

The Grotesque *Agape*: De-masculinization of Hazel Motes and His Separation from the Mother in *Wise Blood*

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Introduction

Flannery O'Connor (1925–1964) has been famous for her unique Christian view, especially of revelation and redemption, and regarding this, critics have paid much attention to her grotesque description of characters. They have examined the issues of gender and sexuality in O'Connor's works since the 1990s, pointing out that some characters in O'Connor's works have ambiguous sexuality and oppose existing gender norms. For example, Patricia Smith Yaeger has maintained that O'Connor's female characters deviate from the social norms and have the power to resist the patriarchal social structure of the South. Yaeger focuses on the fearful, grotesque body of O'Connor's female characters and admires "the aggression and feistiness of preadolescent girl who refuses. . . to cleave to any serene standard of female decorum or beauty" (Yaeger, "The Woman without Any Bones: Anti-Angel Aggression in *Wise Blood*" 113).¹ Female characters have the power to change themselves and other characters in O'Connor's works, such as *Wise Blood* (1952).

In *Wise Blood*, Hazel Motes, a young returnee from World War II who lost his family, establishes "The Church Without Christ" and preaches about his disbelief in God in a fictional Southern city, Taulkinham. Gradually disturbed and confused by his sense of sin, Hazel tortures himself—by blinding himself with quicklime, wrapping his body with barbed wire, and putting sharp rocks and pebbles in his shoes—and finally becomes like Christ. As O'Connor wrote in a letter to her friend, this story can be understood as a representation of the process in which Hazel becomes "a kind of saint" (O'Connor, *Habit of Being: Letters of Flannery O'Connor* 89) and it is achieved by his rebellion against the idea of redemption through a strong influence of his mother's strict idea toward Christianity. When he was a small child, Hazel got scolded by her for having seen an obscene show, which is advertised as "SINsational" (O'Connor, *Wise Blood* 56)—a naked woman in a casket like a skinned animal—in a moving carnival. As he went home, his mother repeatedly asked him what he had seen, and finally, hit him for his sinful act, saying "Jesus died to redeem you." (59) This experience

¹ In contrast, Sara Gordon is skeptical about the power of O'Connor's prose to overthrow a male-dominated society. In *Flannery O'Connor: The Obedient Imagination*, she points out that O'Connor's prose is not influenced by the second-wave feminism's revolutionary thought in the twentieth century, which is the feminists' radical questioning of the duality of thoughts, that is, male vs. female (Gordon 96). She takes notice of O'Connor's use of "the flame of the traditional male spiritual quest" (98).

obsesses him so strongly that it seems impossible for him to escape from the influence of his mother, both the strictness of her Christian view and the guilty conscience about sex that it evokes. Hazel struggles with Christian dogma because he doubts the idea of redemption and the original sin, believing that to avoid sin is to avoid Jesus.

As Yaeger suggests, the relationships with three female characters, each of whom temporally lives with Hazel promote Hazel's ironic change. Hazel lives with Leora Watts and Sabbath Lily Hawks to substantiate his purity by showing he does not believe in sin, but their close connections between maternity and sexuality make him realize the discrepancy between his remarks about Christianity and his strong disbelief in God; the more strongly he attempts to deny God, the more its presence seems undeniable. He tries to separate maternal purity and unproductive sexual pleasure but at the same time, he oddly connects them because of his childhood experience. That is, he is confused with his idea that he believes a mother should be immaculate and must not pursue sexual pleasure through interaction with these women.

Marshall Bruce Gentry suggests that many characters in O'Connor's works "move toward androgyny" to make themselves free from the "typical O'Connor narrator," namely "a rigidly patriarchal female" narrator (Gentry, "Gender Dialogue in O'Connor" 57). He approves of feminine power in O'Connor's characters, claiming that male characters are gradually feminized as their rebellion becomes successful (57). According to Gentry, while Hazel tries to act manly "by preaching blasphemy and dominating and destroying others," he "becomes feminized" toward the end (69). It is exactly through his feminization that Hazel becomes a "saint" after blinding himself and finding his destination.² Hazel's transformation into a "saint" is not completed only through the grotesqueness of the female body as Yaeger argues, but also through resonance with his obsession with the mother, however. These women act not only as a woman but also like a mother even though they are in a sexual relationship with them. Ironically, the harder he tries to attack the Christian idea of sin through his sexual act with Leora and Sabbath, the more progressively and unintentionally he proves that he is afraid of the impurity of sexuality.

