Flannery O'Connor's Country of the Soul

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ABSTRACT

O'Connor's Catholicism takes an iconoclastic stand against religion that privileges subject superiority. Using violence as a means to shatter comfort in the separation such superiority presupposes, O'Connor brings her characters into direct confrontation with natural figures and objects--animals, trees, rocks, clay-- to draw attention to their soul energies in God's world. This essay offers a new way to appreciate Flannery O'Connor's spiritual intentions by invoking Neoplatonic ideas of the *anima mundi* (soul in the world), mythic understanding of the connection among all life forms, as well as depth psychologist James Hillman's re-visioning psychology. According to these strands, the cosmos is alive, sacred, and intentional and has lessons to teach pious Bible thumpers about the breadth of an animating spirit in the surrounding world.

The real self appears only when it enters into relation with the other.—Buber

Catholicism is specially concentrated upon this profound Otherness, this Over-against-ness, this Contrada, this Country, of the Soul. – Von Hugel

Flannery O'Connor (1978) offers readers a multi-pronged approach to her religious themes with a manifold display of symbols. Doubling, as in the pairing of opposite-likes, suggests the twoness of everything: the double-edged sword of any truth, the shadow side of every self. Eyes, short-sighted, moored in literalisms, or containing a mote, describe characters who lack vision or are blind to their doubled nature. "Mary" characters keep Mary Flannery O'Connor ever-present in the text, reminding us that she stands with her characters but differs from their outlook. References to the sayings of Jesus assure readers of the familiar territory of the Christian Bible. . . with a twist. In any given story we are met with a violent twist that turns every upside down, for it is an O'Connor trademark that taken-for-granted old time religious belief needs serious readjustment. That O'Connor selects comedy as her mode of choice is disarming; we laugh our fool heads off at the outrageous sayings and behaviors of her country characters, believing ourselves superior. However, hers is a comedic vision that upsets assumptions, tests limits, crosses boundaries, and disabuses any public "of its most firmly held beliefs" (Miller, 1995, p.71). Until we see that her comedy is iconoclastic, intended to shatter our comfort, we might miss the profound disagreement she has with safe and easy religion, the purpose of which is to cocoon us from seeing through to the Other.

This iconoclasm extends to a basic taken-for-granted Western idea: the primacy of the subject. When we split Subject from Object, I from Thou, Human from Animal, Human from Nature, we unknowingly adopt an Enlightenment philosophy that takes its cues from Descartes and Kant, where truth is found "from the neck up" (Fox, 1996, p. 29). To turn the subject position upside down privileges, for example, the meek. Think here of the revelation at the end of the story by that name when Mrs. Turpin has a vision of "a vast horde of souls. . . rumbling toward heaven" (O'Connor, 1978, p. 508). The scene is sensed "behind the tree line"—behind, in other words, the boundary separating the ordinary from the eschatological; some from others; white trash, blacks, lunatics and freaks from Mrs. Turpin and those of her social class. Re-positioning the subject also re-cognizes the Other in the self and in the natural world.

The upside down of things extends as well to the grandmother and her family in "A Good Man is Hard to Find." The plot follows the grandmother in Bailey's car trekking along on a hilly back-country road filled with "dust-coated trees looking down on them" (O'Connor, 1978, p. 124). The reference to the trees "dust-coated" looking down at the family reverses the order set forth by Great Chain of Being, where angels and

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men are higher in the hierarchy than women and dust. In this moment, nature in its lowest form takes a superior position. And then, suddenly, the car turns upside down. At the end of the story, the characters scattered on the ground from the car's overturn, the grandmother sinks into a ditch and sees the Misfit for what he really is: her Other. That the Misfit—of all people—will deliver a truth to the grandmother about the mysterious ways of the divine seems upside down. But O'Connor insists in her essay on Catholic novelists that "the main concern of the fiction writer is with mystery as it is incarnated in human life" (as cited in Fitzgerald and Fitzgerald, 1981, p. 176). I take this to mean that the Misfit, neither God nor Devil, is the incarnated mystery which throws such dualisms as "good' versus "evil" off balance. At the end, the grandmother is able to recognize that she and the Misfit are of the same (human) family, despite their seeming otherness.

