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Beyond the Vicious Cycle:
A Psychoanalytic Reading of the Grotesque in
Flannery O'Connor's *Wise Blood*

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摘要

本篇論文以佛蘭莉·歐康納《智血》為例，輔以紀傑克精神分析，閱讀歐康納宗教觀裡的怪誕現象。論文分成三章：第一章介紹怪誕現象在文學和藝術的呈現方式，並指出怪誕作品裡都有讓人無法理解的成分（incomprehensible element）。歐康納小說裡角色的怪誕崇拜來自對此成分的著迷；此無法言喻的成分也模糊了歐康納宗教觀中善與惡的界定。第二章用紀傑克精神分析，說明《智血》中天主教教徒藉由「罪惡」此主導能指（master signifier）的運作，建構教義並依附於天主教之下。第二章也指出無法理解的成分操控「罪惡」在教義裡的運作；因此，教徒們奉行教義之餘，依然享樂和從事金錢交易。第三章用紀傑克精神分析中的真實界（the real）剖析此無法理解的成分，和歐康納的怪誕宗教觀。真實界滲透象徵界（the symbolic order）；怪誕現象在幻見（fantasy）的運作下，抵抗真實層的介入。《智血》中黑茲（Haze）和以諾（Enoch）的瘋狂著迷和強制行為都是為了否定並逃避來自真實層的耶穌。他們越否定真實界，越被幻見所操控，然後越困在由享樂、懲罰和罪惡感交織的無止盡深淵。本論文最後提出超越無止盡深淵的可能性。歐康納的天主教救贖和紀傑克的超越幻見皆指出象徵界的死亡（symbolic death）為超越深淵的方式。

關鍵詞：《智血》，怪誕現象，精神分析，真實界，超越幻見，紀傑克。

Abstract

This thesis looks at the grotesque in Flannery O'Connor's Christian vision in *Wise Blood*. The first chapter proposes to focus on the incomprehensible in the grotesque and demonstrates that the inexplicable lead to the inevitability of evil in O'Connor's grotesque vision. In the lens of Žižekian psychoanalysis, the second chapter deploys the interpellation of Christianity through sin qua the master-signifier in *Wise Blood* and explicates the surplus-X as the most fundamental in the characters' identification with Christianity. Following the inexplicable surplus, the grotesque is explored in the light of the real in Chapter Three. The intrusion of the real in Christianity leads to the fact that Jesus assumes the role of the superego imperative and Haze's and Enoch's obsessions function in staving off anxiety aroused by their over-proximity to the real. The characters' vicious cycle of enjoyment, punishment and guilt results from compliance with the demands of the enjoying Jesus and from the renunciation of the *jouissance*. The last part of the thesis discusses a possible way out of the vicious cycle by drawing attention to O'Connor's idea of self-abnegation in salvation and Žižekian traversing of the fantasy. This thesis aims to examine O'Connor's grotesque vision in *Wise Blood* in the light of the subject's over-proximity to the real and his desire and anxiety, structured by fantasy, as a defense against the overwhelming real.

Key words: *Wise Blood*, the grotesque, psychoanalysis, the real, traversing the fantasy, Žižek

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Introduction

The grotesque never ceases to recur in art and literature. Michael J. Meyer points out in *Literature and the Grotesque* that from England depicted by Shakespeare, Russia by Dostoyevsky to the freaks in Nathaniel Hawthorne's and William Faulkner's works, the grotesque makes its constant appearance (i). Wilson Yates demonstrates in "An Introduction to the Grotesque: Theoretical and Theological Considerations" that the dark, neogothic style of architecture is introduced in the Romantic Period and even until today, the grotesque tradition can be shown with religious iconography in paintings and writings (Adams 40). It is nearly impossible to categorize the grotesque, because it is neither a genre nor an element the artists apply. It is instead "the unresolved clash of incompatibles in work and response" and is aroused by the "ambivalent nature of the abnormal" (Thomson 27). The ambivalence pierces through the familiarity to which humans are accustomed and make us rethink the nature of humans' existence. It comes as no surprise that there is a rich use of the grotesque in religious artworks and literature, which deal with matters "concerned with the nature of the human condition, our understanding of the holy, and our possibilities as a human community" (Adams xi). Roger Hazelton suggests that theology and the grotesque have a common concern for the mystery of being a human in the unmanageable world. The dragons, gargoyles and the devils, therefore, "symbolize the presence of the self-destroying potentialities in being" (78). They are the spiritual and moral temptations that threaten humans' existence.

Flannery O'Connor, who considers herself as a Catholic writer, finds the grotesque effective in depicting her Christian vision. Her stories are full of abnormalities: freak protagonists, a distorted and violent world, a fusion of the animate and inanimate, the human and non-human (Muller 10), and detailed descriptions of

corporeality, especially the lacerated ones (Renzo 73). O'Connor mentions in *Mystery and Manners* that the grotesque can best represent reality. The writer of grotesque fiction looks for "one image that will connect or combine or embody two points: one is a point in the concrete, and the other is a point not visible to the naked eye..." (42). The grotesque provides a way of seeing things with "extensions of meanings" (44) and therefore, are closer to reality. However, critics such as John Hawkes condemn the grotesque Christian vision as demonic. Her novels are sometimes rejected for publication because of heated controversy. Robert H. Brinkmeyer states that critics and readers alike are unsettled by "the bizarre qualities of the novel—the grotesque world, the repulsive characters, the wild goings on, the apparent meaninglessness of it all" (Kreyling 71). Reproaching for the evilness, those critics and readers fail to notice the ambiguity in the demonic world O'Connor presents. Preston M. Browning affirms holiness in the demonic. He mentions in "Flannery O'Connor and the Demonic" that "Miss O'Connor's purpose...is to resuscitate the notion of demonic holiness in order to recover the idea of holiness itself. . ." (Browning, *Modern Fiction Studies* 40). True good can't exist without the reality of evil. In O'Connor's vision, we can see that it is through demonic characters that believers understand Christian mystery and it is in the distorted bodies that Christ manifests Himself. The ambiguity of good and evil provides another perspective on the grotesque in religious works. Unlike Hazelton, who believes the grotesque as a threat to humans' morality, O'Connor thinks that the grotesque—the ambiguity of good and evil—sustains fundamental Christian experience.

Among all of O'Connor's works, *Wise Blood* catches my attention. *Wise Blood* is O'Connor's first novel and contains a great deal of grotesque elements that unsettle the readers. The protagonists are indulged in pervert practices. Haze Motes is

obsessed with Jesus but spends his life violating Christian doctrines. Enoch Emery practices perverse enjoyment by peeping at the women in swim suits and by making obscene comments at the animals. He experiences the moment of “mystery” in his transformation to a gorilla. Hawks, the blind priest, distorts his eyes to prove his redemption and begs for money as a blind man. Hoover Shoats, Haze’s land lady and other characters in Taulkinham have secular points of view on Christianity. Besides the aforementioned characters, *Wise Blood* is full of disgusting elements, such as the distorted mummy Enoch steals and which he considers as a “new Jesus,” Hawks’ distorted eye that attracts Haze and a machine-like mechanic who keeps repeating “nothing.” It comes as no surprise that William Rodney Allen perceives the world in *Wise Blood* as without “spiritual dimension” (257). Nevertheless, I plan to argue that the demonic is essential to Christian salvation. I will focus on Christians’ obsession, desire, repulsion and guilt and propose that it is the ambivalent responses, aroused by the ambiguity of good and evil, that support Christianity.

The thesis plans to read the grotesque Christian vision in *Wise Blood* through Žižekian psychoanalysis. I will explicate the grotesque in relation to the uncanny, which points to an undergrowth of libidinal economy aroused by the intrusion of the real. Following Žižekian real, Christians’ obsessive practices indicate an enjoyment that is manipulated by fantasy to conceal the overwhelming real. I will suggest that the figure of Christ, as superego imperative, is at the core of Christians’ enjoyment and controls them with a sense of guilt. In the following, fantasy, the uncanny, the double, superego and guilt is discussed in the light of the real.

Žižek mentions in *The Sublime Object of Ideology* that the real can not be symbolized and its presence in the symbolic order can only be detected as holes and inconsistencies. Fantasy functions as a screen to cover the lack through co-ordinating

our desire. Žižek points out the paradox of fantasy. An ordinary object, when put in the frame of fantasy, contains an unknown quality that is something in it more than itself, and suddenly becomes an object of desire. However, the same object may turn to be horrifying if one gets too close to the Mother-Thing. It constructs our desire and enables us to seek maternal substitutes but, at the same time, it is “a screen shielding us from going too close to the maternal Thing” (120). When an object gets too close to the real, it becomes uncanny. The uncanny deploys a disturbing moment aroused by the ambiguity of familiar and unfamiliar, inside and outside. Freud points out that the uncanny designates a shocking confusion when the familiar and homely suddenly becomes unfamiliar and threatening. The blur of boundaries is called by Lacan as *extimate*, which refers to the place where the interior coincides with the exterior. The point of anamorphosis, Žižek proposes, points to the ambiguity of the real and the symbolic. The anamorphosis in a picture is a meaningless stain that all of a sudden acquires the surplus-X, something in the stain that is more than the stain itself, and becomes uncanny. The surplus-X stems from the remnant of the real and unsettles us because of the over-proximity to the real. Anamorphosis entails a radical change in our libidinal economy. An undergrowth of desires, “hallucinations, suspicions, obsessions, feelings of guilt” is aroused and changes what we see into pervert, obscene and threatening (Žižek, *Looking Awry* 90). In a word, the uncanny elicits a whirl of libidinal economy in defense against the real that comes too close.

The uncanny leads us to the discussion of the double. Žižek points out in “Why Does the Phallus Appear?” that when an individual enters the symbolic order, the *jouissance* is sacrificed and the double appears as the mirror image which contains the *jouissance* (Žižek, *Enjoying your Symptom* 125, 126). The double looks exactly like me, but there is something more in him—the unfathomable and unnamable

element—that makes a familiar object threatening. The double, as a figure of the *jouissance*, incarnates as the anal father, the reverse of the Name of the Father, and commands the subject to enjoy. The “excessive ‘sprout of enjoyment’” (Žižek, *Enjoying Your Symptom* 125) hinders us from pursuing our desire and covers the lack in the Other by surplus enjoyment. Superego imperative, as the double, commands us to enjoy more. Symbolic order cooperates with the superego to manipulate the subject’s identification with the law. Žižek designates in “Superego by Default” that the symbolic law guarantees meaning in ideological field, whereas superego “provides enjoyment which serves as the unacknowledged support of meaning” (Žižek, *Metastases of Enjoyment* 56-57). The public law is not completed and at its point of failure, it looks for support in illicit enjoyment, which embodies as the fetishistic disavowal of the shared guilt in the community. It resembles a filthy secret that “everybody knew, yet did not want to speak about aloud” (55). The filthy secret, in psychoanalytic terms, refers to a specific form of enjoyment that the subject identifies with. However, the subject’s identification with the superego leads to guilt. Superego lures us to give up our desire and “enjoy,” which generates guilt. The more we enjoy, the more guilt we have and the more we want to pay it off by following the command to enjoy. We can say that symbolic order cooperates with the superego in solidifying the subject’s identification through the manipulation of enjoyment and guilt.

In the thesis, I attempt to discuss O’Connor’s grotesque Christian vision in Žižekian real. I will suggest the grotesque—the ambiguity of good and evil—as the uncanny, which indicates the intrusion of the real into Christianity. Christians’ obsession and devotion indicate a specific form of enjoyment that is structured by fantasy to cover the over-proximity real. I will propose Jesus as a figure of superego

imperative, to whom Christians pay tribute in their enjoyment. Instead of considering the pervert practices as evil and demonic, I will suggest it is the perverse and the filthy that support Christianity. O'Connor's grotesque vision, in which the readers find holiness in the demonic and evil in good, provides an alternative to Christian belief.

In Chapter One, "The Grotesque in Context," I will firstly discuss the definitions of the grotesque by looking at John Ruskin's *Stones of Venice*, Wolfgang Kayser's *The Grottesque in Art and Literature* and Mikhail Bakhtin's *Rabelais and His World*. The critics generally agree the grotesque as abnormal, ambiguous and incomprehensible. I will then focus on the grotesque in Flannery O'Connor's Christian vision and suggest that the grotesqueness comes from the blurred boundary between good and evil. It is through the distorted bodies and violent acts, which are the embodiment of the grotesque, that leads the characters to Christian mystery. I will discuss distortions and violence in several O'Connor's short stories.

The second chapter, "The Interpellation of Christianity," will demonstrate that sin qua the master-signifier interpellates Christians in *Wise Blood* through debt with Jesus. The significances of the signifiers are defined retroactively according to the debt. Haze's binaries of good and evil, Enoch's and Hoover's eagerness to be redeemed, the blind priest's and other Christians' practices of repentance and self penance deploy that the significance of their belief and practices are based on the debt with Jesus. They attempt to pay the debt off by punishing themselves for sinful deeds and stay clean. However, I will then discuss the slips in the Christian doctrines and suggest that it is the sinful enjoyment that supports Christianity. A naked lady's performance in the tent, a boy's eagerness to visit a whorehouse, Hawks' begging for money and Hoover's plan to make a fortune by preaching indicate the filthy, sinful and evil are the support of Christianity. The binary of the good and evil is therefore

challenged.