In contrast, Hazel gives Mrs. Flood revelation when he transforms into a "saint." She is a landlady in his last days and is crucially different from the other two women in that she does not have a sexual relationship with Haze. Suggesting that they should

² On the other hand, Teresa Clark Caruso sees *Wise Blood* as a misogynistic novel. She criticizes that O'Connor, even though she was a female writer, made a plot using the biased, male-centered canon (Caruso 355). She focuses on the trite, disconnected conversation among O'Connor's female characters and points out that their meaningless conversation is just scenery to shed light on the male protagonist. She claims that O'Connor is just an ordinary writer in "the strongly patriarchal society of the regional South" (369), and female power is not expressed anywhere in the story.

marry, she takes care of his grotesque body, not because of sexual purpose but because of her mysterious interest in his eyes. At the end of the story, he merges, in Mrs. Flood's imagination, in "the pin point of light" (*WB* 236). This last chapter shows a logical leap, and the narrative focus shifts from Hazel to Mrs. Flood, depicting how the landlady is influenced by him instead of portraying how the young man thinks and feels while struggling with physical torment. According to Gentry, Hazel's transformation into a "saint" suggests his "participation in the redemption of his community" (Gentry, "The Eye vs. The Body: Individual and Communal Grotesquerie in 'Wise Blood'" 489). This community, I argue, is a grotesquely idealized, pure relationship between a male and a female.

Mrs. Flood's selfless dedication toward Hazel depicted in the novel's last chapter is *agape*,³ which is not erotic love, nor maternal affection, but is a universal feeling that is the basis of an ideal human relationship. However, this *agape* is an 'O'Connorian' grotesque one, in that it unexpectedly occurs by the failure to deny Christianity and God. Hazel's self-harm is the most grotesque scene in *Wise Blood*. Mrs. Flood's *agape* toward Hazel applied divinity to his unsightly scar, and he becomes a grotesque Christ-like figure for her. During the conquering of sex, maternity also must desert him because sex and maternity are tied up through his childhood trauma. The last chapter thus suggests that freedom from the mother and the sin of sex is crucial to represent the grotesque *agape* evoked between Hazel and Mrs. Flood. The simultaneous correspondence between violence and divinity is common in O'Connor's works, but in *Wise Blood*, Hazel's struggle toward this perverted revelation involves an escape not only from the maternal sense of sin toward sexual desire but also from sexual acts just for pleasure.

Although Gentry's argument about the androgyny of O'Connor's male characters highlights their feminization, makes sense, Hazel's change should be understood as de-masculinization, not as finding feminine strengths, but simply as losing the sexual. The absence of a sexual relationship between Hazel and Mrs. Flood indicates his asexualization. In this essay, I argue that Hazel's transformation into a "saint" is achieved as a result of his escape from his mother and the sense of sin of sexuality that he strongly associates with her. I first examine his constant reliance on maternal purity, comparing the relationships with three women, Leora Watts, Sabbath Lily Hawks, and Mrs. Flood. These relationships clearly show whether he is kept in captivity by his mother or becomes independent of his mother. While the unification between Hazel and his mother, he unconsciously chooses and encounters women referring to his mother. Then, I clarify the process that his de-masculinization and separation from his mother make him a child of God from a child of his mother.

³ *Oxford Dictionary of English* defines *Agape* as "Christian love, as distinct from erotic love or simple affection."

1. Hazel's Search for the Lost Home: Relationships between Mother and Daughter

O'Connor often describes daughters having a conflicting relationship with their mothers in her works, such as Joy/Hulga Hopewell in "Good Country People" (1955) and Mary Grace in "Revelation" (1964). Lisa S. Babinec deals with mother-daughter domination in O'Connor's short stories, pointing out that some of O'Connor's works do not have fathers (Babinec 24). Babinec also explains that Joy/Hulga fails to live up to her mother's expectations, which not only shows the mother's domination over the daughter but, at the same time, also suggests that the mother does not meet her daughter's expectations (15-16). Thus, Babinec suggests that the mother-daughter relationship in O'Connor ties a mother and a daughter in both directions and does not progress as they desire.