O'Connor speaks on behalf of many others so as to rail against the damage subject superiority has done in the name of progress and development. When the ugly girl Mary Grace in "Revelation" hurls the book *Human Development* at Mrs. Turpin, we must heed the statement O'Connor is making here. All intellection, schooling, classifying, thinking, and ordering that defines "human development" is the problem. Indeed, the notion of development—not just human but also the development of land—is the unknowing cause of the world's wounds, symbolized by the wounded savior who yet cannot save the world from humanity's arrogance and greed. I see O'Connor bringing back to modern and postmodern readers a vision that is older and deeper than religion: not just humans have soul: the world is ensouled; everything and action has psychic qualities. To pay attention to the non-human Others of O'Connor's work is, then, my purpose in this essay. Her multicolored settings, filled and dotted with vivid greens, purples, yellows, and blues, "speak" of both the sensibility and, especially, the suffering of Mother Earth; the prevalence of animals reveals their ancient, sacred connection with the mysteries of life and death; and her singling out dirt, clay, and stone reminds us of what myths have described as the origin of the human species.

Take the multicolored settings of any O'Connor story that draw attention to the faces of otherness. Sometimes her color imagery draws attention to the multi-racial aspects of humanity, as in "Everything that Rises Must Converge." The open lighted space of the bus allows the colors of the riders' clothes to stand out over-against the prevailing racism of the newly integrated South that sees only black or white. Animal references in the text (monkey, goat, cat, bird), along with references to various ethnicities (African, Egypt, Japan, Germany), offer a wide and generous view of a world that humans share with species and races other than their own. However, the word "mammoth," mentioned twice in the text, implies that the characters have not evolved in their racial attitudes and seem to be living in the Ice Age. As Robert Penn Warren (1997) observed, "The Southerner's attitude toward [tradition] is frozen . . . trapped in history" (p. 161).

In "The Enduring Chill," the characters are usually clothed in blacks and whites to stamp their either/or approach to the world. In contrast, color dots the landscape. Fields contain "yellow bitter weed" and are "purple-looking" (O'Connor, 1978, p. 359); the sky is "china blue" (p. 368). Asbury, the over-educated son who comes home to die, would seem to be the antagonist in this story because of his hauteur; yet he intuits, dreams, is eyed by a cow (p. 362),and observes things—"an imaginary temple" (p. 358)—that aren't exactly "there." In his delirium Asbury sees the brightness of the natural world turn to a "darkening green" and "the black pond [become] speckled with little nickel-colored stars" (p. 374). This is a vision, brought on by sickness and fever, allowing him insight into the suffering world when he is out of his right mind. Ultimately it is this insight which singles him out for a "purifying" (p. 382) death. Still, he becomes only a weak kind of sacrificial figure: the sort of modern miseducated person who uses his head to think rather than his soul to know.

The distinction between thinking and knowing is one O'Connor particularly noted in her reading of Thomas Aquinas. She underlined several passages in the Anton C. Pagis edition *Introduction to SaintThomas Aquinas* that decry the decline of medieval philosophy as a "transition from the world of sensible things to man thinking abstract thoughts in separation from existence" (as cited in Kinney, 1985 p. 72). Understanding the world as sensible, capable of feeling, marks a time in human history when humans and the world of nature and of things were united in sympathy. This is "knowing." Earlier in the same edition, Pagis writes of a retreat from this view: "If we are to judge matters as St. Thomas has done, we are bound to say that the European man became a thinker after he ruined himself as a knower" (as cited in Kinney71).

Surely the ruined thinker is the target of much of O'Connor's fiction. Interestingly, she attributes this major idea of a knowing and sensible world to seemingly minor subtexts, settings, scrub humans, and symbols in

her work. It is as if O'Connor wants to make the reader work harder to see the faces of the Other; we must get beyond the obvious in our reading. In a letter to Cecil Dawkins (as cited in Fitzgerald and Fitzgerald, 1981), she chides: "The Holy Spirit very rarely shows Himself on the surface of anything. . . . All human nature vigorously resists grace because grace changes us and the change is painful." She continues, "It is what is invisible that God sees and the Christian must look for" (pp. 307, 308). Even though this chiding is straight forward, I get a clearer understanding of the shape of O'Connor's mind by reading her marginal notes and under linings from books in her personal library than I do by reading her letters. Indeed, Arthur Kinney's (1985) book on O'Connor's library not only bears witness to the breadth and seriousness of her intellect but also to how closely her reading connects with her writing. As Kinney comments, "her markings in her books are frequent and often directly related to her own work already underway" (p. 3).