Following the slips of Christine doctrines in the previous chapter, Chapter Three, “The Obscene Christianity and the Enjoying Jesus,” will discuss the grotesque Christian vision in the light of the real. In the first part, I will associate the grotesque with the uncanny, and understand Jesus as the figure of superego imperative. The grotesque in Christians’ sinful obsession deploys specific enjoyment that is structured by fantasy to defend against over-proximity to the real. Jesus as superego imperative embodies as the core of the specific enjoyment that constantly attracts and repels Christians. I will discuss in the second part Haze’s frantic negation of Christine doctrines and compulsive enjoyment and Enoch’s obsession with voyeurism and animals. Both of them attempt to prove their independency from the enjoying Jesus. Haze thinks that by disavowing his debt with Jesus, he is immune to Jesus’ command. However, negation and enjoyment only affirm that sin and debt are the innermost kernel of Christianity and he is controlled by the enjoying Jesus. Enoch tries to deny his impotence in castration. His ritualistic practices of peeking at the women and assaulting the animals demonstrate his endeavor to prove his agency in symbolic identification. Nevertheless, his ridiculous moment of grace—transformation to a gorilla—designates zealous and unconditional sacrifice to the Other. In the end, the enjoying Jesus manipulates Haze and Enoch, in order to steer them away from the lack in Christianity.

In the last part of the thesis, I will tackle with the possibility of a way out of Jesus’ endless commands by focusing on O’Connor’s idea of salvation and Žižekian traversing of the fantasy. O’Connor believes that reunion with God occurs in endless physical suffering and Žižek proposes that traversing the fantasy is probable through meaningless repetitions.

The thesis does not aim to suggest that Christianity stands as nothing but an obscene religion. In the lens of Žižekian psychoanalysis, the thesis proposes to analyze Christianity in relation to the grotesque. I am, firstly, concerned with how an ideology manipulates the grotesque. As the thesis argues, the grotesque indicates the intrusion of the real, which is structured in fantasy. The grotesque—a lack or an excess that eludes symbolization—is often presented as a form of degradation that threatens the harmony of a community. Analyzing the grotesque vision in Flannery O'Connor's *Wise Blood*, I would point out that, ironically, it is the grotesque that supports the function of Christianity. My second concern is the interaction between the subject and the grotesque. The thesis would demonstrate the characters' obsession, fear, desire and guilt in *Wise Blood* to show that the sublimation or demonization of an everyday object corresponds to the subject's inner struggle. I would also emphasize that it is through the struggles that the subject stays in fantasy. I will last plow on the possibility of escaping from the endless struggles. In the last part of the thesis, I will focus on O'Connor's idea of salvation and Žižekian traversing of the fantasy to discuss the possibility for Christians to exculpate from the endless struggles of enjoyment and guilt. The idea of submission to God's will in salvation and confrontation with the death drive in traversing of the fantasy illuminate that a way out of the vicious cycle is through the subject's symbolic death. O'Connor's grotesque vision provides a different perspective on evil in Christianity. It is the demonic that supports the religion and it is in the distorted that we receive grace.

Chapter One: The Grotesque in Context

The chapter will firstly explore the characteristics of the grotesque by looking at John Ruskin's *Stones of Venice*, Wolfgang Kayser's *The Grotesque in Art and Literature* and Mikhail Bakhtin's *Rabelais and His World*. The critics agree that the grotesque results from incongruity, ambiguity, the incomprehensibility and the ambivalence. An incomprehensible element in the combination of the incongruous elements generates the grotesque which arouses the spectators' ambivalent responses. The chapter will then discuss the grotesque in Flannery O'Connor's Christian vision by taking examples from "Revelation," "Parker's Back" and "A Good Man is Hard to Find." The characters' distorted body and violent incidents initiated by evil-seeming characters are grotesque because they deploy the ambiguity of good and evil. Christ manifests in deformity and violence. Through the blurred boundary between good and evil, O'Connor depicts a grotesque Christian vision to challenge what we considered as evil—human body parts and violence that threaten human existence—and to present evil as part of Christian mystery.

The word grotesque derives from the Italian word *grotto*, which denotes a kind of painting style found in the chambers of Roman buildings in Domus Aurea of Nero. Humans, animals and vegetable elements are combined and interwoven in the paintings, which are considered as controversial for their break from the classical art. The Roman writer Marcus Vitruvius Pollio is outraged at this kind of painting. He sees it as "the willful disregard of the principle of mimesis or realistic reproduction of the familiar world" and as "the transgression against the laws of nature and proportion" (Thomson 12). Controversial as it is, the grotesque style takes off. William Yates points out in *The Grotesque in Art and Literature* that the first documented use of the word grotesque occurred in the contract in 1502 when the artist

Pinturicchio was commissioned to paint for the cathedral. Artists such as Raphael Ghirlandaio, Giovanni da Udine and Michelangelo were attracted by the style of the grotesque and integrated the style in their paintings of secular and religious arts (Adams 7). The use of the grotesque extended to the non-artistic works and literature in England in the eighteenth century. Since then, writers and critics, such as John Ruskin, Wolfgang Kayser and Mikhail Bakhtin, have made the grotesque “a subject of major critical attention” and explored its “philosophical, social, and aesthetic significance” (Adams 1). Most critics agree that abnormality, ambiguity, the incomprehensible elements beyond the consciousness and the contradictory responses are the distinguishing characteristics of the grotesque. In the following, based on Ruskin, Kayser, Bakhtin and other critics, I would like to propose that ambiguity, among all the other characteristics, is the most fundamental in the grotesque. Ambiguity takes the forms of the abnormal and haunts us with an incomprehensible force that arouses ambivalent responses.

From Abnormity to Ambiguity

Since the excavation of the grotesque paintings in Domus Aurea of Nero, abnormality, which appears as the combination of the incompatible elements, has been one of the characteristics of the grotesque. The mixture of the incongruities is important in the idea of the grotesque because it points out the effacement of the boundaries between the categories we are familiar with. We are, therefore, exposed to ambiguity. Philip John Thomson states that the most distinguished characteristic of the grotesque “has been the fundamental element of disharmony, whether this is referred to as conflict, clash, mixture of the heterogeneous, or conflation of disparates” (20). The fusion of the disharmonious elements is seen as abnormal and distorted. John Ruskin discusses the fusion of the incompatible in *Stones of Venice*. In

“Grotesque Renaissance,” he thinks the heterogeneous elements as the “deformed and monstrous sculpture” (112). The artists’ fear of sin and death makes them inevitably leave “strange horrors and phantoms” among the beautiful leaves and flowers, such as the “grisly beasts and venomous serpents, and spectral fiends and nameless inconsistencies of ghastly life. . .” (142). Disharmony between beauty and horror distorts the sculptures in Venetian architecture. Wolfgang Kayser also defines the grotesque as images that embody “distortions, exaggeration, a fusion of incompatible parts that it confronts us as strange and disordered. . .” (2). He extracts the grotesque elements in German literature from the sixteenth to the twentieth century. Whether it is a jungle “with its ominous vitality, in which nature itself seems to have erased the difference between plants and animals,” or mechanical objects which run like “monstrous animals,” or human beings that have been reduced to “puppets, marionettes, and automata. . .” (183), the cohesion of different components contributes to the abnormality in the grotesque literature. Aside from the incompatible elements Ruskin and Kayser mentions, Mikhail Bakhtin demonstrates ambiguity in the grotesque. He discusses the grotesque descriptions of human body in Middle Ages. Bakhtin suggests that the distorted corporeality results from the elimination of the confinement between the body and the world and between separated bodies. The body “swallows the world and is itself swallowed by the world.” Eating, drinking, defecation, and “copulation, pregnancy, dismemberment” are emphasized by Bakhtin, because these events are performed on the borderline of the body and the outer world. The boundaries between separated bodies are also overcome. The grotesque body is “in the act of becoming” (317). It is “continually built, created, and builds and creates another body”(317). Among all the organs, the bowels and the phallus best represent the idea of transgression of its own body. They can “detach themselves from the body

and lead an independent life, for they hide the rest of the body, as something secondary” (317). Excrescences, orifices, bowels and phalluses are grotesque because the boundaries of different bodies and the world are crumbled. Here, we see Bakhtin explicates ambiguity in the grotesque. The effacement of the boundaries leads to ambiguity, which is considered as grotesque.

Susan Stewart defines ambiguity as something “which cannot be defined in terms of any given category” and “which belongs to more than one domain at a time” (Harpham 4). The blurred boundaries between the bodies and the world proposed by Bakhtin are grotesque because the body parts can’t be defined by any given category. Bakhtin further elaborates the ambiguity of the grotesque body:

Degradation here means coming down to earth, the contact with earth as an element that swallows up and gives birth at the same time. To degrade is to bury, to sow, and to kill simultaneously, in order to bring forth something more and better. To degrade also means to concern oneself with the lower stratum of the body, the life of the belly and the reproductive organs. . . . Degradation digs a bodily grave for a new birth; it has not only a destructive, negative aspect, but also a regenerating one.

(21)

Bakhtin claims deterioration as “the fundamental artistic principle of grotesque realism,” (370) because the world is “destroyed so that it may be regenerated and renewed. While dying it gives birth” (48). Death is not the opposite of life. Death is always “related to birth, the grave is related to the earth’s life-giving womb. . . . Death is included in life, and together with birth determines its eternal movement” (50). Death and destruction are parts of life and reproduction. Ruskin and Kayser think the mixture of the incongruity as grotesque and Bakhtin focuses on ambiguity in the

grotesque.

The Incomprehensible

Incongruity and ambiguity reveal that the fundamental characteristic of the grotesque lies in an incomprehensible element. There is something *more* to the grotesque than the fusion of the incompatible and the effacement of the boundaries. An incomprehensible element contributes to the grotesque. Artists, writers and critics alike believe that there is an incomprehensible power, which is beyond humans' rational understanding and control, in a distorted face, an evil-looking lizard or mutilated bodies.

Geoffrey Galt Harpham suggests that the incomprehensible in the grotesque as a series of "non-things." He says that a child develops discriminatory grids with which he categorizes things in the world. However, "the grid fails to account for or identify a certain segment of reality, which therefore appears as a series of 'non-things'" (4). The "non-things" are suppressed in the "interstices of the consciousness" and take the forms of "incarnate deities, virgin mothers, supernatural monsters that are half-man and half-beast" (4). Harpham thinks the incomprehensible indicates something that is suppressed from consciousness and embodies the grotesque. In *Literature and the Grotesque*, Michael J. Meyer also attributes the inexplicable to the realm beyond consciousness. He agrees with Laura Quinney that the inexplicable represent "shadowy remnants of consciousness, wavering presence that become uncanny because their residualized subjectivity appears as otherness". The incomprehensible exist as "an excess consciousness which cannot be absorbed by the rational categorizing ego" (i). In addition to Harpham and Meyer, Ruskin and Kayser also discuss the incomprehensible in the grotesque. The inexplicable force eludes humans' control and understanding. In "Grotesque Renaissance," Ruskin

mentions an overwhelming power that is beyond understanding. He states that the fear of sin and death possesses and dominates the artists:

He cannot forget it [the presence of sin and death], among all that he sees of beautiful in nature. . . . He sees more in the earth than these—misery and wrath, and discordance, and danger. . . . this he sees with too deep feeling ever to forget. And though when he returns to his idle work,—it may be to gild the letters upon the page, or to carve the timbers of the chamber, or the stones of the pinnacle,—he cannot give his strength of thought any more to the woe or to the danger, there is a shadow of them still present with him. . . . (142)

Fear of sin and death is too overwhelming for the artists to give any thought. The fear possesses him as a shadow and makes him complete the grotesque artworks. Fear, which contributes to the grotesque sculpture, explicates that the incomprehensible element exists beyond consciousness.

Kayser also attributes the incomprehensible to something beyond human understanding. There is a “ghostly ‘It’” (Kayser 185) in the grotesque and anything that is abnormal, including the nocturnal animals, the flourishing plants, the monstrous machine, and the estranged world, can be bowled down to the ghostly and incomprehensible “It” (Clayborough 65). Kayser understands the ghostly “It” as autonomy possessed by the inanimate. Arthur Clayborough brings psychoanalysis into view and proposes the force as “id,” which belongs to unconsciousness. The incomprehensible, which contributes to the grotesque in the mixture of incongruity and ambiguity, opens up the realm of unconsciousness.

Ambivalent Responses

The inexplicable arouse the spectators’ ambivalent responses. Thomson affirms

the unresolved clash of responses. He gives us an example of a man making a grimace to a child. The child laughs “at the face pulled only up to a certain point. . . once this point is passed, once the face becomes so distorted that the child feels threatened, it cries in fear” (25). Thomson emphasizes the point when the comic collides with the terrifying and suggests ambivalent responses as a distinguishing feature of the grotesque. The critics focus on the comic side of the grotesque and offer explanations of the mechanism in laughing. Thomson offers a Freudian point of view on the humor of the grotesque. Laughing functions as a defense against “emotional shock or distress” (53). A person laughs because he attempts to laugh off “something which distresses him extremely” (54). Kayser also discusses the laughing in the grotesque. Humor comes as “a scornful, cynical variety” (Clayborough 66). The exaggeration of “the inappropriate to incredible and monstrous dimension” (Bakhtin 306) excites laughter because we “see the truly existing monastic corruption and depravity as symbolized in the hyperbolic image...we feel a moral satisfaction, since sharp criticism and mockery have dealt a blow to these vices” (305-06). In Kayser’s interpretation, laughter becomes a scornful criticism to the grotesque. Michael Steig points out the ambiguity of the laugher in “Defining the Grotesque: An Attempt at Synthesis:”

(a) When the infantile material is primarily threatening, comic techniques, including caricature, diminish the threat through degradation or ridicule; but at the same time, they may also enhance anxiety through their aggressive implications and through the strangeness they lend to the threatening figure. (Thomson 259)

In short, Steig thinks that the comic aroused by the grotesque diminishes the threat while at the same time intensifies the anxiety to the menace. The more we laugh, the

more terrified we are. Thomson, Kayser and Steig affirm the ambivalent responses aroused by the grotesque and explain the laughter at the sight of horror. They agree that the comic functions in defending against the terrifying or to criticize the absurdity.