Babinec's theory of mother-daughter conflict can be applied to *Wise Blood*. Hazel has both parents, but his father does not influence Hazel with his idea and never sets Hazel a good example. Although Hazel has already lost all members of his family, the memory of his mother's death is so intense for him that the bed of the sleeping limited express car reminds him of his mother's coffin and his mother in her coffin is likened to "a huge bat" (*WB* 21):

He saw her in his sleep, terrible, like a huge bat, dart from the clothing, fly out of there, but it was falling dark on top of her, closing down all the time. From inside he saw it closing, coming closer down and cutting off the light and the room. He opened his eyes and saw it closing and he sprang up between the crack and wedged his head and shoulders through it and hung there, dizzy[.] (21)

He thinks that his mother is "unrested" (20) even though she is dead now and feels "she wasn't any more satisfied dead than alive" (21), and she is still "looking" (20). His imagination of a huge bat springing up to him shows he feels he is still pursued and monitored by his mother. That is why he tries to relieve her by saving her chifforobe. It shows that the existence of his mother is different from other family members for him, and he is afraid of the death of his mother. It also symbolizes that Hazel is still seized with his mother. As Babinec suggests that "the daughter attempts to differentiate herself from her mother" (Babinec 17), Hazel refuses to be a mirror image of his mother by disturbing her mother's instruction in Christianity. Hazel's mother tries to tie Hazel up by teaching Jesus's redemption to Hazel, but Hazel opposes her.

Like Hazel Motes, O'Connor herself had a complicated relationship with her mother while O'Connor was struggling with lupus. Her mother, Regina Cline, was an independent businesswoman who balanced care of ill O'Connor and housework because O'Connor's father died of lupus when she was a teenager. Regina managed a farm and interacted with many people. O'Connor described that "she [her mother] sits in the back hall now and talks to the vet, the seed man, the feed man, the tractor

& implement man” (*HB* 169). In contrast, according to *Flannery: A Life of Flannery O’Connor*, O’Connor spent most of her time in her room, writing (Gooch 177). O’Connor herself depended on her mother because of her physical problem. It is the same situation as Joy/Hulga of “Good Country People.”

Gentry points out that the narrator partly reflects O’Connor’s character that she wanted to transform (“Gender” 70). Gentry thinks that “the typical O’Connor narrator is a rigidly patriarchal female who promotes gender separation” (57), but after that, he maintains, “O’Connor characters frequently find redemption as they move toward androgyny” (57). However, the problem is not only “a matter of male patriarchy in the narrator versus female rebellion in the characters” (60). As Gentry explains, her narrators, who represent patriarchal authority, mock the characters, but the characters are capable of strength and self-transformation (60). In *Wise Blood*, the transformation indicates Hazel’s progress toward becoming a “saint.”

Texts symbolically show Hazel’s obsession with his mother even after her death and the fact that his Christian belief has been entwined with maternity. When Hazel first leaves his hometown, Eastrod, he takes only two things; “a black Bible and a pair of silver-rimmed spectacles that had belonged to his mother” (*WB* 17). Moreover, “the Bible was the only book he read” and “when he did [read the Bible] he wore his mother’s glasses” (17). It shows that his mother, home, and Christianity are combined in one coherent image of the family Bible.