Although the writings of Marcilio Ficinoare not in O'Connor's library collection, his theory of a world soul reverberates with her work. Calling his theory "anima mundi," Ficino attributed soul to the God-given things of nature, including animals, plants, rocks, and dirt. For indigenous cultures, as well as the Renaissance, this idea is nothing new, nor was it for Carl Jung centuries later, who in his memoirs, recounts his experience living in the country among natural things "filled with secret meaning":

> I had grown up . . . in the country, among rivers and woods, among men and animals in a small village bathed in sunlight, with the winds and the clouds moving over it, and encompassed by dark night in which uncertain things happened. It was no mere locality on the map, but 'God's world,' so ordered by him and filled with secret meaning. (As cited in Mogenson, 2006, p. 49)

Continuing his idea, Jung notes his understanding that "men did not know" that they dwelt in God's world. Sadder still, "even animals had somehow lost the senses to perceive it" (as cited in Mogenson, 2006, p. 49). While many O'Connor's characters live unknowingly in a world they treat as inert, she does suggest that characters who are feverish, intuitive, or childlike glimpse (at the hour of their death) the wider picture. This glimpse is occasioned by a sudden strike to the head or heart, a blow poised and waiting to crack open the hardness of prejudice and false superiority.

This older picture of a world animated by soul is one depth psychologist James Hillman(1975; 1982)spent his career addressing. The little prefix *–re* is central to his work, indicating in some of his titles and all of his theory that our modern and postmodern condition needs to turn back to the wisdoms of the past so that we can learn to see afresh. In *Re-Visioning Psychology,* Hillman (1975*)*writes, "I hope these pages evoke the soul's longing for a depth psychology of understanding, yet I believe that for such light we must strike steel on flint and provoke irritating sparks" (xvi). In "Anima Mundi: The Return of the Soul to the World, "Hillman (1982) takes another turn, from a psychology of the human soul to a psychology of the world soul: "We will not be able to move in this direction," he warns, "until we have made radical shifts of orientation, so that we can value soul before mind. . . . we would have to let fall such games as subject-object" (p. 92). Hillman argues for nothing less than a shattering of long-held beliefs about human development. In his essay "Hillman Re-Visioning Hillman," Marcus Quintaes (2008) describes Hillman's revival of the Neo-Platonic notion of *Anima Mundi*: "[Hillman] launched an unprecedented and furious attack on the subjective and intrapsychic preoccupation of all psychotherapies, criticizing their tendency to over-value individual subjectivity at the expense of the real problems of the world" (p. 82).

Hillman's flinty writing (he once said he aligned himself with the Greek God of war, Mars) can be seen reflected in recent editions of the oldest Jungian psychology journal in the world, *Spring,* of which for many years he was the editor*.* In the fall of 2006 *Spring* devoted two issues exclusively to soul in the world. Some of the titles tell the story: "Psyche and Nature," "The Eyes of the Background," "Trans-Species Psychology," "The Soul of Sky," "The Burial of Soul in Technological Civilization," "The Death of Nature" (*Spring 75: Psyche and Nature* Part 1 of 2). The theme continues in *Spring 76Part 2 of 2*with titles that are akin to O'Connor's theme of the country of the soul: "Land Minds," "Tending the Dream is Tending the World," "Charting an Ecological Imagination: Between Leaf and Hand," "Phenomenon and Place: Toward a Renewed Ethics of the Environment," "Terrapsychology: Reengaging the Soul of Place."

So much scholarly devotion not to thinking but to knowing, in the old sense, offers a background against hich to place Flannery O'Connor's (1978) country of soul. It should not be surprising to see O'Connor's imagination embrace what indigenous cultures have always known: everything, everything, has psychic qualities, especially in the natural world. Her descriptions of the sky in "Greenleaf"(O'Connor, 1978), for instance, suggest purposiveness, as seen in the opening paragraph. The skyscape is quietly but deliberately

animated: the moon drifts, light slides, and clouds blacken. Such intentionality of the natural world, awake at night, is juxtaposed with a barely awake Mrs. May, semi-aware of the bull's steady rhythmic chewing outside her window. That the bull's noise comes to her in a dream-like state suggests her unconscious similarity with the animal of her namesake, May being the month of Taurus the bull. The whole opening segment of the story further implies that Mrs. May, a country woman, is connected with her natural world in ways she does not fully "know." As the day dawns the sky takes on more and more liveliness by its central orb, the sun, which moves slowly, disappears, and then, at night enters Mrs. May's dream state: "She became aware after a time that the noise was the sun trying to burn through the treeline" (p. 329). The sun in her dream "burst through the tree line and raced down the hill toward her" (p. 329). The surrealism of this dream corresponds with Asbury's delirium in "The Enduring Chill, "suggestive of a kind of "knowing" both characters have when they are not "thinking." At these moments both characters are in a threshold state between waking and sleep when something else can emerge.