In short, the grotesque derives from an incomprehensible element which makes an object abnormal and arouses spectators' and readers' ambivalent responses. O'Connor's *Wise blood* is full of the abnormality. The combination of the animate/inanimate, human/animal and distortion/divinity creates inharmoniousness that disturbs readers. A machine-like man, who helps Haze with his car, does nothing to the car but keeps repeating "Nothing" (O'Connor, *WB* 126). Enoch considers himself superior to the animals but his wise blood causes his tongue to edge out every few minutes, a behavior resembles that of a dog (129-30). A mummy, which is an exhibition in a museum, turns out to be a new Jesus in Haze's Church Without Christ. Moreover, the characters are obsessed with some form of abnormality. Enoch is attracted to the mummy and pay homage to it through a set of rituals. Asa Hawks, the blind priest, relies on a deformed kind of Christianity, in which he begs and cheats through preaching. Haze, in the end of the novel, indulges himself in severe physical punishment to satisfy Jesus. Abnormality is often considered as demonic and O'Connor's Christian vision is described as evil. However, the thesis proposes to focus on the incomprehensible in the grotesque. In this case, there is an inexplicable element in abnormality, which challenges the boundary between good and evil. The obsessive practices may lead to salvation. O'Connor has a penchant for describing physical distortions and violent incidents. The following section demonstrates the blurred boundary between good and evil through the display of Christ's embodiment in distortions and violence.

The Grotesque in Flannery O'Connor's Christian Vision

Flannery O'Connor thinks of her writings as influenced by Southern literature and Catholic churches (O'Connor, *MM* 196). She finds violence, demonic characters and distorted world in Southern literature effective in portraying her Christian vision. A Christ-haunted figure's obsession with throwing the world off balance, a faithful Christian's shock at the perverse nature of humanity and an atheist's baptism through violence make the contemporary Christian readers uncomfortable. However, Christian mystery is revealed in the aforementioned abnormality. O'Connor's grotesque vision thus resides in the blurred boundary between good and evil. The following section first deploys the influence of the Southern grotesque in O'Connor's Catholic vision and elaborates the grotesque as the ambiguity between good and evil. Then, examples of distortions and violence in some of O'Connor's stories are extracted to illustrate that Christian mystery is embodied in the abnormality.

The grotesque in O'Connor's Christian vision is influenced by southern literature. O'Connor believes that the south provides the Catholic novelists with experiences that best describe human conditions and divine reality. Although the Catholic novelists find violence, the grotesque and religious enthusiasm in the southern literature incompatible to Catholic perspectives, they find "what has been lost to the life" and "the terrible loss . . . in the Church of human faith and passion" in the grotesque Southern literature (*MM* 206-07). Affinity between the Catholic and the south results to a perverse kind of fictions, which give "us no picture of Catholic life, or the religious experiences that are usual with us" (207). J. F. Power is a Catholic novelist in favor of the grotesque. The Catholics he writes:

are vulgar, ignorant, greedy, and fearfully drab, and all these qualities have an unmistakable Catholic social flavor. Mr. Powers doesn't write

about such Catholics because he wants to embarrass the Church; he writes about them because, by the grace of God, he can't write about any other kind. (173)

Mr. Powers thinks perversity as the essence of God. O'Connor explains that Catholic novels are not necessarily "about a Christianized or Catholicized world" (173), but about the Christian truth which is best revealed by the perversity in southern literature. To O'Connor, the grotesque can best illuminate the mystery in Christianity.

Therefore, in O'Connor's stories, there is an intense encounter with mystery. She gives us a whole gallery of characters "who take up ugliness and perversity as their banners of rebellion, who refuse to be normalized out of sheer contempt for normality" (Elroy 140). The distorted characters are "forced out to meet evil and grace," an extreme situation in which the characters can only "act on a trust beyond themselves," and are led to violence and death (O'Connor, *MM* 42). An abnormal character's intense confrontation with Christian mystery reveals the blurred boundary between good and evil. Holiness resides in deformity and violence. Besides violent encounter with mystery, salvation in O'Connor's Christianity also demonstrates the ambiguity of good and evil. O'Connor suggests the demonic is necessary in salvation. She thinks our salvation is "brought about by Christ's death and by our slow participation in it" (148). Slow participation refers to the struggle with evil. She thinks people nowadays forget the cost of redemption. Their "sense of evil is diluted or lacking altogether" and they have forgotten "the price of restoration" (48). Here, O'Connor suggests evil as necessary in salvation. Our exposure to and awareness of evil prepare us for the ultimate good. She discredits those who only believe in good and hope in redemption (179). Good is meaningless without evil. Therefore, serious Catholic novelists are preoccupied with the seedy, evil and violent (178). Muller

points out that the demonic is at the heart of Christianity in O'Connor's works. There "are no saints in O'Connor fiction, but here is an incredible legion of sinners, because in her stories the Catholic universe of evil is presented" (101). Nevertheless, in "the conditions of disorder and damnation, spawned by the grotesque" (100) grace is revealed. From violent encounters with mystery to salvation through the demonic, we see that evil is necessary in the illumination of good.

O'Connor has a penchant for deformed corporeality and violent incidents. Most people consider deformity and violence as evil while O'Connor depicts Christ's presence in abnormality. Mrs. Turpin in "Revelation," the grandmother in "A Good Man is Hard to Find" and Hulga in "Good Country People" are ignorant to Christian mystery because they eschew evil in Christianity. Through physical distortions and violence, they realize the inevitability of evil. O'Connor has a strong insistence on humans' corporeality, especially the wounded ones. Donald E. Hardy points out the various maimed bodies in O'Connor's stories: "Hulga Hopewell's missing legs, Claud Turpin's ulcerous leg, Rayber's deafness, Tom T. Shiftlet's missing arm, General Sash's infirmity, Mrs. McIntyre's general declining health, including vision and voice, Julian's mother's high blood pressure and weight problem, Asbury Fox's fever" (4). O'Connor's preference for physicality challenges modern Protestantism and Gnostic strain in Catholicism, which separate spirit from the flesh, grace from nature. Protestantism, she mentions, approaches "the spiritual directly instead of through matter" (O'Connor, *HB* 304). The Gnostic excludes matter from spirit as well. "To them all material things were evil. They sought pure spirit and tried to approach the infinite directly without any mediation of matter. This is also pretty much the modern spirit. . ." (O'Connor, *MM* 68). O'Connor thinks that matter, far from evil, is as important as spirit. Christina Bieber Lake suggests that bodies "in O'Connor stories

serve always to remind characters and readers of what the Incarnation validates—the inescapable reality of human embodiment” (9). God manifests Himself in our bodies. Therefore, O’Connor’s descriptions of physicality are more complicated than her contempt and loathing for human bodies or her celebration of evil (Di Renzo 65). Corporeality is an important mediator for O’Connor’s theological imagination. The ugly body parts embody spiritual afflictions and Christ manifests His presence in the body parts.

Mrs. Turpin in “Revelation” and Parker in “Parker’s Back” exhibit “corporeality as the aperture through which one enters into mystery, especially the mystery of divine judgment” (Slattery 181). Mrs. Turpin’s blindness lies in her denial of the matter of the world. Slattery points out in “Wounds and Tattoos” that if “a soul that has lost touch with the soiled and sullied qualities of the world’s imperfection and often unpredictable unfolding,” (179) one becomes “victim of a diseased vision distinct from matter” (181) and is excluded from divine presence. Mrs. Turpin disavows animality, wounds and any other imperfections in the world. The pigs are raised in the antiseptic and sterile pig-parlor, where their “feet never touch the ground” (O’Connor, *Completed Stories* 493). When she sees Mary Grace’s face blue with acne, Mrs. Turpin feels sorry for the girl because she is forty-seven years old, and “there was not a wrinkle in her face. . .” (490). The clean habitation of the pigs and Mrs. Turpin’s pride in the unblemished body mirror her perfect and pure vision for the Christian world. Her diseased vision begins to shatter when her head is struck by Mary Grace. A greenish-blue protuberance is left on the forehead and the neck, which the girl chocks tightly, is indented with two “little moon-shaped lines like pink fish bones” (501). Dennis Patrick Slattery claims that the wound inaugurates Mrs. Turpin’s realization of her blindness, which prepares her to the moment of grace later.

The animality she denies, ironically, is the sight where grace embodies. It is in the pig pen, where the shoats are “running about shaking themselves like idiot children,” (506) that Mrs. Turpin has a vision of a procession of Christians, she and her husband in the end, rumbling toward heaven. It is through the pigs that she gazes at the “very heart of mystery” (508). Slattery suggests that “Revelation” is about “lifting the veil of blindness so that through the presence of mystery itself one glimpses the invisible presence of the sacred in ordinary life” (177). The ordinary life refers to the imperfections Mrs. Turpin eschews. The disgusting wound designates Mrs. Turpin’s spiritual blindness and from the wound, the process to grace is inaugurated. Parker in “Parker’s Back” ignores calling from God and rejects Christianity. His obsession with tattooing reflects his sense of loss and disorientation. He has “a tiger and a panther on each shoulder, a cobra coiled about a torch on his chest, hawks on his thighs, Elizabeth II and Philip over where his stomach and liver were respectively.” Colorful as the tattoos are, Parker is dissatisfied and is eager to have another space filled up. It is when he has the image of Christ engraved that his dissatisfaction and disorientation wears off. Slattery states that “the image of Christ is tattooed, like a magnificently colored wound, onto the back of Parker attests to the concrete and incarnational reality of Christ’s presence in the world” (194). Although ignorant and insensitive to Christian doctrines, Parker is the one who experiences God as spirit, not his wife, Sarah Ruth, who is preoccupied with sin and last judgment. As Slattery points out, Parker learns to focus his moral vision on “the visible creation in order to apprehend, if even for an instant, the invisible presence of the Creator” (195). The visible creation is the Christ tattoo, the colored wound. Parker’s back is “marked, identified, and pained by the presence of the sacred quality of being” (196). Through the colored wound, Parker accepts his identity as a Christian. In short, the wound on Mrs.

Turpin's head and the tattoo on Parker's back force the characters to confront the inevitability of evil and inaugurate their path to salvation.

Besides corporeality, violence contributes to O'Connor's grotesque Christine vision. The murder of the grandmother's family in "A Good Man is Hard to Find" and Hulga's grotesque encounter with the Bible salesman compel them to acknowledge the demonic in Christianity. O'Connor's stories are full of violent images. The burning eyes of Mary Grace when she scowls at Mrs. Turpin in "Revelation," Mrs. Freeman's "beady steel-pointed eyes" that pierce through Hulga's secretes in "Good Country people," small islands of graves that cut through peaceful landscape and lines of woods that gapes "like a dark open mouth" in "A Good Man is Hard to Find" give readers a chill of horror. Muller agrees with Frederick J. Hoffman that shock and disruption in violence makes a familiar world alienated. Human existence is based on routines and expected events. A sudden break challenges humans' sense of existence, involves shock and disruption and is considered as a violent separation from the familiar world. The demonic characters induce shock and disruption through their violent and pervasive behaviors. However, Christians are prepared to receive mystery through violence. The grandmother in "A Good Man is Hard to Find" considers herself as a good Christian. Browning Jr. states that the grandma is in her "habitual refusal to recognize that there is more to life than 'the bright side of things'" (Browning, *Flannery O'Connor* 55). When her family is kidnapped by Misfit, she keeps saying, "I know you're a good man. You don't look a bit like you have common blood. I know you must come from nice people!" (O'Connor, *Completed Stories* 127). Her pure vision clears before she is shot to death:

His voice seemed about to crack and the grandmother's head cleared for an instant. She saw the man's face twisted close to her own as if he were

going to cry and she murmured, “Why you’re one of my babies. You’re one of my own children!” She reached out and touched him on the shoulder. The Misfit sprang back as if a snake had bitten him and shot her three times through the chest. (132)

Grandma’s reaching hand and recognition of Misfit as her baby, as Browning Jr. explains, designates that she understands “briefly and dimly that she and The Misfit are bound together by the mystery of life and death, a mystery which, until this moment of extremity, she has been able to ignore” (57). The grandma, who half sits and half lies in a puddle of blood, receives the moment of grace. Manley Pointer, the Bible salesman in “Good Country People,” is also the demonic character who shatters Hulga’s ignorance. Although Hulga appears to be an atheist, the secret fact she hides is her desire to return to Eden before fall, to “be reborn into innocence, to shed the weight of consciousness and pain which life entails” (Browning, *Flannery O’Connor* 48). When Hulga and Pointer sit face to face in the barn, the real innocence of the boy touches the truth about her. Hulga feels as if she is reborn in Pointer and fantasizes running away with him and “every night he would take the leg off and every morning put it back on again” (O’Connor, *The Completed Stories* 289). Browning Jr. points out that Hulga’s sin resides in her denial of the “primary datum of the human situation—the fallen nature of man” (*Flannery O’Connor* 49). Therefore, when Pointer takes away her artificial leg, takes out whisky and cards with obscene pictures, Hulga is mesmerized with impotent outrage (O’Connor, *The Completed Stories* 289) and can only repeat, “aren’t you just good country people?” (290). It is with the pervasive encounter of the evil character that Hulga’s realization of the true reality is initiated. Humans are in the fallen states and the reality is penetrated with the demonic and the pervasive. From the grandmother’s acceptance of mystery after the murder

and Hulga's realization of human fallen states after confrontation with a demonic character, we see violence as necessary in salvation.