Hazel’s twisted understanding of sexuality and maternity is caused by his obsession with his mother, and Hazel Motes’ progress from protesting against Jesus to being himself Jesus is attained by the process of becoming free from his mother. His vision of Christianity, “the way to avoid Jesus was to avoid sin” (16), is influenced by his mother. He holds on to be clean to contradict original sin, saying, “I AM clean.” (91). He also has “a strong confidence in his power to resist evil” (17). His persistence begins with his skepticism of Jesus’s redemption by his dying for humans. As Susan Srigley points out, Hazel is influenced by his mother’s “religious understanding of the close connection between sin and the atoning act of Jesus’s sacrificial death” (Srigley, “Penance and Love in *Wise Blood*: Seeing Redemption?” 98). She maintains that young Hazel understands human beings’ relation to Jesus just as a debt forced by God, and the bond between humans and God is empty (98). His mother looks like she hates sex for pleasure for young Hazel through his childhood trauma, and he may think that the strict mother never concludes any sexual, obscene factors. This experience causes his understanding of sexuality as impurity and maternity as purity. Through his mother’s traumatic moralizing about his seeing an obscene show, he oddly associates sin with sexuality. He never dares to see the immoral show, so he feels unreasonable with an air of condescension toward Jesus’s redemption. After that, he becomes afraid of sin, which is combined with sexuality as immoral, and he strictly tries to separate sexuality from maternity. He attempts to overcome his mother’s

piousness by establishing The Church of God Without Christ. He clings to the vision, which is not necessarily of his own, but was imposed by his mother, unable to unleash himself from her.

He is obsessed with maternity when observing the choice of women, whom he lives with, in contrast, however, after he loses his car and blinds his eyes, he is not obsessed with any homely women. The fact that he realizes he has not been clean shows he is released from a narrow-minded Christian view of sin. Throughout the story, he completes the removal of his mother from his mind through interactions with three women, Leora Watts, Sabbath Lily Hawks, and Mrs. Flood. When he stays with Leora, he is still caught in the maternal sense of guilt, but during the days of the Sabbath, he comes to confront his obsession with the mother. The separation from his mother is expressed by his throwing and breaking her mother's glasses, which is one of his mother's keepsakes and symbolizes his vision of Christianity had been distorted by his mother's idea. Owing to psychological separation from his mother, Hazel Motes eventually transforms into something divine. The dynamic of such a mother-daughter relationship can be applied to him, especially if we read him as a reflection of O'Connor's struggle with her mother, Regina. At the same time, Hazel's divine transformation into a "saint" (*HB* 69), it seems, is accomplished by his demasculinization, as Gentry suggests.

2. Hazel's Obsession with Maternity: In the Case of Leora Watts and Sabbath Lily Hawks

By observing Hazel's relationship with women, we find that he is still obsessed with his mother after he starts life in Taulkinham. The first place he stays in the city is Leora Watts's brothel. She is a prostitute, and the night with Mrs. Watts is Hazel's first opportunity to sleep with a woman. Loaded both with female sexuality and maternity, Leora is "a speckled green-toothed prostitute with low mental wattage" (Whitt 20). Grotesquely enough, she approaches him as a mother when she has a sexual act with him, naming herself "Momma" and calling him "son" (*WB* 30). Mrs. Watts treats him not merely as a child but as her own as "she put her other hand under his face and tickled it in a *motherly* way" (30; emphasis added). She takes the place of his mother, and he faces her strong/grotesque maternity. With exposure to this threat of maternity, he starts an exploration of his inner recognition of sin and sexuality.

Leora Watts's body, which overstates her maternity while approaching him in a mother-child relationship, violates his private territory when he meets her. Mrs. Watts penetrates him "bold steady [. . .] stare" (29), which takes "everything in whole, like quicksand" (56). The metaphor of quicksand offers a violent image that sucks others into her. Pointing out "a frightening relationship between adult and child" ("Woman" 98) depicted in the novel, Yaeger claims that Mrs. Watts's dangerous body

presses Hazel's physical space and gets rid of its fragile boundaries (98). This observation explains why "his throat got dryer, and his heart began to grip him like a little ape clutching the bars of its cage" (*WB* 56).

With Leora Watts, Hazel takes a passive posture when he has a sexual act, even though he thinks a woman is necessary for his faith to react against Christian ideas; the text says, "He felt that he should have a woman, not for the sake of the pleasure in her, but to prove that he didn't believe in sin." (*WB* 106) After his first sex, "he was like something washed ashore on her" (55). Gentry defines femininity as adopting a dominant ("Gender" 69). Considering her body is a threat to him, he is dominated. Then, Gentry concludes that Hazel is feminized when he faces Leora Watts.

