

Wise blood by flannery o'connor

[Literature](#), [Novel](#)



Introduction to Wise Blood by Flannery O'Connor by Karen L. Enz Though a short novel, Wise Blood is a dense and complicated one with various levels of meaning. Many readers are confused and shocked by the novel as there is a distinct lack of likeable characters and there is much violence. A key element in understanding the novel's construction and meaning is to understand the literary influences on Flannery O'Connor. Flannery O'Connor was deeply influenced by Roman Catholicism that informed her own religious sensibility which echoed in her literary voice.

Her religious views envisioned a deeply flawed world that could only be redeemed by the intercession of grace. Her Southern origins brought that vision into high relief with her use of casts of grotesque characters who were often involved in violent incidents. She subjected her characters to microscopic evaluation of their religious and existential obsessions. To lighten its dark tone, Flannery O'Connor utilized her masterful satiric wit to increase the spectrum of the colors in her literary canvass.

A second influence was O'Connor's intense exposure to the predominant literary style, New Criticism, which was at its apex during the middle of the twentieth century. New Criticism was a complicated formulaic style that often utilized dense symbolism, paradox, irony, tension and ambiguous meaning, all hallmarks of O'Connor's writing. New Criticism also professed that a work was to have a high degree of unity and self-containment. If we see Wise Blood through both O'Connor's religious sensibility and its permeation in New Criticism, the structure and meaning of the novel fall more easily into place.

Haze Motes, (note the symbolism of his name hazy vision and mote in the eye) is the epitome of the religiously obsessed individual. The more he professes unbelief, the more unsure and shortsighted he becomes. The ultimate paradox occurs in his blinding, when he finally realizes his need for redemption. The text is rife with symbolism, much of it religious. The sky is permeated with clouds that look like a simplified God's beards and curls, roadside pigs that are symbols of the devil, a shrunken man who was a symbol a false idol, an old Essex which was symbolic of a search for meaning and homecoming, and glasses that obscure vision.

Some critics see the novel as a condemnation of modernity in its cult of shallow self-absorption and nihilistic pursuits. Haze is so focused on his pursuit of unbelief that he fails to see anything around him, including the needs of Enoch (who is driven by instinct "wise blood") and Sabbath. A satiric note is sounded in Chapter 7, which can serve as a microcosm of the novel, when Sabbath receives a letter from Mary Brittle (note the symbolic nature of the name) who advises Sabbath "Perhaps you ought to re-examine your religious values to see if they meet your needs in Life.

A religious experience can be a beautiful addition to living if you put it a proper perspective and do not let it warp you. Read some books on EthicalCulture. "Sabbath, though she is trying to seduce Haze, can be seen as a Christ figure in that mentions "I can save you, I got a church in my heart where Jesus is king." Haze is unconvinced and he drives off leaving behind a blinding white cloud that turns into a bird with long wings that disappears in the opposite direction. Wise Blood is a complicated and multi-

faceted novel that is not for the faint of heart. For those who can plumb the novel's meaning, it can challenge and inform.