To conclude, O'Connor's grotesque Christian vision explicates the ambiguity of good and evil. In her short stories, distorted human body and violent incidents embody evil and lead the characters to Christian mystery. In *Wise Blood*, O'Connor depicts her grotesque vision through the characters' obsession with deformity and violence. Deformity and violence does not designate physical distortions nor murder, but points to a specific kind of enjoyment that violates Christian doctrines. Haze Motes spends his life disavowing Jesus by claiming that he is not sinful and is not indebted with Him. Asa Hawks and Hoover Shoats depend on Christianity to make money while Haze's father relies on the religion to have sensual delights. Enoch Emery indulges in perverse practices to pay tribute to Christianity. Christian mystery manifests in the characters' perverse enjoyment. We see from the brief description that the grotesque in Christian vision comes from the inevitability of evil in Christianity. Žižekian psychoanalysis offers a different perspective on the blurred boundary of good and evil. The grotesque will be analyzed in the lens of the intrusion of the real and Christians' perverse enjoyment will be elaborated as a defense against over-proximity to the real. Jesus will be proposed to assume the role of the superego imperative. Christians' self-penance and debt with Jesus will be illustrated as the function of fantasy to fulfill Jesus' desire. The following chapter will deploy the interpellation of Christianity through sin qua the master-signifier and point out that the Christians' evil-seeming obsession exposes the remnant of the real and supports the function of Christianity.

Chapter Two: “The Interpellation of Christianity”

The chapter starts with the proposition that the interpellation of Christianity in *Wise Blood* is initiated from sin qua the master-signifier. Christians are quilted through sin, which makes them believe that sin designates the original choice they make and that they need to pay for the choice. As a result, binary oppositions of clean and corruption in Haze’s world and Hoover’s and Enoch’s dependency on a mysterious force for transformation indicate that significance of their belief functions according to sin. The chapter further points out that sin quilts Christians with the idea of debt to Jesus. Grandfather’s sermons, Hawks’ preaching and Sabbath’s stories sew Christians to the religion with a haunting Jesus, who chases frantically for their debt. The end of the chapter suggests the surplus-X, remains of the real, as essential in the interpellation of Christianity. The surplus manifests in secretive enjoyment with which Christians identify. Haze’s father depends on Christianity to enjoy while Hawks and Hoover rely on the religion to make money. Enjoyment supports Christianity and Christians’ compulsive enjoyment stems from their avoidance of the lack in God and traumatic castration in Christianity. As the remnant of the real, the surplus results to the sense of ambiguity and leads to the ambiguity of good and evil in O’Connor’s grotesque vision.

The Interpellation of Christianity

Symbolic order starts from ideological quilting. Before the quilt, ideological field is composed of free-floating, non-bound and non-tied signifiers, “whose very identity is ‘open’, overdetermined by their articulation in a chain with other elements” (Žižek, *The Sublime Object* 87). Relations among ideological elements are not determined in advance and their significance is not fixed. The floating signifiers are structured to a unified field through *point de capiton*. They are suddenly halted, fixed

and totalized into a certain network of meaning. Take “communism” as an example. Quilting free signifiers, such as democracy, ecologism, peace movement, through “communism” means to confer “class struggle” to all the elements. Democracy, therefore, is defined as opposition to bourgeois democracy and ecologism is understood as natural destruction resulting from capitalism (*The Sublime Object* 87-88). Being totalized into a unified ideological field, the signifiers refer to and identify with the quilting point. The significance of the signifiers is determined in advance, in order to serve under an ideological field. Here, we see the arbitrary in the quilting of ideology. *Point de capiton* does not have “all the richness of meaning of the field it ‘quilts’” (95). Rather, it is a signifier without the signified and randomly totalizes a group of signifiers by imposing meanings on them. That is to say, only after the signifiers are quilted in an ideological field are they given meanings. Žižek talks about the retroactivity of meaning:

Lacan’s emphasis is precisely on this retroactive character of the effect of signification with respect to the signifier. . . the effect of meaning is always produced backwards, *après coup*. Signifiers which are still in a ‘floating’ state—whose signification is not yet fixed—follow one another. Then, at a certain point—precisely the point at which the intention pierces the signifier’s chain, traverses it—some signifier fixes retroactively the meaning of the chain, sews the meaning to the signifier, halts the sliding of the meaning. (101-02)

The connection between a signifier and its meaning is not immanent, but is constructed in a retroactive direction. Žižek points out the logic of transference in retroactivity. Transference “consists of the illusion that the meaning of a certain element (which was retroactively fixed by the intervention of the master-signifier)

was present in it from the very beginning as its immanent essence” (102). The illusion of something “which was already there from the beginning” (104) is necessary in the operation of the quilting.

An individual is also sewn into a signifying chain through the *point de capiton*. Before the quilt, an individual designates some “pre-symbolic, mythical entity,” which can’t be defined by the symbolic order. A certain master-signifier addresses a free-floating individual and by answering the call, an individual is turned into a subject, who recognizes and identifies himself with the master-signifier. The addressing point is referred to as the point of subjectivation. Based on the retroactivity of meaning, the identity of a subject is constructed after subjectivation; however, transference illusion makes a subject believe itself to be “the autonomous agent which is present from the very beginning as the origin of its acts: this imaginary self-experience is for the subject the way to misrecognize his radical dependence on the Big Other, on the symbolic order as his decentred cause” (104). In other words, the subject is manipulated by the signifying chain in a way that it does not realize that its significance is initiated by and depends on the symbolic order.

The meanings of each ideological element and the mandate the subject takes on are based on *the point de capiton*. In *Wise Blood*, “sin” functions as the *point de capiton* that totalizes ideological elements, such as impunity, corruption and enjoyment, to Christianity by imposing “debt to Jesus” on them. Consequently, Christian doctrines, from repentance, self-penance to redemption, center on how to deal with the debt. The characters are redeemed by Jesus from sin and are therefore in debt with Him. Prone to sinful delights, they repent and mortify to ask for Jesus’ forgiveness and to pay the debt off.

Most critics focus on Haze Mote’s spiritual journey from rejection of Jesus to

acceptance of Him. Linda Rohrer Paige points out that it is Haze's phallic desire, which is connected with sin and guilt, that drives him to Christian vision (326). Although she suggests that Christine vision is associated with sin, she does not show how sin, guilt and desire structure Christine vision. Instead, Paige emphasizes the vision as the essence of Christianity by demonstrating ignorant characters' capacity of perceiving religious vision: Leora's association of Haze's black hat with "Jesus-seeing hat" (328), Sabbath's comment of him being "Jesus' hog" (331) and Asa's accusation of "some preacher has left his mark" on Haze (329). The focus should be the fact that sin, guilt and desire are related to "sin" in the construction of Christine visions. Lewis A. Lesson discusses the theme of blindness versus vision in *Wise Blood*. Lesson deploys that O'Connor plays with the idea of physical sight and spiritual vision to illustrate defective spirituality (137). He points out several situations in which Hawks, Sabbath, Haze's double and mother's glasses remind Haze of his distorted vision. The protagonist's insistency of authentic vision intensifies the irony when he realizes his spiritual blindness in the end. As Paige, Lesson puts emphasis on Haze's spiritual journey to Christine vision. However, we should discuss how sin organizes sight, blindness, spiritual defectiveness and redemption into Christine doctrines.

Preston M. Browning mentions that *Wise Blood* is "organized around a nexus of opposites: sin/innocence; animality/spirituality; commitment to nothing/commitment to evil; the deity of the *coincidentia oppositorium*/the god of debased theism; spiritual sight/spiritual blindness" (Browning, *Flannery O'Connor* 25). These ideological elements are quilted through "sin" and their meanings are constructed according to the master-signifier, which leads to polarization in the end. Binary oppositions support the function of Christian ideology by constantly defining the idea of sin. Haze spends his

life eschewing sin, impunity, corruption and damnation. He divides the world in pairs to demonstrate his cleanness, pureness, incorruption and salvation. Before the army, Haze fends off evil through guarding the Christian disciplines; after the war, he disavows sin by breaking the doctrines. He believes that he can be immune to sin as long as he stays on the good side and proves the other side inexistent. Miles Orvell states in *Flannery O'Connor: An Introduction* that "Haze's spiritual career lies in the influence of his grandfather and his mother, both Tennessee backwoods believers, the variety of whose religious experience is intense and sin-ridden" (74). Haze's belief is nurtured by a demanding grandfather and a supervising Mother. Since little, Haze has learnt to judge the world based on his religious experiences at home. Mother, her belongs and Eastrod are quilted through sin qua the master-signifier and are defined retroactively as good to confront evil. Haze's mother follows Christian doctrines strictly, who wears "black all the time" and her dresses are "longer than other women's" (O'Connor, *Wise Blood* 62). She keeps an eye on Haze to ensure his conformity to disciplines. After Haze comes back from the SINSational tent, she beats him up for betrayal of Jesus. Mother's belongings, such as a pair of silver-rimmed spectacles and the chifforobe in the kitchen, turn into an emblem of good as well. When Haze is eighteen, he is called to the army. The war embodies "a trick to lead him into temptation." To bolster confidence "in his power to resist evil" (23), Haze brings a black Bible and a pair of his mother's spectacles. When invited to a whorehouse, he takes "his mother's glasses out of his pocket and put on" (24). Haze's hometown, Eastrod, also represents the force to combat evil. Eastrod is presented as a safe place "where he wanted to stay. . . with his two eyes open, and his hands always handling the familiar thing, his feet on the known track, and his tongue not too loose" (22). Open eyes, familiar things and known track are opposed to the dark woods and

dangerous water of sin. At home, Haze is certain of his footing while at places full of temptation, he may get drown in the water of sin before realizing (22). Therefore, he “meant to tell anyone in the army who invited him to sin that he was from Eastrod, Tennessee, and that he meant to get back there and stay back there, that he was going to be a preacher of the gospel and that he wasn’t going to have his soul dammed by the government or by any foreign place it sent him to” (23). Haze assumes that Eastrod can shield off evil temptations. After the war, Haze goes home, only to find Eastrod disserted. There must have been “twenty-five people in Eastrod then, three Motes. Now there were no more Motes, no more Ashfields, no more Blasengames, Feys, Jacksons...or Parrums. . .” (20-21). The fence around his home is fallen and weeds grow rampantly through porch floor. Besides the chifforobe which belongs to his mother, there is nothing left in the house. Disserted hometown indicates corrosion of evil. Haze makes his utmost efforts to defend good by tying the chifforobe on the floor and leaves a warning note. Haze’s binary oppositions become even more intense when he claims to be an atheist and announces a life without sin. His negations turn out to be an affirmation of what he attempts to negate. He deliberately approaches the source of sin to prove his disbelief. He spends nights with Mrs. Watts, a prostitute, and announces that he does not need Jesus because he has a woman (56). He plans to seduce the blind priest’s child to testify the nonexistence of sin (110). Nevertheless, commitment to sensual delights affirms his belief of sin and intensifies dualism of good and evil. The significance of Haze Mote’s world is quilted through sin qua the master-signifier and is defined according to sin, which leads to binary oppositions of good and evil.

Citizens in Taulkinham are also sewed to sin. When Christians are interpellated by sin, they have transferential illusion that sin is the original choice they chose over

good and their dependency on Jesus' salvation is the price they need to pay for the wrong choice. Although the citizens do not admit original sin and dependency on Jesus' salvation, their expectations of transformation indicate hope of being redeemed. Hoover Shoats, the artist-type preacher, emphasizes the sweetness in Christianity. He advocates that everyone is born sweet and full of love, but as we grow up, all the sweetness is pushed inside. The new "jesus" he proclaims is to bring the "sweet nature into the open where everybody could enjoy it" (151). He testifies the transformation this new "jesus" gives him. Two months ago, he does not have a friend in such a miserable condition that he plans to hang himself. It is not until being enlightened by the new "jesus" that he knows how to "make the natural sweetness inside" show (150). Citizens expect "jesus" to change them to a likable person. Natural sweetness is quilted through sin and is defined according to the master-signifier as good. Bringing the sweetness out is constructed as Jesus' salvation. The lives of the citizens are manipulated by sin. Enoch Emery also anticipates a life-changing experience. He believes that a mummy in the city museum possesses a mysterious power. There is something the typewritten card couldn't say about the mummy. The unnamable *something* embodies "a terrible knowledge without any words to it, a terrible knowledge like a big nerve growing inside him" (81). When he approaches the museum, where the dark secret lies, pronouncing the word "Muvseevum" (96) gives him such a shiver that he dares not to say the word again. Enoch, nevertheless, believes that something is going to happen after showing the mummy to Haze. "What was going to happen to him had started to happen when he showed what was in the glass case to Haze Motes. That was a mystery beyond his understanding, but he knew that what was going to be expected of him was something awful" (129). The mystery beyond words and understanding, Enoch believes, is to

give him the supreme moment after his service to it. Therefore, he steals the mummy and brings it to Haze as a new Jesus for Church Without Christ. He wants to be rewarded, to “become something,” to “better his condition until it was the best,” to “be THE young man of the future, like the ones in the insurance ads,” and “to see a line of people waiting to shake his hand” (191). Here, the significance of the supreme moment is constructed retroactively as salvation from sin. Enoch’s anticipation of reward after service to the unknown power demonstrates the archetype of salvation: one sacrifices to be redeemed. Hoover’s and Enoch’s anticipation of transformation indicate that they are interpellated by sin and their symbolic mandate is solidified through expectations to be saved.

Sin qua the master-signifier quilts ideological elements with Christians’ debt to Jesus. Haze’s dualism and citizens’ expectations to be saved indicate their grapple with the debt. From grandfather’s and Asa Hawks’ sermons and Sabbath’s stories, we see that “sin” manipulates Christians through the imposition of debt to Jesus. Haze’s grandfather evokes Christians’ sense of guilt to intensify eternal debt. He reminds them how Jesus suffers to save them and they are guilty for the ignorance of Jesus’ suffering:

They were like stones! He would shout. But Jesus had died to redeem them! Jesus was so soul-hungry that He had died, one death for all, but He would have died every soul’s death for one! Did they understand that? Did they understand that for each stone soul, He would have died ten million deaths, had His arms and legs stretched on the cross and nailed ten million times for one of them. . . .?(21-22)

For a corrupted soul, Jesus has to die millions of times. Physically painful as Jesus is, Christians are ignorant of their hellish conditions. The sense of guilt makes Christians

realize how much they have owed for being redeemed. Once an individual is interpellated into Christianity, sin qua the master-signifier manipulates him with debt to Jesus and confines him to the signifying chain with the sense of guilt.