Taking his obsession with his mother into consideration, he divides women into two role models: a woman as a sexual and, therefore, sinful object, just like a prostitute, and the mother who prohibits him from seeing her as a sexual object. Hazel's involvement with Leora Watts, the prostitute, is necessary to prove that he does not believe in sin and that his soul is clean. In this part, he does not have to choose such a motherly prostitute, but he does choose. While he refuses his mother's religious idea, his belief itself, which confronts her, is distorted by his mother's view. Also, he does not refuse maternity because he is obsessed with home with his mother. He says, "The misery he had was a longing for home." (*WB* 18), but his hometown reminds him only of his mother, not other family members such as his father. It shows the fact that only his mother's chifforobe remains in the ruins when he comes home after the disbandment. All other family relics disappear from Eastrod,⁴ and it is related to his mother looking unsatisfied when she is buried. He may feel that his mother is still around him. That may be why he tries to save the chifforobe for her with the threatening letters, written that "THIS SHIFFER-ROBE BELONGS TO HAZEL MOTES. DO NOT STEAL IT OR YOU WILL BE HUNTED AND KILLED." (20) Even though he tries to refuse maternity, he cannot escape from it; "Haze tries to accept and avoid his mother and her religion at the same time." (LeClair 199) As he

⁴ This novel can be read as a story of Hazel's getting back home, which can be speculated by Mrs. Flood's words, "I see you've come home!" (*WB* 235). Margaret Early Whitt points out that "Hazel Motes, at novel's end, has also found his spiritual home" (Whitt 17). He experienced the deaths of his family during his childhood. After that, he leaves home to join the army, and when he revisits there, he finds his house no more exists after his disbandment. He has special feelings for his hometown, Eastrod, saying, "Where he wanted to stay was in Eastrod with his two eyes open, and his hands always managing the familiar thing, his feet on the known track, and his tongue not too loose" (16). He wants to feel secure in his hometown and he thinks that he is mentally so stable in Eastrod that his body works well there. Thus, the loss of his home is a crisis of his stability, and *Wise Blood* is a story of finding his lost home and completing his wholeness.

refuses Enoch Emery's proposal for going to a brothel, Hazel believes that sexual affair is not for pleasure but for his noble aim. Moreover, he compares Mrs. Watts to the Savior, saying, "What do I need with Jesus? I got Leora Watts." (*WB* 52) Leora Watts, the substitute for his mother, is equal to Jesus for him, and this identifying Leora with Jesus shows that Hazel takes maternity as absolute as God. His rejection of Jesus is bold, but there is a big contradiction; he refuses Jesus and his mother's religious idea, but at the same time, he is obsessed with his mother.

Nevertheless, he leaves Mrs. Watts because he is obsessed with the mother even though he says that the reason is that he wants a more innocent girl. Instead of regarding vulgar women themselves as sinful, Hazel maintains, "There's no person a whoremonger, who wasn't something worse fast" and "That's not the sin, nor blasphemy. The sin came before them" (72). Since Leora Watts is a prostitute in the first place, he must have comprehended her obscenity, so the true reason he leaves Leora Watts lies below the level of consciousness, like his involuntary obsession with his mother. Hazel's divide between what he is putting into words and what he is thinking makes this narrative complicated. At first, he is attracted to her, acting like his mother, and he calls for her sexual role to prove that he does not believe in sin. Sexuality and maternity are respectively necessary, but they should be separated for him. He suddenly clearly notices her sexual aspects by her cutting "the top of his hat out in an obscene shape" (106). Until that time, her eroticism as a prostitute had been buried in oblivion for Hazel, but then he sees her sexual aspects and maternal aspect at the same time. He had thought sexual affairs necessary to prove his fearlessness of sin, but sexual mischief is inappropriate to her maternal behavior. He is confused by the connection between Leora's maternity and Leora's sexuality. A mother should be pure and sacred existence, having guessed from his experience with his mother, but Leora's two-sidedness of sexuality and maternity confounds him. Therefore, he cannot find his peaceful home with Leora Watts.