This something else is none other than a psychic awareness of soul in the world—a gift given to those characters with an openness to otherness. In his book *The Logos of the Soul*, Evangelos Christou(1976) adheres to the basic principle of depth psychology: it is not that the psyche is inside man but that man is inside psyche. This distinction between inside and outside, like O'Connor's distinction between upside and downside, offers a different perspective on living in the world more fully, which means living with soul-awareness. Christou (1976) insists, however, on the difficulty of apprehending the soul: "We are in particular brought up again and again against the cruel fact that we tend to project preformed ideas into vague and limitless possibilities of such an elusive concept as that of the unconscious. . . . For it is only when the psyche has been left on its own that we can really see what it has to tell us" (p. 92). Mrs. May may not be an intellectual or an insurance salesman, like her no-good sons, but she has an innate capacity for sensing the soul in the world: she "hears" the sun. So, of course, the bull that strays into her backyard will seek her out as a receptacle for his animal power. Here we are in the terra-tory of soul, as understood by indigenous cultures and mythic stories.

O'Connor often introduces characters whose false superiority masks their primal sympathy. We have seen this with the grandmother, with Asbury, and now with Mrs. May. As Jamake Highwater(1981) tells us, people like American Indians have retained a "precious reservoir of humanity's visionary power" (p.10). This is a primal power that sees through to the Other which refuses to disappear and is, in all reality, the "hard bone on which reason breaks its teeth" (p. 11):

> Among primal peoples, the natural world is not something alien and wild. It is not an enemy or an outside force that must be subdued and dominated. Nature is the aesthetic perfection with which we aspire to become identical, harmonious, and bounded by immediacy and wholeness. It is therefore not surprising that among primal people music is the sound of the natural world made immediate and vivid by the perceptual miracle of the ear. (p. 159)

Highwater, whose ancestors are members of the Blackfeet and Cherokee tribes, further explains what he means by the sound of the natural world—which I connect with Mrs. May's "hearing" the sun in her dream. Highwater(1981) writes that in the primal scheme of sound, "auditory space has no favored boundaries; it is an unfixed space shaped by the sound itself and not, as it is in the West, a space *containing* sounds" (p. 159). The connection here with Mrs. May's sensory ability to hear the sun suggests that as a country folk person she has primal properties which she does not, however, want to recognize or value. That the sun in her dream breaks the boundary of the tree line is indicative of Mrs. May's potential for breaking through the thin boundary that separates the sacred from the profane. However, perhaps because she is "country," she dreads being viewed as a lower form of human social life, a quality she would not want to share with tribal peoples or "scrub humans"(O'Connor, 1978, p.317), like the Greenleafs. Yet tribal peoples, similar to O'Connor's foil characters, have always known they are perceived by the industrialized West as "primitives." Vine Deloria, Jr. (2009) of the Sioux tribe, puts it this way: "Primitive/tribal peoples were believed to represent early man. . . . They would give scholars clues about how human society evolved" (p. 60).

Clearly, part of O'Connor's comedy in "Greenleaf" is aimed at Mrs. May's outrageous imaginings of herself as a superior, Christian woman, more evolved than her "scrub human" grounds keeper and his wife. I think it is O'Connor's intention to stress the Christian aspect of Mrs. May's persona, for it is precisely the pious Christian believer like her that needs to see (and hear) differently, to come down a peg. O'Connor issues this challenge to the Church: "When the Catholic novelist closes his own eyes and tries to see with the eyes of the

Church, the result is another addition to that large body of pious trash for which we have so long been famous" (as cited in Fitzgerald and Fitzgerald, p.180). To counter such propriety, O'Connor draws Mrs. Greenleaf as Mrs. May's absolute Other, her double: while Mrs. May believes Jesus belongs in the church, Mrs. Greenleaf prays to Jesus in the dirt. While pious Christians prefer to keep Jesus with his lamb, O'Connor offers the bull. It is as if the bull is a sky god come down to Earth to seek her out, and the sun lights the way. So it is that the story revolves partly around the wooing of Mrs. May during the month of May by her Taurus suitor. There she stands in her rubber curlers at her window, an aging Juliet to her munching Romeo.