“Debt to Jesus” is also intensified by Christ’s severe commands to pay the debt off, which is embodied in the priests’ preaching. George Alexander Kennedy affirms a watching other in sermons. He proposes to interpret the Bible through rhetorical criticism. The essence of the rhetoric in the Bible is oratorical. “We have to keep in mind that the Bible in early Christian time was more often heard when read aloud to a group than read privately (5). The priests’ primary mission is to make the crowds accept Christianity in an instant. Therefore, at the heart of rhetoric religion lies “authoritative proclamation, not rational persuasion” (6). Proclamation involves absolute demand, “deliberate rejection of worldly reason, sometimes paradoxes or even obscurity” (6). Authoritative demands in Grandfather’s and Hawks’ preaching denote fiery commands from Christ. Grandfather’s interrogations, such as “Do you doubt that Jesus will chase you over the waters of sin” or “Do you understand Jesus has died to save you,” expose Jesus’ blames of Christians’ ignorance of their debt. Exclamations, such as “You are like stones” and “Jesus dies to save you,” imply Christ’s reproaches of Christians’ obliviousness of their sin. Hawks’ fiery sermons also denote Jesus’ fiery commands to pay off the debt. The blind priest reaches out his hand suddenly, clamps Haze around the arm, and says in a fast whisper, “Repent! Go to the head of the stairs and renounce your sins and distribute these tracts to the people!” and he thrust a stack of pamphlets into Haze’s hand”. The preacher’s imperative “Repent!” indicates demands from the watching Jesus. Hawks’ fast and repetitive whisper, “Jesus loves you, Jesus loves you. . . ,” (O’Connor, *Wise Blood* 53) functions as a constant reminder of the debt to Jesus. The priest’s gripping hand

and Haze's failure to lose himself accord with the fact of haunting Jesus from which Christians can't run away. Here, we see that Christians' symbolic mandate is intensified by Jesus' severe demands of the unpaid debt.

Severe demands make Jesus become a violently haunting figure. Sabbath, Hawks' daughter, associates "sin" with haunting Jesus, who comes back for the damned soul. In one of her stories, a sinful couple sends their baby away because it is ugly. "She sent the child away and it come back and she sent it away again and it come back again and ever' time she sent it away, it come back to where her and this man was living in sin'" (52). The baby illuminates the couple's fallen states. Without realizing their sin, they strangle the baby and hang it up in the chimney. Ever since then, the baby has left the woman uneasy. "Everything she looked at was that child. Jesus made it beautiful to haunt her. She couldn't lie with that man without she saw it, staring through the chimney at her, shinning through the brick in the middle of the night" (52). Jesus tracks down each corrupted soul to show their sin. In another story, an evil grandmother is haunted. When the child is around her house, she gets "all itching and swoll. Even her eyes would itch her and swell up and there wasn't nothing she could do but run up and down the road, shaking her hands and cursing and it was twicet as bad when this child was there. . ." (122). Itching and swelling indicates the grandmother's hellish states and the presence of the child is meant to make her see the fact. However, she runs away from the child and in the end, breaks her neck in a well. In these stories, Jesus chases frantically after the sinful souls. At the point of subjectivation, an individual is quilted as a Christian through sin qua the master-signifier. He is thus imposed on debt to Jesus and the mandate is intensified through the sense of guilt and Jesus as a haunting figure who reminds him of the debt.

Repentance and self penance are totalized by sin to deal with the debt.

Christians repent and punish themselves to pay for sinful enjoyment, in the hope of Jesus' forgiveness and the elimination of debt. Asceticism has been a main discussion in O'Connor's sacramental arts. Divine reality is revealed in scourging, self-punishments and penance. In the discussion of Haze Motes' self-mortification in *Wise Blood*, Overll agrees with Raymond that divinity reveals through asceticism:

What emerges most profoundly is that all the saint's actions were conformed to a Reality of which the ordinary man is not aware. If the reader can once realize the strength and power of Catherine's vision, the scourgings and other self-punishments become understandable.

Conversely, it is only from these penances that the vision can be surmised and vouched for (22).

The vision refers to the divine. Christians expect that self punishments will lead to divinity, in which their sin is forgiven by Jesus. Here, physical punishment demonstrates Christians' acknowledgment of sinful deeds in order to ask for Jesus' forgiveness. Suffering is meant to satisfy Jesus. Repentance and self punishment keep occurring in *Wise Blood*. Hawks emphasizes repentance. He believes that salvation comes from repentance (O'Connor, *WB* 112). Haze practices physical punishment. After Haze sees a performance from a naked woman in the tent, there is such a strong sense of guilt that he feels an urgent need to pay for what he has committed:

The next day he took his shoes in secret out into the woods. . . .He took them out of the box and filled the bottoms of them with stones and small rocks and then he put them on. He laced them up tight and walked in them through the woods for what he know to be a mile until he came to a creek, and then he sat down and took them off and eased his feet in the wet sand. He thought, that ought to satisfy Him. (63-64)

Haze's sense of guilt results from his ignorance of debt to Jesus and physical mortification is meant to satisfy Jesus, in order to pay the debt off. We see that repentance and physical punishment grapple with Christians' debt to Jesus. However, we perceive a paradox. Repentance and punishment demonstrate Christians' acknowledgement of sin and their begging for Jesus' forgiveness; in other words, to satisfy Jesus, Christians need to commit sin, in order to repent and be punished for evil deeds. Christians' hope of the elimination of debt through repentance and punishment will never be fulfilled because practicing the rituals indicates devotion to sin.

The Unattainable Surplus in Christianity

Slips-off in repentance and penance exposes the unattainable surplus, which is unable to be symbolized in Christianity. The operation of the quilting is based on the inexplicable surplus because it is what the signifiers identify with when quilted by the master-signifier. Žižek mentions that the master-signifier represents a signifier without the signified, which maintains "its identity through all variations of its signified" (Žižek, *The Sublime Object* 100). The *point de capiton* is empty and its significance is held by the ideological elements that have been totalized into a network of meaning. The empty master-signifier, arbitrary totalization and a nonsensical network of meanings are "error of perspective," or *ideological anamorphosis*. The master-signifier embodies the immanent lack in the symbolic order. The lack makes the movement of symbolization work. However, a certain ideological field may suddenly be denatured when we discover the master-signifier as empty and the network of signifiers as meaningless. To illustrate *ideological anamorphosis*, Žižek points out an eccentric point, which denatures the whole picture in Holbein's "Ambassadors." If we

look at what appears from the frontal view as an extended, ‘erected’ meaningless spot, from the right perspective we notice the contours of a skull. The criticism of ideology must perform a somewhat homologous operation: if we look at the element which holds together the ideological edifice, at this ‘phallic’, erected Guarantee of Meaning. . . , we are able to recognize in it the embodiment of a lack, of a chasm of non-sense gaping in the midst of ideological meaning. (99-100)

Žižek thinks that we should analyze an ideological edifice through “error of perspective” and proposes to understand the *point de capiton* as a structural function. Take a “Jew” for an example. All “the phantasmic richness of the traits supposed to characterize Jews (avidity, the spirit of intrigue, and so on) is here to conceal not the fact that ‘Jews are really not like that’, not the empirical reality of Jews, but the fact that in the anti-Semitic construction of a ‘Jew’, we are concerned with a purely structural function” (99). In the light of *ideological anamorphosis*, the “Jew” is an empty signifier that is used to construct anti-Semitism and the network of signifiers appears meaningless.

Ideological anamorphosis leads us to see that the structural function of an ideology is based on the surplus-X. The master-signifier, as the embodiment of the lack in the symbolic order, targets at the surplus which cannot be seized by other signifiers in a given ideological field. In the case of the Jews, the “Jew,” the signifier, does not “connote a series of effective properties,” such as greedy and intriguing; rather, it refers to the unattainable X, to “what is ‘in Jew more than Jew’” (96-97). In other words, when we say that the Jews are greedy and intriguing *because they are Jews*, what we really aim at is the surplus that can not be grasped by “greedy” and “intriguing.” Also, the subject identifies with the surplus. Žižek deploys the quilting

of “American” to “Coke.” In the statement, “America, this is Coke,” Coke is the signifier with which the “vision of American achieves its identity” by identifying. What the Americans get from the quilting is something more in Coke than Coke itself. Here, we see that the operation of the quilting is based on the surplus. Therefore, intricate interaction between the symbolic order and the immanent lack in the manipulation of an ideology is revealed. An ideology proclaims itself as the truth not only through “a doctrine, a composite of ideas, beliefs, concepts,” but also through “ruptures, blanks and slips” (Žižek, *The Žižek Reader* 63). What really matters is not the content as such, but “the way this content is related to the subjective position implied by its own process of enunciation” (61). Once the relation of the subjective position to an ideological edifice is exposed, we realize that the truth of ideology is held up by a “perception of a lack or surplus (‘not enough of this’, ‘too much of that’)” which always “involves a symbolic universe” (65). In the case of *Wise Blood*, the preachers proclaim the fact of original sin, Jesus’ scarification and Christians’ debt to Him. What needs to be focused on is how the preachers’ enunciations are structured by the ruptures and lack in Christianity. Sin qua the master-signifier does not refer to impunity, corruption or enjoyment; it refers to *something more* than sin itself, and it is the inexplicable more that cooperates with Christine doctrines in the manipulation of the preachers, Christians and non-believers alike.

As mentioned above, Haze divides the world to stay clean. However, the unattainable surplus indicates the slips-off in dualism. The something more in “sin” and other signifiers embody dirty enjoyment that Christians enjoy privately. Haze’s father once takes him to a carnival in Melsy. After sending Haze to a tent where monkeys dance, father goes to an exclusive tent which is “SINsational” (O’Connor, *Wise Blood* 60). Haze manages to get inside and sees something white “lying,

squirming a little, in a box lined with black cloth.” It takes Haze a while to realize the white squirming thing is a naked woman. She is fat and has “a mole on the corner of her lip,” (62) which moves when she grins, and the other mole is on her side. Performance from the naked woman is sinful. The word, SINSational combines “sin” and “sensation,” and both reminds Christians of a watching Jesus, who guards for their purity. Nonetheless, the barker outside the tent uses “SINSational” to attract the crowds to sensual delights, which indicates the fact of secretive enjoyment in Christianity. The ambivalence of sin is revealed. The idea of sin restrains Christians from enjoying, but at the same time, provides filthy delights. However, enjoyment only exists under Christian doctrines. Christians can only enjoy secretly. The naked lady is hidden inside a tent and the barker refuses to tell what is inside. When Haze asks about the tent, the man only says “There ain’t no pop and there ain’t no monkeys” (61). It is not allowed to enunciate the pleasure publically. Besides Haze’s father, a sixteen-year old boy also enjoys secretly in the name of Christianity. He follows Haze’s sermons to find a company to a whorehouse. The boy says that going to whorehouse is “a mortal sin, and that should they die unrepentant of it they would suffer eternal punishment and never see God” (147). Nevertheless, he invites Haze again the next night. Repentance and self-penance ensure Christians to enjoy more than they want. The ambivalence in Christianity is thus exposed. Repentance and penance demonstrate prices to be paid for enjoying, but they also guarantee enjoyment without punishment from Jesus. From the examples above, we see that the unattainable surplus challenges the division between good and evil. The undergrowth of enjoyment becomes a support of Christianity. The males enjoy sensual performance to follow the Christian doctrines and the boy conforms to the doctrines to enjoy.

In this case, materialistic lifestyle in Taulkinham is not a subversion to

Christianity; instead, it bolsters the religion. Materialism demonstrates the unattainable surplus as a support of Christianity. We see the collaboration of Christianity and capitalism in the mode of exchange. Hawks, the blind priest, exchanges refusal to repentant with money. When the blind man preaches in a department store, he mutters, “Help a blind preacher. If you won’t repent, give up a nickel. I can use it as good as you. Help a blind unemployed preacher. Wouldn’t you rather have me beg than preach? Come on and give a nickel if you won’t repent” (40). There is an exchange of repentance and nickel. The connection is, however, illogical and meaningless. Through the illogical and meaningless connection, repentance exists in capitalism. In other words, the arbitrary exchange connects the nickel-giving and capitalism-oriented crowds to repentance.

The exchange of Christianity and materialism can also be perceived in Hoover Shoat’s sermons. Hoover Shoats is a businessman who tries to attract the crowds with his unordinary outfits:

The man was plumpish, and he had curly blond hair that was cut with showy sideburns. He wore a black suit with a silver stripe in it and a wide-brimmed white hat pushed onto the back of his head, and he had on tight-fitting black pointed hoes and no socks. He looked like an ex-preacher turned cowboy, or an ex-cowboy turned mortician. He was not handsome but under his smile, there was an honest look that fitted into his face like a set of false teeth. (147-48)

His outfit is showy and flamboyant, which makes him look like a cowboy and mortician. To Hoover, what’s important is to make profit out of Haze’s Church without Christ. He is proud of himself as an artist-type amateur, who knows how to keep a religion sweet by promoting (157). One of his strategies, like selling a product,

is to give certifications. He gives out three reasons that the crowds can “buy” the religion: there is nothing foreign to the new church; it is based on the Bible and it is up-to-date. Here, we see complicity between Christianity and capitalism in the modes of exchange. Religion can only be acceptable when it is promoted as “up-to-date.” The idea of being fashionable and innovative comes from consumption, which serve as an appeal to consumers. Hoover’s capitalism supports Christianity by way of promoting the religion to the citizens. Here, we see that the unattainable surplus in Christianity embodies materialistic lifestyle in Taulkinham and Christians’ identification with materialism keeps Christianity functioning.