His second 'home' is built on the relationship with Sabbath Lily Hawks. She is an illegitimate child of a preacher, Asa Hawks, whom Haze believes is blind but turns out to be a swindler who is not blind. Hazel gets sick of Leora Watts and plans to seduce Sabbath because she looks "ugly" (50) and "so homely" (106) that he expects her of innocent. The narrator's choice of the word "homely" implies his desire to find his home in her. In addition, she is associated with the Christian image: Her name, Sabbath, means she can provide a healing place for him. Moreover, she reminds the readers of the Virgin Mary, especially after she finds maternal affection and attachment to the mummy. Enoch takes the mummy from the central museum of the town and tries to give it to Hazel as a new Jesus. Before Hazel gets it, Sabbath holds it, but then she feels it is "cute" (185) and finally says, "Call me Momma now." (187)

Unlike her name, she is not as pure and innocent as Hazel expects. She is interested in sexual acts with some boys and willingly seduces Hazel. This is opposed to Virgin

Mary's image, which is sometimes recognized as free from the original sin. Lilies' whiteness suggests purity, but on Sabbath Lily dresses in black (Whitt 19), which shows her bilateral character; she looks pure but is not.

Sabbath's impureness is described as nature because she is an illegitimate child. Hazel believes in Asa Hawks' fanaticalness about Jesus, so Hazel is confused by the fact that he has an illegitimate child. Hazel never thinks that a reverent Christian engages in unmarried sexual intercourse, so the existence of the Sabbath makes Hazel mixed up. He utters that the Church Without Christ can save everyone regardless of being illegitimate or not but does not think true to his words: "[S]omething in his mind was already contradicting him and saying that a bastard couldn't, that there was only one truth—that Jesus was a liar—and that her case was hopeless" (*WB* 120). Ignoring the talkative Sabbath, he is still thinking that "[t]he thing in his mind said that the truth didn't contradict itself and that a bastard couldn't be saved in the Church Without Christ" (120). His decision that "he would forget it, that it was not important" (120) shows that the pursuit of contradictory ideas in his mind is not ready to be accomplished because of his concrescence with his mother. He recognizes his inconsistency in dealing with sin and sexuality, but he cannot specify what his problem is because his view is fundamentally far from Christian doctrines. Even though Sabbath causes Hazel great distress about her background and her interest in him, his indecisive attitude shows his inconsistency between his faith that he does not fear sin and his unconscious, real hope that he expects others to be clean as Jesus tells people to do.

The time when he suddenly refuses Sabbath while he has not rejected her immediately is after she shows her maternal side: when she holds a mummy, which Enoch Emery brings, and then Sabbath appears as a perverse Virgin Mary⁵ (Whitt 19) in common points of having no sexual act. He breaks the mummy and throws it out. Then, he tells her that he is going to get away from her and live in another city. Neither her being an illegitimate child nor her sexual interests his rejection of Sabbath triggers, but her maternal nature, which is caused by the mummy convulsively leads to his rejection of her. Besides, he is terrified by the mummy that Sabbath Lily Hawks attends as its mother. The threat of maternity which Hazel feels may prove Marianne Hirsch's theory of the processes of daughters' overcoming their mothers. That is,

⁵ Martha Chew suggests that not equating Sabbath with the real Virgin Mary shows O'Connor avoids making her female characters as people to devote to men in the masculine society (Chew 17). Chew thinks Virgin Mary is a symbol of innocent women serving men, and Sabbath, who looks like Virgin Mary but is not, is a person who copes with patriarchy. Chew's idea corresponds with Yaeger's suggestion that O'Connor's female characters are different from the stereotypical, homebound southern women, and they escape from "male-defined southern tradition" (Yaeger, *Dirt and Desire* xi). Sabbath has the power to resist the existing society.

maternity is an object to oppose for him, as Hirsch suggests that daughters recognize their mothers as a threat.