Stuart L. Burns (1967) interprets the bull as "Christ's earthly nature. . . a shadow of the sun" (pp. 161,162). I prefer to see the earthly nature of Christ in more mythic terms, since sacralized nature has been a religious idea long before religion. Re-ligio, the Latin roots of "religion," means "linking back"—to older mythic understandings. Just as the sun is an ancient symbol of divinity—not simply Christ-- the divine bull has an old, pre-Christian history as well. As a power animal, the bull contains a massive life force, whose sacrifice was deemed necessary to placate the gods. For the Sioux, animals were representative of the Great Mystery containing knowledge and power beyond human ken (Deloria, 2009, p. 116). Celtic, Egyptian, Mesopotamian cultures all had divine bulls. The Indo-European Thunder God was a bull. Isis and Hathor of Egyptian culture wore a head dress shaped from the horns of a bull which cradled a sun disk (another bull-sun combination). Think too of Zeus as bull-lover to Europa, making Europe's origins of bullish descent. Farther East, according to Hindu myth, the divine bull was born from the right side of Vishnu. When Vishnu would shape change into the destroyer god Shiva-Rudra, he would usher in a new cosmic order by entering the sun's rays and intensifying them (Rosenberg , 1994, p. 329). O'Connor's blending of bull with sun echo these ancient images and would seem to reflect the mythic idea of destruction and death as necessary for the creation of a new order and a deeper vision.

When Mrs. May enters her milking room, she becomes conscious (again) of the sun's fierce intensity: "The sun was directly on top of her head, like a silver bullet ready to drop into her brain" (O'Connor, 1978, p. 325). This amazing sentence draws attention to the deadly force of nature, Its intention as over-against any human need or desire. Milking rooms and pig parlors as places of revelation bring the character in question very much down to Earth; and the sun, here particularly, is very much in command. Like the bull, the sun is on a deadly mission which demands adherence. That the sun is described with the colors red and purple brings Christian together with pagan iconography to suggest the necessary human sacrifice that must occur to restore nature. When the sun moves "as if it were descending a ladder" (p. 328), the interesting reference to descending a ladder reverses the Western Enlightenment view that humans are tops, or the Genesis view that humans will dominate Earth (Genesis 1:26). The Genesis view goes even further, describing man's "duty" to "subdue" the earth. No such subjugation will occur in an O'Connor scenario, however, since the hierarchal order must be reversed. The human position of being on top must topple if humanity is to see its more real relationship with the natural world and its soul-containing character.

For O'Connor, the aliveness of nature-- the soul of the world—cannot be made visible to unseeing eyes until a shattering blow occurs. What must be shattered is the human inflated view of itself as prime mover and shaker. In O'Connor's reading of Victor White's *Soul and Psyche*, she underlines White's definition of a mature faith, which I see reflected in O'Connor's final scene in "Greenleaf."White writes, and she underlines, that the human ego must surrender "to a mystery which transcends it, [and] the surrender [must be] willed and intended" (as cited in Kinney, 1985, p.28). What White suggests about ego surrender is that it ushers in a "relationship to the mystery which excludes unconscious identification with it" (p. 28). In other words, by surrending ego one enters profound Otherness in the country of the soul. At Mrs. May's final hour we see her surrender as she is embraced in the lap of her dying bull lover, whose horns have pierced her heart. The scene is a variant of the Christian Pieta, mother holding her dying son in her lap; or the dying Egyptian Osiris being cradled by his sister-wife Isis; or the Bernini statue of the rapture of St. Teresa receiving the stabbing arrow of the angel. St. Teresa wrote of that moment as a kind of bliss: "He appeared to me to be thrusting [the spear] at times into my heart" (as cited in Peer, 2002, p. 13). These are similar to the words Mrs. Greenleaf hollers as she rolls around on the ground: "Oh Jesus, stab me in the heart" (O'Connor, 1978, p. 317). The echo of Mrs. Greenleaf's words with the image here of Mrs. May redoubles O'Connor's pairing of two opposite-sames, as in the convergence of everything.

