

That than just the
sight of the



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

That Heinous Beast: Sexuality In the novel *Wiseblood*, by Flannery O'Connor, one finds an unpleasant, almost antagonistic view of sexuality. The author seems to regard sex as an evil, and harps on this theme throughout the novel. Each sexual incident which occurs in the novel is tainted with grotesqueness.

Different levels of the darker side of sexuality are exposed, from perversion to flagrant displays of nudity. It serves to give the novel a bit of amoralistic overtone. The "Carnival Episode" illustrated Hazel's first experience with sexuality.

The author depicts an incident surrounded by an aura of sinfulness. Indeed, the show promoter claims that it is "SINsational." In his anxiousness to view the sideshow, Haze resorted to lying about his age. He was that eager to see it. When he enters the tent, Haze observes the body of an obese naked woman squirming in a casket lined with black cloth. He leaves the scene quickly. This first bout with sexuality was certainly a grotesque one, and one which, perhaps, helped fortify his resolve not to experiment with sex for years to come. Haze reacted to the incident on different levels.

Before watching the "show," he was filled with curiosity. So badly he wanted to view this "EXclusive" show. After glancing at the body, he first thought that it was a skinned animal. When he realized what it was, he at once left the tent, ashamed, and perhaps frightened of the object before his eyes. Hazel's reaction was not unnatural. The sight with which he was confronted would invoke both fear and embarrassment within most ten-year-olds.

Not only was the body nude, but it was inside a casket aswell. The author parallels this vulgar display of sexuality with death itself. But Hazel reacted to more than just the sight of the object. Hazel once realizes that he was not supposed to watch the naked lady, that it was sinful to do so. He feels ashamed for having gone inside the tent, and punishes himself.

Here, it is evident that the author means to show that Sexuality is a sinful creature. This moral tone is reinforced by the behavior of his parents during the episode. Whilst inside the tent, Hazel hears his father remark appreciatively about the nude body: " Had one of them there built into ever casket, be a heap ready to go sooner." After returning home, Hazel's mother realizes that her son has experienced something that he should not have, and confronts him about it. Though he does not admit what he has done, he proceeds to punish himself. It is inferred that Hazel respects his mother's attitude toward the matter. O'Connor seems to propose that Hazel must do penance for what he has done, or, on a larger scale, for witnessing vulgar displays of sexuality.

Perversion reaches its height when O'Connor introduces the reader to Enoch Emery. During Enoch's various dealings with women, one witnesses vulgarity in all its forms. The events surrounding the first of these incidents is tinged with a bit of mystery. O'Connor paints the portrait of a Peeping Tom, an adolescent Enoch Emery watching a topless woman sunbathe while hidden in between abelia bushes. Strangely enough, the woman has a " long and cadaverous" face, with a " bandage-like bathing cap." Ironically, the woman also has pointed teeth, with " greenish-yellow hair.

" The woman is portrayed as a corpse-like figure who is surprisingly similar to Hazels one-time mistress, Leora Watts. Sexuality comes in the form of a corpse, an allusion not to be missed. The narrator depicts Sexuality as being analogous to spiritual death. In this episode, however, one sees more than just the grotesque. Enoch Emery introduces us to the grimmer side of sexuality, a side in which a predator spies on an unknowing woman, and gains pleasure from it. The meaning behind the scene is somewhat masked by the lascivious behavior of a typical eighteen year old, but its aim is clear.

Here is sexuality at its darker side: one in which women are violated unbeknownst to them. Enoch's other dealings with women are also on the perverse side. He enjoys making " suggestive remarks" towards them. The fact that they do not respond to him results from two things.

Firstly, the women do not find him appealing in the least bit. At the " Frosty Bottle," the waitress refers to Enoch as a " pus-marked bastard," and a " son of a bitch." Secondly, the author points out that sexuality and perversion in all its forms is evil. Perhaps one of the most grotesque representations of sexuality in the novel is