Browning suggests the commercialized religion in the city Taulkinham. As he mentions in his critique on *Wise Blood* that:

Religion becomes indistinguishable from commercial enterprise (the fraudulent preacher Hawks. . . . and Shoats wants to turn Haze’s Church Without Christ into a dues-collecting association), and commercial enterprise becomes the telos of human existence. . . .On the street there are potato peelers for sale and Hawks and the salesman compete for the attention of prospective customers. (*Flannery O’Connor* 27)

He criticizes that the citizens’ working philosophy as “a debased form of Paul Tillich’s “god of theism,” in which “devotees are freed of annoying moral imperatives, having for the most part adopted the code” (34-35) of enjoyment from Haze’s landlady. The only positive effect resulted from the negative capitalism is to bring Haze “toward recognition of the falsity of his anti-Jesus gospel” (30). Browning Jr. overlooks the underground enjoyment in Christianity. Christian doctrines thrive in the working philosophy. Ignorance to moral imperatives sustains the consistency of Christianity.

To conclude, the quilting of Christianity is based on something more in sin qua the master-signifier. The surplus-X manifests in secretive enjoyment with which Christians identify. In this case, Haze's binary oppositions and Hoover's and Enoch's expectations of transformation are supported by secretive enjoyment. Haze's binary oppositions of clean and corruption reveals his attempt to eschew something *more* in sin; however, he realizes in the end that his disavowal indicates identification with the surplus-X. Hoover and Enoch believe in the inexplicable *more* in salvation. The pursuit of the *more* motivates Hoover's "sweet" preaching and Enoch's perverse tribute to the mysterious power. Also, the surplus-X provides an alternative reading of a haunting Jesus, who chases after Christians for something *more* in the debt. As mentioned in Chapter One, the grotesque vision in *Wise Blood* results from the fact that Christian mystery is revealed in the characters' obsession with deformity and violence. It is the surplus-X in deformity and violence that the characters are obsessed with. From the above mentioned, we see that the surplus as the foundation of Christianity is clearly revealed. The following chapter will elaborate the function of Christianity in relation to the surplus-X. By way of Žižekian psychoanalysis, the surplus in Christianity indicates the intrusion of the real and leads to the grotesque in Christianity. As the remnant of the real, the surplus blurs the boundary of the inside and the outside. That is to say, surplus enjoyment, which manifests in Jesus' commands to enjoy, stems from Christians' disavowal of the lack in God and their traumatic castration in Christianity. The ambiguity of the surplus leads to the sense of the grotesque. The grotesque will, therefore, be examined in the light of the uncanny. Following the intrusion of the real, the chapter will suggest that Jesus takes the role of the superego imperative who commands Christians to enjoy and illustrate that the characters' illicit enjoyment is structured by fantasy to cover the lack in Christianity.

Chapter Three “The Obscene Christianity and the Enjoying Jesus”

Chapter One mentions that the grotesque in O’Connor’s Christine vision resides in the blurred boundary of good and evil. According to Chapter Two, the surplus-X contributes to the ambiguity of the boundary. This chapter will firstly explicate that the surplus designates the intrusion of the real by discussing Freudian uncanny, Lacanian *extimate* and Žižekian *anamorphosis* and propose that the grotesque results from over-proximity to the real. Following the intrusion of the real, the chapter will then deploy that fantasy occurs when the symbolic order is penetrated by the real. The ambiguity of fantasy and the double will be addressed to illustrate anxiety aroused by the uncanny. In this light, the enjoying Jesus will be understood as the double of the punishing one in Christianity. Jesus thus takes the role of the superego imperative and quilts Christians with surplus enjoyment and guilt. The last part of the chapter will focus on Christians’ obsession with deformity and violence, which will be suggested as a specific kind of enjoyment commanded by Jesus to eschew the lack in Christianity. To deny the fact that there is a lack in God and that the imperfection of God reflects the lack in themselves, Haze and Enoch pay tribute to the enjoying Jesus through negations of Christian doctrines, compulsive pursuit of enjoyment, obsession with peeping and making obscene comments to the animals. From Haze’s and Enoch’s examples, we see that fantasy, which is structured around the lack, maintains the obsessive practices in Christianity.

The Uncanny

Sigmund Freud discusses the uncanny in Hoffmann’s “The Sand-Man.” Automata-like human beings, the fear of evil eyes and the loss of eyesight, the theme of the double and repetitive compulsion point out that the threat comes from the old and the familiar. The uncanny, suggested by Freud, designates the ambivalence of the

familiar and the unfamiliar. He gives an etymological survey on German words, *heimlich* and *unheimliche*. *Unheimliche* does not hold the opposite meaning of *heimlich*, but is directly implied by the word. The familiar, homely and intimate is at the same time something that is secretly concealed, “kept from sight...withheld from others” (Freud 3), and appears to be uncomfortable, “uneasy, gloomy, dismal, uncanny, ghastly; (of a house) haunted; (of a man) a repulsive fellow” (2). The division between the familiar and the unfamiliar is challenged. The familiar suddenly becomes threatening. Mladen Dolar associates the Freudian uncanny with the Lacanian *extimate*. The dimension of the *extimate* blurs the line of “essence/appearance, mind/body, subject/object, spirit/matter.” It points “neither to the interior nor to the exterior, but is located there where the most intimate interiority coincides with the exterior and becomes threatening, provoking horror and anxiety” (6). In a word, the *extimate* is simultaneously the most intimate and the foreign. The ambivalence of the interior and the exterior elicits the feeling of the uncanny. Dolar further suggests that the “very dimension beyond the division” indicates the intrusion of the real. She re-examines relationships among Nathaniel, Olympia, Father and Sand-man in Hoffman’s “The Sandman” in the light of the *jouissance*, *objet a* and the Name of the Father. Žižek also suggests the uncanny as the intrusion of the real and points out the radical change of libidinal economy when the subject is in the ambiguity of the real and the symbolic order. There is a “small supplementary feature, a detail that ‘does not belong,’ that sticks out, is ‘out of place,’ does not make any sense within the frame of idyllic scene” (Žižek, *Looking Awry* 88). The supplementary detail, also called the point of *anamorphosis*, remains a meaningless stain when viewed straightforwardly, but the point suddenly appears strange and denatures the whole scene. It is at this point that the subject is too close to the real of desire and

“hallucinations, suspicions, obsessions, feelings of guilt” are generated to confront with the real. “The more we find ourselves in ambiguity, not knowing where ‘reality’ ends and ‘hallucination’ (i.e., desire) begins, the more menacing this domain appears” (90). In short, at the point of *anamorphosis* when an ordinary scene denatures and everything suddenly turns to be frightening, the subject is exposed to total ambiguity of the real and reality and to the undergrowth of enjoyment.

The uncanny sheds a different light on the grotesque. Chapter One suggests the grotesque as the incongruity and the incomprehensible. The focus of the incompatible elements, such as the monstrous sculptures in Venetian architecture, the distorted corporeality in the Middle-Aged art works and the combination of the human and animal images in German literature, should be a supplementary detail that doesn’t belong to any given category and denatures what we consider as natural. It is the supplementary detail that makes something monstrous, distorted and abnormal. Also, the incomprehensible that leaves strange horror in Venetian architecture and the ghostly “It” (Kayser 185) that makes an element in German literature terrifying come from a supplementary detail that designates the ambiguity of the real and the reality. The subject’s exposure to ambiguity leads to ambivalent responses to the grotesque. As mentioned in Chapter One, the grotesque evokes unresolved clash of responses, such as the laughter and the horror. Analyzing from the perspective of the real, ambivalent responses are aroused by over-proximity to the real. Here, we see that there is something more to the grotesque than incongruity and the incomprehensible. The grotesque indicates intrusion of the real and uncovers the subject’s anxiety, obsession and horror to the remnant of the real.

Real, Fantasy and Symbolic Order

Žižek and Dolar elaborate the uncanny by way of the real. The uncanny

discloses the subject's over-proximity to the real and deploys the function of fantasy to cover the lack in the symbolic order. Symbolic order starts from the quilting point. When filtered by the master-signifier, a free-floating signifier is castrated from enjoyment. In other words, "the order of the signifier (the big Other) and that of enjoyment (the Thing as its embodiment) are radically heterogeneous, inconsistent" (Žižek, *The Sublime Ideology* 122). It is impossible to symbolize enjoyment and therefore, when pre-symbolic enjoyment penetrates the signifier's field, the symbolic becomes "inconsistent, porous, perforated" (122). The holes in the symbolic order elicit the subject's hysterical question, "Che Vuoi." The symbolic mandate assigned to the subject is arbitrary. Since the nature of the mandate is "performative, it cannot be accounted for by reference to the 'real' properties and capacities of the subjects" (113). The gap between the mandate and the subject's real property overwhelms him with the question of "Che Vuoi," "What do you want from me." The hysterical question indicates the gap of "the *object in subject* which resists...its inclusion in the symbolic network" (113). Here, the hysterical question is manipulated by fantasy to cover the lack in the symbolic order. Fantasy attempts to cover the lack in the Other by constructing the subject's desire. In a fantasy scenario, the desire is not "fulfilled, 'satisfied', but constructed. . . [and] *through fantasy, we learn 'how to desire'*" (118). When an ordinary object enters the frame of fantasy, it contains "some X, some unknown quality, something which is 'in it more than it' and makes it worthy of our desire" (119). However, it is also the something more in *objet a* that irritates, terrifies and commands the subject with the question of "Che Vuoi." Here, we see the ambivalence of *objet a*. An object is desirable in a fantasy scenario, but if the object is too close to the traumatic Thing, "the effect is extremely disturbing and disgusting: fantasy loses its fascinating power and changes into a nauseating object" (120). The

paradox of fantasy is thus revealed. Fantasy is “a construction enabling us to seek maternal substitutes, but at the same time a screen shielding us from getting too close to the maternal Thing” (119-20). As mentioned above, the uncanny designates the subject’s over-proximity to the real and the sense of disgust is aroused to protect him from getting too close. The uncanny leads to the discussion of the double. Žižek points out in “Why Does the Phallus Appear?” that the double appears as the mirror image which contains the *jouissance* (Žižek, *Enjoying your Symptom* 125, 126). The double looks exactly like me, but there is something more in him—the unfathomable and unnamable element—that makes a familiar object threatening. Žižek elaborates the relation between the self and the double with Lacanian “Scheme L” a-a’ (126). The apostrophe is the *objet a*, “the *unheimliches* surplus forever missing,”(126) and from which the mirror image becomes uncanny. Encountering one’s double is uncanny because the confrontation indicates over-proximity to the real.

The uncanny provides an alternative understanding to the grotesque in O’Connor’s *Wise Blood*. The novel is full of perverse and evil-seeming characters, who are obsessed with deformity and devote themselves to violent practices. Haze Motes spends his life disavowing Jesus by claiming that he is not sinful and is not indebted with Jesus. Asa Hawks and Hoover Shoats depend on Christianity to make money while Haze’s father relies on the religion to have sensual delights. Enoch Emery indulges in perverse practices to pay tribute to Christianity. The characters indulge in obscene practices to pay tribute to Jesus. As mentioned in Chapter One, O’Connor’s grotesque vision resides in the fact that Christian mystery is revealed through evil. The grotesque in the blurred boundary of good and evil can be examined in the light of intrusion of the real. There is an enjoying Jesus as the double of a punishing one in Christianity. The enjoying Jesus gives body to the *jouissance* and

confrontation with Him arouses anxiety because of the over-proximity to the real. The characters' indulgence in the "evil" practices is structured by fantasy as a defense against the real. The following section will discuss the enjoying Jesus as the superego imperative, who commands the subject to enjoy. Christians' obsession with deformity and violence will be elaborated as a specific enjoyment which is demanded by Jesus to diminish anxiety and to prevent Christians from getting too close to the real. The grotesque in O'Connor's Christian vision results from the enjoying Jesus, who takes the role of the double in Christianity, and Christians' illicit enjoyment, which supports the religion. The boundary between good and evil is blurred.

The Superego Imperative

The superego imperative commands the subject to enjoy. As mentioned above, the double contains the *jouissance* from which the subject has been castrated at the moment of the interpellation. The "excessive 'sprout of enjoyment'" (Žižek, *Enjoying Your Symptom* 125) materialized in the figure of the anal father who commands the subject to enjoy. Surplus enjoyment maintains the consistency of the symbolic order. We see the complicity of superego and the symbolic. Superego emerges at the point when symbolization fails (Žižek, *Žižek Reader* 54). At its point of failure, the symbolic searches for support in illicit enjoyment. A specific kind of enjoyment maintains the consistency of the symbolic order and consolidates communal identification. Žižek mentions in "Superego by Default" that what holds a community together is not "so much identification with the Law that regulates the community's 'normal' everyday circuit, but rather *identification with a specific form of transgression of the Law, of the Law's suspension* (in psychoanalytic terms, with a specific form of *enjoyment*)" (55). Illicit enjoyment bolsters the consolidation of a community. Also, Žižek mentions in "Che Vuoi" that the basis of our identification

can be “a certain failure, weakness, guilt of the other, so that by pointing out the failure we can unwittingly reinforce the identification” (Žižek, *The Sublime Ideology* 106). The subject is quilted by the failure of symbolization. The symbolic order is doomed to fail and the point of failure is supported by superego. The complicity of the symbolic and superego manipulates the subject’s symbolic identification.