While the ending to "Greenleaf" concludes the mythic saga of sun, bull, and woman-- which has seemed to be the central focus of the story-- there is another aspect that appears secondary to O'Connor's concerns but may, in fact, be primary. I refer to the Greenleaf characters themselves, after whom the title takes its meaning. The title refers to the blessing Jeremiah gives to the true believer in the Lord: "For he shall be as a

tree planted by the waters. . . and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green"(17: 5-8). The true believer sees what is reborn in the land, the green leaf, because his is a naïve and fresh outlook that does not seek to dominant the earth nor use land for mercenary means. He is simple in his faith, as simple, literally down-to-earth, as "the lilies of the field," who "toil not, neither do they spin" (Matthew 6:28). Mrs. May condemns the Greenleafs as lazy, good-for-nothing, scrub humans, yet even that curse connects them with the land differently from her toil and spin. When we see Mr. Greenleaf creeping along the circumference of the action in the pasture, it is as if from the perimeter he attains a kind of double vision into the true nature of "green" that utterly eludes the hardworking Mrs. May.When she looks out her window at those same pastures, all she sees is "the reflection of her own character" (O'Connor, 1978, p. 321);so busy is she in obtaining the fat off the land that she devalues its intrinsic sacredness, seeing only what It can give to her. It will take the dying bull to strike awareness of a "last discovery" (p. 334) into her heart.

We must take Mr. Greenleaf seriously, then, precisely because he is not of Mrs. May's mind-set or social class. He is lower on the scale of human development, meaning he is "greener," more primal. O'Connor (1978) describes him with a face "shaped like a rough chalice" and with fox-colored eyes (p. 314). The last thing he wants to do is Mrs. May's bidding to kill the stray bull, which he refers to as a "gentleman" (p. 323). The fact that he names his twin sons O.T. and E.T. adds a sense of mystery to his being. Could those initials refer to Ordinary Time and Eternal Time or Eschatological Time? Could the two times, one earthly the other heavenly, be simply twin sides of one sacred cosmos? Could Mr. Greenleaf be in touch with the eternities that encircle the small compass of his life? This strange but endearing character expresses some very insightful thoughts, as when he reminds Mrs. May of the difference between his two boys and her two boys. It was inexcusable, from his perspective, that Mrs. May's boys would allow their mother to chase after the bull: "'If hit was my boys, he would have said, '"they would have cut off their right arm before they would have allowed their maw to …" (p. 313). True or not, family dynamics reflect the sacredness or lack thereof in everyday life. O'Connor's disrespectful sons are part of a larger disdain that they have learned from their pious mother.

Everyday rituals and exchanges reveal much about the presence or absence of respect in the human family. Since there is a mysterious correspondence between the human and natural spheres, as O'Connor demonstrates and indigenous cultures know, it follows that disturbances in one realm will affect the other. Conversely, human behavior that is nature-bound is, in a sense, divine, i.e. Mr. Greenleaf. Breaking the nature- bond splits the world at the tree line. Witness O'Connor's family dysfunctions. Dinner table scenes in both "Greenleaf" and "A View of the Woods" show an appalling lack of relationship among family members. Worse, the inappropriate behavior—especially the subliminal violence—is but another indicator of a world gone wrong. If humans cannot cultivate sacredness in everyday living, how can the soul of the world survive? "Care of the soul," Thomas Moore(1992) writes, "begins with observance. . . a word from ritual and religion" (p. 5). At table, the boys taunt Mrs. May, whose passive mothering allows their mocking cruelty to persist. But the real point is that all eating is communion. Passing the butter is part of a ritual which, when ignored or debased, turns a family meal into a battleground. "Without this lowly incorporation of the sacred into life," Moore (1992) writes, "religion can become so far removed from the human situation as to be irrelevant" (p. 215). No wonder Mrs. May believes none of the teachings of religion although she professes a "large respect" for it (O'Connor, 1978, p. 316). If Jesus is to be boxed inside the church building, that excludes the rest of life outside the church from the domain of the sacred.

Not only are humans split off from nature, they are split off within themselves and from members of their own families. This split is foreshadowed in the opening moments of " A View of the Woods" that picture Mary Fortune and her grandfather looking down into a red pit. This is the pit being dug by a bulldozer so that Fortune can make his fortune off the land. By looking down into the wound of the earth, Fortune establishes himself as owner, possessor, and dominator of that which does not "belong" to him. O'Connor insists that Earth's body matters so much that in this story, particularly, she becomes "a prophet on behalf of the created world" (Vande, 2011, p. 24). She is clear that the woods are the divine nature of nature: "The woods, if anything," she wrote, "are the Christ symbol. They walk across the water, they are bathed in a red light, and they in the end escape the old man's vision" (as cited in Vande, 2011, p. 20).