After he breaks the mummy, Hazel throws and breaks his mother's glasses, the symbol he has been obsessed with as his mother's religious ideas. They do not suit him, but he continues to use them to read the Bible. The perverse view of Christianity, which he has from his hometown, breaks away from him at this point, and he gains his vision of the sin of sex. Moreover, his rejection of fatherhood and his fake child also suggest his de-masculinization. As Whitt has suggested, "[h]e must reject the 'baby' that Sabbath clutches to her breast and his own 'fatherhood' in this fraudulent momentary drama" (22). He rejects not only "the religion behind the words he has spoken on the street, a first step on his path to salvation" (22) but also the social norm of masculine nature.

3. Hazel's Process of Being a "Saint"

O'Connor herself may not persist in the characters' gender identities. In a letter to her friend, "A" in 1956, O'Connor said,

I've always believed there were two [sexes] but generally acted as if there were only one. I guess meditation and contemplation and all the ways of prayer boil down to keeping it firmly in sight that there are two. I've never spent much time over the bride-bridegroom analogy. . . because. . . it's been more father and child. (*HB* 136-137).

O'Connor emphasized not her gender identity but her religious identity as "a Christian, a Catholic, a Southerner, and a flawed human being who needed constantly to focus on her relationship with God" (Evans 212). Therefore, there is a possibility that her characters' gender identity is not her concern.

Gentry pays attention to Hazel's sexuality by comparing him with another preacher, Manley Pointer, in "Good Country People." In contrast to Hazel, which is a unisex name, although it is used as a girl name today, Manley Pointer is a masculine name, and he is a fake preacher. Hazel is "haunted by memories of his mother and the homestead and landscape she dominated, and he spends much of the novel trying to become another Manley Pointer by preaching blasphemy and dominating and destroying others" ("Gender" 69). After he refuses Sabbath's mummy, throwing his mother's glasses, Hazel kills Solace Layfield, and Gentry points out that the scene in which Hazel's Essex runs over naked Solace has a sexual dimension (69). Like this murder, toward the end of the story, Hazel's de-masculinization has proceeded;

Hazel sees himself adopting a dominated, feminized role, and he senses that such a role is somehow proper for him too. We might conclude that Hazel becomes feminized when he conjures up a patrolman to dominate him and destroy his car. The most positive effect Hazel has on any character is his influence on Mrs. Flood, his landlady, who also makes a woman of him. (69)

Hazel's positive influence gives Mrs. Flood what she wants to see in his eyes, and that is because she gives him *agape*, and she does not act like his mother nor expects him to have sexual contact.

The de-masculinization process is finished when he is free from his mother's contorted religious ideas. At first, he has no suspicion that he is distorted by the home adhered to by his mother. Yet, he is gradually confused by his idea, encountering Leora Watts and Sabbath Lily Hawks. Just before he sees the mummy, he is preparing the trip to another town, thinking about living with another girl because he cannot understand Sabbath's illegitimate nature and is also sick of her sexual enthusiasm. However, when he notices what he has seen is dyed by his mother's awful shadow, he recognizes that "they [the little silver-rimmed glasses of his mother] were hiding some dishonest plan that would show in his naked eyes." (*WB* 187). It means that his ingenuous understanding is obstructed by his mother's sense of values. Until this scene, in his life in Taulkinham, Hazel never recalls the memory of his mother. The first experience that Hazel is aware of his mother, saying, "[h]e saw his mother's face in his, looking at the face in the mirror" (187), reveals that his true comprehension of Christianity, especially about sin, had been interrupted. After the separation, which is explained by his action of throwing and breaking his mother's glasses, Hazel may become aware that he has the power to transform himself. Babinec's consideration that daughters in O'Connor's works improve themselves by breaking the ties with their mothers (Babinec 10-11) exactly overlaps with Gentry's theory that feminization enables the character to transform into a sacred one to find redemption ("Gender" 57).