When superego is elevated to the status of the law, it becomes the Father-*jouissance* and commands the subject to enjoy. The command to enjoy quilts the subject to the symbolic through guilt. Žižek agrees with Lacan that guilt comes from sacrifice of desire for pathological enjoyment. When the subject follows the superego imperative to enjoy, he renounces his desire. The more he submits himself to the superego imperative, the more he feels guilty. According to Lacan, this ‘feeling of guilt’ is not a self-deception to be dispelled in the course of the psychoanalytic cure—we really are guilty:

superego draws the energy of the pressure it exerts upon the subject from the fact that the subject was not faithful to his desire, that he gave it up. Our sacrificing to the superego, our paying tribute to it, only corroborates our guilt. For that reason our debt to the superego is unredeemable: the more we pay it off, the more we owe. Superego is like the extortioner slowly bleeding us to death—the more he gets, the stronger his hold on us. (Žižek, *The Metastases of Enjoyment* 67-68)

The subject is guilty because he submits to the Father-*jouissance* and gives up his desire. His sacrifice generates debt to superego and he tries to pay the debt off by enjoying more. In the end, he is in the vicious cycle of enjoyment and guilt. Superego imperative, therefore, is a semblance of the law. It emphasizes the subject’s symbolic mandate by enjoyment and guilt.

Žižek points out that Jesus takes the figure of the superego imperative. The ultimate message of Christ's sacrifice states that "you can indulge in your desires, and enjoy; I took the price for it upon myself" (*Puppet and the Dwarf* 48). Jesus' sacrifice becomes a safeguard for Christians to enjoy without worries of death and decay. However, Žižek suggests that the freedom to enjoy is misleading because Christians betray their desire to enjoy. Christianity entices Christians to "betray your desire, compromise with regard to the essential, to what really matters, and you are welcome to have all the trivial pleasures you are dreaming about deep in your heart" (49). Succumbing one's desire results to indeterminate guilt that one strives to pay off throughout his life. In this case, Jesus' sacrifice turns into the source of debt. Žižek mentions in *On Belief* that Jesus "establishes itself as the supreme superego agency: 'I paid the highest price for your sins, and you are thus indebted to me FOREVER. . .'" (145). Debt comes from Christians' surplus enjoyment. Jesus as the superego imperative puts Christians in a vicious cycle of enjoyment and debt.

In *Wise Blood*, Jesus assumes the role of the superego imperative. Jesus allows Christians to enjoy, but on one condition. They can enjoy as much as they want if they repent and punish for their sin. The boy following Haze's sermons goes to the whorehouse even though he knows that what he does is a mortal sin. He tells Haze that without repentance, they will never be redeemed (O'Connor, *Wise Blood* 147). As long as the boy confesses his sin to Jesus, he will be forgiven and he can enjoy as much sin as he desires. However, the twist is that Jesus is never satisfied by Christians' punishment. After Haze's sinful pleasure in the tent, he punishes himself by walking on small stones. He "thought, that ought to satisfy Him. Nothing happened. If a stone had fallen he would have taken it as a sign" (63-64). The unsatisfying Jesus leads to insatiable enjoyment and punishment. Here, we see that Jesus takes the figure

of the superego imperative and commands Christians to enjoy more. In this case, Haze's blinding and physical suffering in the end of the story can be reinterpreted. After the army, Haze deliberately approaches illicit enjoyment to prove that he is not in debt with Jesus. His epiphany occurs when his car is destroyed and he realizes that it is Jesus who wants them to have sin. Ever since then, Haze devotes himself to physical punishment. He blinds himself, walks on rock and penetrates his body with wires to satisfy Jesus. Mrs. Floods, the land lady, describes that the bottoms of Haze's shoes are "lined with gravel and broken glass and pieces of small stones" (221) and Haze takes a walk on these shoes half of each day (219). Inside the shirt Haze wears to sleep shows "three stands of barbed wire, wrapped around his chest" (224). His bed and shirt are streaked with blood. When the landlady asks Haze why he walks on the rocks, Haze replies, "I'm paying" (222). When she asks about the wire on Haze's shirt, he answers, "I'm not clean" (224). Haze's physical punishment deploys that he is paying for not having enough enjoyment. He is guilty because he has not committed enough sins for Jesus to forgive him. The only way to lift up the debt to Jesus is to keep enjoying and being punished. The enjoying Jesus puts Haze is in the vicious cycle of enjoyment, punishment and guilt.

Žižek suggest that the superego imperative leads to fake sacrifice, which is the fundamental structure in Christianity. Christians sacrifice secular enjoyment in order to deceive the Other from the fact that they have "real" enjoyment. Žižek gives us an example of a priest renouncing marriage, in order to have all the little boys he wants. Beneath the surface of renunciation lies secretive enjoyment (*Puppet and the Dwarf* 50). Christians go through fake sacrifice in order to deny castration. Žižek mentions that symbolic castration indicates "the loss of something that one never possessed. . ." (51). In fake sacrifice, Christians believe that they *do* have what is lost. In this sense,

“sacrifice and castration are to be opposed: far from involving the voluntary acceptance of castration, sacrifice is the most refined way of disavowing it. . .” (51). Here, we see Christians’ utter impotence in fake sacrifice. Their active renunciation and enjoyment prevents the confrontation with the real. They are active in order to assure the passivity of the Other. The structure of interpassivity is thus revealed. Žižek mentions in “The Fantasy in Cyberspace” that the subject goes through obsessional rituals in order to postpone the encounter with the *jouissance* (*Žižek Reader* 108). The subject actively fulfills the Other’s demands to prevent “the Other’s desire from emerging” (109). In fake sacrifice, Christians disavow passivity in castration through obsessional renunciation and enjoyment. Nevertheless, their compromise of the *jouissance* for pathological enjoyment results to guilt, which quilts them to the enjoying Jesus and puts them in the vicious cycle of enjoyment and guilt. Christians’ impotence and passivity in the command of the enjoying Jesus is revealed.

In the light of the interpassivity in fake sacrifice, Haze Mote’s repetitive negation of Christian doctrines and Enoch’s obsession with grotesque rituals are demanded by the enjoying Jesus to prevent them from getting too close to the lack in God and their traumatic castration. Both of them attempt to prove their dependency from Jesus’ desire through active participation of some ritual but in the end, they are fulfilling His desire.

Enjoyment in *Wise Blood*

Throughout the novel, Haze frantically denies illicit enjoyment in Christianity. He is overwhelmed with Jesus’ command to enjoy and tries to elude superego imperative and claims his freedom through disavowal of the debt to Jesus. Nevertheless, Haze’s demonstration to the evil eyes of the others, establishment of Church Without Christ and compulsive pursuit of enjoyment only suggest enjoyment

as the innermost kernel of Christianity.

Jesus' desire is too overwhelming for Haze to bear. He realizes that the fact of Jesus' sacrifice leads to the superego imperative which commands Christians to pay the debt off through surplus enjoyment. Jesus' desire manifests in the evil eyes of others and arouses the sense of the uncanny, which designates Haze's over-proximity to the real. Haze strives to fight off the real through repetitive annunciation that he is not in debt. There is always someone staring at Haze and elicits his anxiety. When Haze is tearing a tract up, he sees Hawks' child watching him. "I seen you,' she said" (42). Haze scowls and follows the blind man and his child to accuse, "I followed her to say I ain't beholden for non of her fast eye like she gave me back there" (O'Connor, *WB* 50). When Haze and the child lie on the grass, Sabbath says in a playful voice, "I seen you"(123). Haze jumps violently, "Git away!" (123) Watching others give body to Jesus' desire and Haze's confrontation with the gaze indicates that the real is too close for comfort. He assumes the gaze as a haunting Jesus, who demands for his debt. Therefore, Haze defends against the uncanny through declaration that he does not have what Jesus is looking for. Gaze from the woman and the owl manifest Jesus' desire that arouse Haze's anxiety for his over-proximity to the real. Haze's declaration of spiritual incorruption implies efforts to stave off Jesus' desire.

Haze also strives to stave off Jesus' desire through the negations of Christine doctrines and compulsive pursuit of enjoyment. However, his disavowal of the enjoying Jesus only leads to acknowledgment of illicit enjoyment in Christianity. Church Without Christ is based on negation of the Christine doctrines. His sermons are constructed by the repetitive use of "no." There's no Fall, no Redemption and no Judgment in Haze's church (105) and salvation comes without repenting (112). Haze

thinks that denying these Christian disciplines unshackles the debt to the enjoying Jesus. However, there are slips and ruptures in negations. Sabbath confesses that she is a bastard and asks Haze whether a bastard can enter heaven in his church. Haze replies, ““There’s no such thing as a bastard in the Church Without Christ. . . Everything is all one. A bastard wouldn’t be any different from anybody else”” (122). We see the ambiguity of the negation in question. On the one hand, ““There is no such thing as a bastard”” means that an evil being like a bastard can not and does not exist in the church. On the other, it means that a bastard does not make sense because evil is fundamental in Christianity. The ambiguity of the negation indicates that Haze affirms evil and sin, which he attempts to subvert. Ruptures in Haze’s negations can also be perceived in his claim, ““Blasphemy is the way to the truth”” (152). Blasphemy, an insult to Jesus, is the ultimate negation of Christianity. However, toward the end of the novel, Haze states that he no longer believes in blasphemy. ““He said it was not right to believe anything you couldn’t see or hold in your hands or test with your teeth. He said he had only a few days ago believed in blasphemy as the way to salvation, but that you couldn’t even believe in that because then you were believing in something to blaspheme”” (206). Here, ““something to blaspheme”” refers to Jesus. He realizes that the act of blasphemy declares the existence of Jesus. It is Jesus who commands Christians to blaspheme. Haze’s negation turns out to be an affirmation. Slips are thirdly revealed in Haze’s proclamation of the “new Jesus.” Haze denies Jesus by promoting a new one. Christians need “something to take the place of Jesus, something that would speak plain. The Church Without Christ. . .needs a new Jesus! It needs one that’s all man, without a blood to waste, and it needs one that don’t look like any other man so you’ll look at him”” (140-41). Haze believes that by replacing Jesus, he can escape the viscous cycle of enjoyment and guilt in Christianity. However,

when Hoover Shoats inquires about the new Jesus, Haze shouts, ““No such thing exists!”” (159). Haze negates what he has been negating. His Church Without Christ becomes Church *With* Christ. Haze’s negations of Christian doctrines acknowledge illicit enjoyment as a support of Christianity.

Besides negations, Haze asserts his independency from Jesus’ desire through compulsive pursuit of enjoyment. Haze takes the initiative to enjoy in order not to give the Other a chance to command him. To prove the credibility of Church Without Christ, Haze has to deliberately approach sin. He thinks that if there’s no such thing as debt to Jesus, the world is free of sin, evil, corruption and enjoyment. Christians can remain uncorrupted even if they devote themselves to the so-called “evil.” Therefore, Haze keeps practicing evil. He spends nights with Leora Watts, the prostitute, and claims that he does not need Jesus because he has the woman (56). Haze also plans to seduce Hawks’ daughter. He thinks that “when the blind preacher saw his daughter ruined, he would realize that he was in earnest when he said he preached The Church Without Christ” (110). However, Haze’s enjoyment is an attempt to demonstrate to Jesus that he enjoys for his own sake. In Haze’s reply, “I don’t need Jesus. . . I got Leora Watts,” (56) we see that having Leora as sensual desire becomes Haze’s proof to Jesus. Also, seducing Sabbath Hawks is meant to show the preacher, who embodies Jesus, that he is immune to Jesus’ commands to enjoy. Spending nights with Leora Watts and seducing Sabbath designate Haze’s demonstration to Jesus that he is independent from His desire. In this case, Haze is enjoying for Jesus’ sake. From Haze’s negation of Christian doctrines to his compulsive pursuit of enjoyment, we see that Haze’s failure of asserting independency from Jesus’ desire acknowledges sin, evil and enjoyment as fundamental in symbolic identification.

Therefore, Haze’s Church Without Christ is doomed to fail. The enjoying Jesus

and the vicious cycle of enjoyment and guilt are the fact that Haze can't run away from. His denial of the enjoying Jesus only designates compliance with His commands to enjoy. Church Without Christ becomes nonsense. O'Connor depicts that Haze's church is a hack of nothingness in the end. Haze yells:

I preach there are all kinds of truth, your truth and somebody else's, but behind all of them, there's only one truth and that is that there's no truth," he called. "No truth behind all truths is what I and this church preach! Where you come from is gone, where you thought you were going to never was there, and where you are is no good unless you can get away from it. Where is there as place for you to be? No place. (165)

Haze thinks that denial of good, evil, redemption and final judgment frees him from Jesus' command, but on the contrary, he is following His demand. Hoover also suggests the meaninglessness of Haze's church. Haze corrects Hoover that his church is the Church Without Christ, not Holy Church of Christ Without Christ. Hoover argues that "It don't make any difference how many Christs you add to the name if you don't add none to the meaning, friend" (157). Church Without Christ is based on Church *With* Christ. In the novel, Haze strives to stave off Jesus' desire through the negations of illicit enjoyment in Christianity. However, his negations turn out to be a fulfillment of Jesus' desire and Haze is captured in the cycle of enjoyment and guilt.

Enoch's obsession with peeping and making obscene comments display his denial of castration from the *jouissance* by asserting his agency in the symbolic interpellation. However, as Haze, Enoch's obsession turns out to be a compliance with Jesus' demands. Enoch never goes to the dark secret center without practicing a set of rituals. First, he hides in the bushes to peek at women in bathing suits. The women wear "a bathing suit that was split on each hip" and sometimes pull "the suit straps

down off their shoulders and lie stretched out” (80). Although Enoch has visited whorehouses before, he is shocked by “the looseness he saw in the open” (80). The observed scene designates a fantasy scenario in which an impotent figure tries to cover traumatic encounters with the *jouissance* through transforming his impotence into power of gaze. Traumatic encounters remind Enoch of his impotence when being castrated from the *jouissance*. His sense of impotence is depicted as inability to fit into city life. He wants to buy a potato peeler but doesn’t have enough money (43). He cries to Haze that “I don’t know nobody, nobody here’ll have nothing to do with nobody else. They ain’t friendly” (57). Secretive gaze becomes a way for Enoch to assert his phallic power. He turns the women into an object of gaze in his frame of fantasy. However, it is Enoch who is terrorized by fantasy. He is compelled to observe every day, in order not to miss any detail. Enoch attempts to gentrify traumatic encounters with the *jouissance* through power of gaze; however, the ritual of peeping indicates that he endeavors to avoid the *jouissance* by taking refuge in the enjoying Jesus. Enoch is, therefore, dependent on Jesus’ desire.