The generational split in this story brings to the fore the clash of ideologies between Progress and Conservation, the Agrarian South and the New Industrial South. The old man is all for progress; while the younger generation cherishes the lawn and the view. But more, O'Connor (1978)shows the violence that

will erupt when "you can't stop the marcher time for a cow" (p. 338). The grandfather's glib saying reveals his selfish/surface way of being in the world. Land ownership provides his capital, his weapon against his son-in-law, whose hatred for the old man is taken out on his nine year old girl child.

Unlike Mrs. May in "Greenleaf," all the characters in "A View of the Woods" are victims of their own unconscious projections. The grandfather projects his ego desires onto the land; his every act is determined by how much power the land gives him—which is considerable. Land is his weapon against his son-in-law and his means of manipulation with his granddaughter. Mary Fortune's father, "a man of a nasty temper and of ugly unreasonable resentments" (O'Connor, 1978, p. 340) hates old man Fortune because of the financial and psychological hold Fortune has on him, which emasculates his position in the family (he does not sit at the head of the table). And Mary Fortune is the pawn that is played between the two men, each projecting their own crisis of masculinity onto her. As the family sits at table they are surrounded by feelings of pride, greed, negativity and revenge which are only partially realized. A psychic truth learned from Freud is that what is repressed or not fully expressed will return with a vengeance. Mary Fortune's father knows that the old man's fortune challenges his role as patriarch. Displaced as the head of the family, the father displaces his anger for the old man onto his girl child, inappropriately selecting her as his whipping post when it is really the old man he would like to beat. He should know that such unwarranted behavior will have repercussions down the line. Indeed, Mary Fortune is seen too often in the old man's bedroom, one time, even, "sitting astride his chest" (p. 345). And the old man, likewise, cajoles her moods and regulates his voice "as if it belonged to a suitor" (p. 347).

"A View of the Woods" is structured similarly to "Greenleaf" in that both contain parallel foci. One focus is on the human story; the other is on the story of nature. The two stories are really about the intrapsychic bond shared by nature and the creatures dependent on her. The gospel writer (Matthew) calls the soil what which nourishes the soul (13:3-9). This is an old understanding: the greater part of the soul is actually outside the human body (as cited in Hillman, 1982, p. 71). O'Connor seems to be saying the same thing, as I have argued. When land is wounded, as we see in the opening description of the bulldozer's gouging, those dependent on the land have broken a sacred bond. It is O'Connor's portrayal of old man Fortune, particularly, that demonstrates the brokenness that occurs when love of money overruns the love of the "nourishing soil of the soul."

O'Connor underscores Mr. Fortune's materialistic outlook by his not-so-subtle name "Fortune" together with the quite-subtle-but-multiple mention of numbers and measurement in the text. Over sixty-six such references occur, including the ages of the characters, the number of years Mary Fortune's family have lived on the property, the number of acres originally owned, the number of acres sold for profit, how high Fortune's blood pressure could soar, the number of feet Fortune intended to sell, the number of miles to Tillman's dark store, the precise clock times. . . and so on. Fortune's vision of reality is measurable, defined, and certain. Opposed to this vision is that of his granddaughter Mary Fortune, whom the old man liked to think of as being "thoroughly clay" (O'Connor, 1978, p. 338). For Fortune, the woods are just woods that can be destroyed for houses and stores and parking places (p. 343); for Mary Fortune a lawn fronts the woods where she can play and the calves can graze, and she cherishes the view she gets of the woods.

Even with their different visions, both grandfather and granddaughter are fascinated by the bulldozer, its noise and its danger. Arthur Erickson once proclaimed, "with the exception of the nuclear warhead, there is no greater machine of aggression against the city and against one's fellow man than the bulldozer" (as cited in Sardello, 1982, p.97). We get a sense of this terrible aggression of the machine when O'Connor (1978) personifies its action: it eats, gorges from its gullet, and spits up "with the sound of a deep sustained nausea and a slow mechanical revulsion" (p. 335). The machine, however, seems to be revolted and repulsed by the use to which it is put. It has a more "soulful" response to its destruction of the earth than do humans. James Hillman (1982) extends the idea of soul in the world to soul in machines, remarking on a disease in the world of things: "Whether in my dream or in my neighborhood," Hillman writes, "the wound in the red earth is still a site of wrenching upheaval" (p. 80). This opening scene sets the tone of upheaval not only of the earth but within the family dynamic. While the Fortune-Pitts family cannot see its own sick sense of communion, the machine of destruction can. The disease at the root of things and people is caused by a severance from the natural world.