In the second edition of *Wise Blood*, O'Connor wrote in the preface, "It is a comic novel about a Christian *malgré lui*." Regarding the Christian *malgré lui*, Susan Srigley says, "Motes's integrity lies in his inability to resist the divine figure" and "Motes's wholeness depends on something more than himself" (Srigley, *Flannery O'Connor's Sacramental Art* 61). When O'Connor explains Hazel as a sort of a "saint," she suggests a man who unconsciously saves others, not a person who is saved by divine will. From Chapter 1 to Chapter 13, the narrator speaks from Hazel's first-person perspective when Hazel appears in the story. On the other hand, in Chapter 14, the narrative focuses on the newly emerged Mrs. Flood, and Hazel is observed from the outside. In this scene, he becomes a different existence from what he is in previous chapters, and I would assume this change is the result of him being touched by divinity. His feminization and his transformation into the "saint" caused by feminization can be equated with Babinec's consideration that daughters become women by breaking ties with their mothers (Babinec 10-11). It requires his overcoming his mother's domination which strongly connects with sin. He finally becomes a "saint" by facing sin outrightly. After the transformation, he does not try to have sinful acts but hurts himself in compensation for his experience. The severe discipline, like packing stones

in his shoes and wrapping barbed wire around his body, recalls a saint, and Mrs. Flood does not understand why he does such a cruel self-mutilation. However, her interest in Hazel Motes deepens even more because of his incomprehensive behavior.

Mrs. Flood's *agape* for Hazel Motes differs from Sabbath Lily Hawks' affection and Leora Watts' sexual love, and her *agape* causes his sanctified change in Chapter 14. *Agape* originally means selfless love, like maternal affection, but in *Wise Blood*, maternity and sexuality are oddly related. In this novel, when sexuality is going to be disappeared, maternity which is inseparable from sexuality, is also given up. Mrs. Flood's care does not seem to come from her maternity, while both Sabbath and Leora have maternal aspects. Sabbath's maternity is suddenly exposed by dealing with the mummy (*WB* 187), and Leora treats Hazel in a mother-son relationship (30).

In contrast to them, Mrs. Flood just wants to support him. At first, she unwillingly helps him, thinking "now that he was a mad man and that he ought to be under the control of a sensible person" (224). She becomes interested in him; "[s]he began to fasten all her attention on him, to the neglect of other things." (227). Her words, "You got nobody to take care of you, but me" (229), emerged from her hope to "penetrate the darkness [Hazel's lost eye holes] behind it and see for herself what was there" (229). Therefore, her proposal to marry him is not due to her romantic feelings but from her sense of vocation to protect him without any maternity or sexuality. His revelation of "the pin point of light" (236) may be a return for her *agape*.

Like Mrs. Flood's *agape*, Hazel's effort at comprehending the Christian aim is not selfish but a more universal effort of humans for perfection in the religious meaning. Mrs. Flood is confused by Hazel's self-sacrifice, saying, "There's no reason for it" (228), but it aims at the coincide of his body and soul. According to O'Connor, Hazel is "God's reasonable man, the prototype of whom must be Abraham, willing to sacrifice his son and thereby to show that he is in the image of God Who sacrifices His Son" (*HB* 116). Ralph Wood defines that the soul's final perfection can be found only in the resurrected body, so salvation is not only an affair of the spirit but also the body (Wood 89-90). His transformation, in other words, his acquisition of true vision through his de-masculinization and separation from maternity, may cause his effort to integrate body and spirit.

Conclusion

Hazel Motes unconsciously depends on his mother's religious beliefs. It is distorted because young Hazel simply has equated sex with sin. *Wise Blood* is a story of correcting this distortion and finding his spiritual home instead of his parent's home, which is haunted by a false vision of Jesus. O'Connor often portrayed the conflict between mothers and children who do not have fathers. So does Hazel; the adherence to his mother and the separation are clearly distinguished through the change of angle of the narration. His facing sin needs the escape from the triangle of distorted

maternity, horrible Jesus, and his lost home.

Hazel thinks that to avoid Jesus is to avoid sin and concludes that sin is equal to sex. His traumatic memory of his mother scolding him for having seen an obscene show and his experience led to the strict separation of his take on maternity from sexuality.

Moreover, in O'Connor's works, female characters often have the power to resist the existing society. The characters' decided sexualities are ambiguous and can be changed. Hazel's dominant attitude and refusal of his paternity can be linked to his conquest of his mother. De-masculinization and his separation from distorted maternity enable him to transform into "a saint" to find his final destination, 'home.'

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