The other ritual Enoch goes through is to visit each animal in a cage. Animals arouse Enoch’s fascination and repulsion. A look of superiority and self-satisfaction on the face of a moose irritates him so much that if “he hadn’t been afraid of him, he would have done something about it a long time ago” (132). Animals in the cages are waiting evil-eyed for him, and are “ready to throw him off time” (93). Although irritated by the self-satisfied and evil-looking animals, Enoch is attracted by them. He watches them every day, “full of awe and hate” (82), and considers visiting them as a ritual he needs to practice (94). The animals, structured by Enoch’s fantasy, propel him to confront traumatic encounters with the *jouissance*. His obsession with the animals designates the pursuit of maternal substitutes while his anxiety indicates his

coming too close to the *jouissance*. Enoch tends to eliminate his anxiety through making obscene comments. He snickers at two black bears, “They don’t do nothing but sit there all day and stink” (93). He spits into the cages of yellow-eyed hyenas and laughs at the apes which expose their ass to all the people (94). He humiliates the moose in the portrait by taking the frame off, an act which Enoch considers as equal to taking the clothes off humans (133). Animals demonstrate the scene of castration. Making obscene comments and humiliating animals are means for Enoch to confront traumatic encounters with the illusion that he takes an active role in castration from the *jouissance*. From Enoch’s obsession with peeping and making obscene comment, we see that he eschews castration by way of asserting an active role in a fantasy scenario. However, since fantasy is structured according to Jesus’ desire, Enoch submits to Jesus’ commands.

In the light of Enoch’s dependence on Jesus’ desire, it is not surprising that his obsessional practices lead to unconditional and irrational sacrifice to the enjoying Jesus. Enoch’s subordination to his blood suggests religious rituals as irrational and his ridiculous transformation of a gorilla proposes sacrifice to the enjoying Jesus as zealous. Enoch’s process to the supreme moment is controlled by his wise blood. His blood is “more sensitive than any other part of him” (129) and gives him a sign of the special person to whom he will show the mummy (81). It is also his blood that leads him through ritualistic practices to prepare for the mysterious moment. Enoch submits to his blood in the practices. The first thing he finds himself doing is saving money. He doesn’t know the reason but “he had the suspicion that saving the money was connected with some larger thing” (130). Then, he starts cleaning his room and lastly, goes shopping. Enoch has no idea what he is going to do next. He is controlled by his blood and following its commands is the only thing he can do. Thelma J. Shinn

suggests that Enoch's irrational blood leads him to spiritual deterioration (63). However, Enoch's irrational subordination to his blood designates his tribute to the enjoying Jesus. Enoch's ridiculous transformation of a gorilla indicates his zealous sacrifice to Jesus. He steals the truck where the ape performer is in and drives to the woods. Then, he undresses, buries his clothes and puts on the ape dress. The burning of his clothes is described as an enchanted ritual. His "natural appearance was marred by a gash that ran from the corner of his lip to his collarbone and by a lump under his eye that gave him a dulled insensitive look. Nothing could have been more deceptive for he was burning with the intensest kind of happiness" (O'Connor, *Wise Blood* 196). Enoch's "insensitive look" and "intensest kind of happiness" reveal frantic sacrifice and devotion to Jesus. Enoch's ridiculous compliance with his blood and absurd transformation of a gorilla deploy the uncanny in Christianity. The demand for rationality is denounced and frantic enjoyment becomes the core of the religion. Therefore, instead of a parody of Christianity, Enoch's perversity displays the essence of the religion.

In conclusion, Jesus assumes the role of the superego imperative and puts Christians in vicious cycle of enjoyment, punishment guilt. Haze and Enoch are overwhelmed by Jesus' desire and strive to exculpate themselves from it through negations of Christian doctrines, compulsive pursuit of enjoyment, obsessional peeping and making obscene comments to the animals. However, their obsessive practices turn out to be a fulfillment of Jesus' desire and are structured by fantasy to prevent them from getting too close to the lack in God and in themselves. They are captured in the vicious cycle to maintain the consistency of their identity in Christianity. The end of the thesis will tackle with the possibility of a way out of the vicious cycle by drawing attention to O'Connor's idea of salvation and Žižekian

traversing of the fantasy. The idea of submission to God's will in salvation and confrontation with the death drive in traversing the fantasy illuminate that a way out of the vicious cycle is through the subject's symbolic death.

Conclusion: Traversing of the Fantasy

This thesis aims to argue that the evil practices in *Wise Blood* support Christianity. The ambiguity of good and evil contributes to the grotesque Christian vision and demonstrates enjoyment as a defense against the real that comes too close. Chapter One explores the style of the grotesque in arts and literature and suggests that the characteristics of the grotesque include abnormality, ambiguity, incomprehensible element and ambivalent responses. Then, the chapter explicates that the ambiguity of good and evil contributes to the grotesque in Christianity in O'Connor's short stories. Distorted bodies and violent acts in her short stories embody evil with which her characters struggle to be saved. Chapter Two discusses the interpellation of Christianity in *Wise Blood*. Sin qua the master-signifier functions in binary opposition, such as good and evil, and interpellates Christians with debt to Jesus. Then, the chapter proposes the unattainable surplus as essential in the interpellation of Christianity. The inexplicable *more* manifests in secretive enjoyment—the naked lady in the tent, whorehouses and capitalistic Christianity in Taulkinham—with which Christians identify. Following the idea of the surplus X, Chapter Three associates the grotesque with the uncanny and suggests the grotesque as the intrusion of the real. The grotesque in *Wise Blood*, including Haze's negations, compulsive enjoyment and Enoch's obsession with rituals, deploys the characters' specific form of enjoyment. Haze's and Enoch's obsessions indicate an undergrowth of desire, anxiety, fear and other libidinal economy to defend against the enjoying Jesus, who commands them to enjoy more. However, the more they strive to prove their independence from Jesus' desire, the more they end up following His command. Their pervert enjoyment is not to be punished by Christianity; instead, it supports the religion.

We see in *Wise Blood* that the characters' indulgence in a specific form of

enjoyment—Haze’s frantic negations, Enoch’s obsession with the rituals and Hawks’ violent sacrifice of self blinding—is considered as evil by contemporary readers and critics. The grotesque in these obsessive practices lies in an incomprehensible *more* that supports Christianity. The surplus derives from the intrusion of the real and leads to the uncanny, which arouses anxiety as prevention from the subject’s over-proximity to the real. The subject’s “evil” practices are structured by fantasy to eliminate anxiety and to grapple with the real. In other words, obsessive practices maintain the consistency of Christianity. The grotesque as an intrusion of the real sheds new light on evil in *Wise Blood*. The evil practices of paying off debt, eliminating sin and satisfying Jesus’ desire uncover the underside of Christianity— the vicious cycle of enjoyment and punishment that binds Christians to the religion. However, both O’Connor and Žižek do not stop at the vicious cycle. O’Connor’s Christian mystery and Žižekian traversing of the fantasy provide a possibility of an escape from the endless struggle.

O’Connor’s idea of salvation and Žižekian traversing of the fantasy indicate the subject’s death in the symbolic order. The subject’s symbolic death offers a way out of repetitive enjoyment and punishment, which is structured by fantasy to defend against the enjoying Jesus as the remnant of the real. O’Connor believes that one receives salvation through physical suffering because suffering exposes the subject to death. She points out that our “saving involvement in the divine life centers on sacramental suffering” (Wood, *Modern Theory* 388) and that suffering “entails painful deprivation. . .” (O’Connor, *HB* 159). Painful deprivation reminds Christians of death and seeing everything in relation to death prepares them for salvation. Death is further elaborated in O’Connor’s discussion on abnegation of the self. Salvation leads to the reunion with God, which is a status of absolute self-abnegation and complete

submission to God. Christians submit free will to God's and accept whatever circumstances God assigns them in. Such self-abnegation constitutes the core of Christian life. O'Connor mentions in *Habit and Being* that resignation "to the will of God does not mean that you stop resisting evil or obstacles. It means you leave the outcome of your personal considerations" (419) and surrender to God's suffering. Submitting to Christ's pain is the ultimate goal in Christianity. Christians have to endure torture and pain for God in order to achieve Christian mystery. Joyce Carol Oates mentions renunciation of one's free will in the witness of a miracle. She discusses how irrational and violent rituals lead to the miracle moment. He takes Motes in *Wise Blood* and Tarwater in *The Violent Bear It Away* as an example. Both of the characters try to "achieve the sterility of absolute freedom"(150) by rejecting their destiny; however, the violent rituals they go through—Haze's blinding of eyes and Tarwater's drowning of the child—are performed against their conscious will (153). At the moment of miracle, Haze and Tarwater submit their free will to God. O'Connor demonstrates that Christians' salvation unravels abnegation of the self and submission to God.

The subject's self-abnegation and submission to God indicates death in the symbolic order. Žižekian traversing of the fantasy provides a further reading on the subject's symbolic death. Fantasy functions in domesticating and gentrify the lack in the Other by manipulating the subject's desire. Žižek mentions in *The Sublime Object of Ideology* that fantasy "conceals the fact that the Other, the symbolic order, is structured around some traumatic impossibility, around something which cannot be symbolized—i.e. the real of the *jouissance*: through fantasy, the *jouissance* is domesticated, 'gentrified'" (123). At the moment of traversing of the fantasy, the subject confronts the *jouissance*, where the death drive pulsates. He realizes that

symbolic order itself is also penetrated by “a fundamental impossibility, structured around an impossible/traumatic kernel, around a central lack” (122), and their desire structures around the fundamental lack in the Other. Realizing the fundamental impossibility, the subjects have no “yearning or some kindred sublime phenomenon” and they identify with the *sinthome* (124). In other words, when the subject identifies with the *sinthome*, he is no longer driven by desire, but confronts with the death drive. Confrontation with the death drive pulls the subject out from the symbolic network, and the subject is symbolically dead. Žižek mentions that the subject undergoes ““subjective destitution”” when he traverses the fantasy. He has no name and no “signifier to represent him” (139-40). In the case of Christianity, Žižek suggests Christian Love as a possibility for traversing the fantasy in Christianity. “Love is always love for the Other insofar as he is lacking—we love the Other BECAUSE of his limitation, helplessness, ordinariness even” (*On Belief* 146-47). Christians realize that God has His own lack and their existence is “the living proof of god’s self-limitation” (146). Christians’ original sin reflects back into the limitation in God. Christian Love deploys a possibility of traversing the fantasy and identifying with *sinthome*, in which God is not celebrated for perfection but imperfection. It is in Christian Love that Christians are no longer trapped in the vicious cycle of enjoyment and punishment and are free from the debt to Jesus for salvation. It is also in Christian love that Christians undergo symbolic death. The subject’s symbolic death in traversing the fantasy accords with self-abnegation in O’Connor’s idea of salvation. Both O’Connor and Žižek propose the subject’s way out of the vicious cycle of enjoyment and punishment through his death in the symbolic order.

The subject’s symbolic death in O’Connor’s idea of salvation and Žižekian traversing of the fantasy is propelled by repetitive physical suffering. O’Connor and

Žižek acknowledges the paradoxical role of suffering. On the one hand, Christians' suffering confines them to the vicious cycle of enjoyment and punishment, which is structured by fantasy to defend against the enjoying Jesus. On the other, suffering also provides a possibility to traverse the fantasy and a way out of the vicious cycle.

O'Connor believes in the possibility in repetitive suffering. She thinks that physical suffering prepares Christians for salvation because it exposes them to the symbolic death. In repetitive suffering, there is a decisive moment in which Christians realize that the enjoying Jesus does not demand any debt from them. There is a lack in God and the lack generates Christians' obsession with and horror to the debt commanded by the haunting Jesus. Žižekian traversing of the fantasy accords with the decisive moment in repetitive suffering. As mentioned above, suffering is structured by fantasy to defend against the intrusion of the real. Žižek displays the paradox in fantasy.

Fantasy supports the symbolic order but is at the same time "the leftover of the real that enables us to 'pull ourselves out,' to preserve a kind of distance from the socio-symbolic network" (*The Sublime Object* 128). The vicious cycle of enjoyment and suffering binds Christians to Christianity but the decisive moment in the meaningless repetition unravels the intrusion of the real and forces Christians to confront the *jouissance*. In this case, Haze's physical torture to satisfy the desire of the enjoying Jesus is preliminary to his symbolic death in salvation. Jesus assumes the role of the superego imperative and commands Haze to enjoy and punish himself. Salvation occurs in an unpredictable moment when Haze, being caught up in the vicious cycle, suddenly realizes the desire of Jesus is structured around the lack. Haze's confrontation with the traumatic lack puts him in the death drive and therefore, he is no longer manipulated by the desire to cover the lack through negations of the enjoying Jesus and compulsive enjoyment. Haze receives salvation when he traverses

the fantasy and is dead in the symbolic order.

The thesis does not aim to suggest that Christianity stands as nothing but an obscene religion. In the lens of Žižekian psychoanalysis, the thesis proposes to analyze Christianity in relation to the grotesque. Christians' grotesque practices lead to the vicious cycle of enjoyment and punishment, which is structured by fantasy to conceal the intrusion of the real and to maintain the consistency of Christians' identity. The grotesque not only deploys the moment when Christians are too close to the real, but also demonstrates the essence of Christianity: while the vicious cycle sustains the function of Christianity and the subject's symbolic identity, it offers a possible way out of endless suffering. It is at the decisive moment in the vicious cycle that the subject suddenly transcends beyond the cycle. It is no wonder that O'Connor's characters receive the moment of miracle in distortion and violence. In the light of the grotesque, evil is the double of good and is essential to Christian salvation.

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