The tragedy of the story is the killing of the girl at the end. She is the only one O'Connor connects positively with the Earth and negatively with violence. Clay references are not only interesting but suggestive of O'Connor's characterization of Mary Fortune, who is "thoroughly clay" (p. 338). Clay is a natural substance,

like dirt: neither is man-made. Clay is soft, permeable and filled with plasticity; therefore it can be molded and shaped before it is fired. Mary Fortune's sensibilities, we can assume, have been molded by a simple love of the woods. For the Sioux, molded clay pipes, used in their pipe ceremonies, symbolize the intertwining of the physical and spiritual realms and acknowledge "the extra-material dimensions of space." Vine Deloria, Jr. (2009) continues: "In using the Sacred Pipe, for example, Sioux religious practitioners always invoke the powers attributed to each of the directions [of Earth]. . . . The space of the universe is acknowledged, its infinite nature admitted, and its powers gathered at a single precise point in order to participate in the ceremony" (p. 85). Here, the understanding of precision is not numerical, as in the grandfather's use of numbers, but rather re-presentational: the bowl of the pipe, fashioned from clay, becomes the universe. Speaking from the English Romantic tradition, William Blake endowed clay with Earth's "knowledge" both of innocence (Heaven) and experience (Hell). Mary Fortune "knows" this.

We may ponder the richness of associations between Mary Fortune and clay. As a nine-year-old child, she is intuitively close to Earth: she plays on the lawn before the wood and clearly loves her view, both her viewpoint (belief about) the woods' larger significance for Earth's species but also her vantage point (position) as seen from the porch. Her contrariness and provocative behavior toward her grandfather suggest she is her own person, not easily molded by others. The several textual references to her feet could further express that she is grounded (unlike her grandfather) or that, like the expression "feet made of clay," that she is vulnerable to her own and her grandfather's stubborn rage.

Like the word "clay," the word "rock," used frequently in the text, has Christian and mythic overtones. Both the grandfather and Mary Fortune have a walking gait, "something between a rock and a shuffle" (O'Connor, 1978, p. 339); Mr. Fortune spies on his grandchild behind a boulder, watching her being belted as she rocks back and forth on her feet; he sits down on a small rock under the tree (p. 341); like Mr. Pitts, the grandfather has rocklike fists; and he smashes Mary Fortune's head against a rock (p. 355). Like any symbol, "rock" has dual qualities, both negative and positive. In the Bible we are told that the Church was founded on a rock which not even Hades will overcome (Matthew 16:18). The famous hymn "Rock of Ages" refers to Jesus, whose wounds will heal the sinner. The rock is "cleft" or broken, but Jesus' blood will be the "double cure" that will "make me pure." The idea of the sacrificial death is implied both in the Christian hymn and in Mary Fortune's death. Is it coincidence that both the grandfather and Mary Fortune shout at each other that they are PURE? Each insists they are of their own bloodline, but surely one can hear the hymnal overtone here.

Overtones of a sacred radiance emanating from dirt further imply a divine Earth source for the birth of Earthlings. In mystical Judaism humans are enjoined to gather God's holy sparks that burst from sacred vessels so as to recognize the divine in every being and thing (Buber, 2002). The Hindu god Krishna was said to have swallowed dirt as a child. When his mother ordered him to open his mouth, she saw that the dirt contained everything that existed, including outer space, her own village, and herself. The Native American Spider Woman mixes four piles of earth—white, black, yellow, and red—with saliva and molds these piles into the shapes of humans, singing them into creation. Prometheus of Greek myth mixes earth with rain or tears to make humans. And the Yoruba tribe of Nigeria featured a rooster, who lowers himself from the sky with a chain and scratches around the dirt, from which Obatala sculpts humans. In the Greek flood myth "stone" and human are built of the same substance. As the only two survivors of the Great Flood, Deucalion and Pyrrha are instructed by the goddess Themis to "throw their mother's bones over their shoulders" so as to repopulate the Earth (as cited in Hathaway, 2001).At first the instruction baffles the two, but they solved the riddle by understanding that their mother's bones refer to the stones of Mother Earth. Finally, in Genesis humans are molded from dirt, which Christians are reminded of during Holy Week when the priest intones, "Remember man that you are dirt and unto dirt you shall return."

These religious and mythic dirt origins of humans brings us down to Earth, and Earth inside us, in a way that many "know" but some merely "think." O'Connor's constant doubling of nature with humans reminds the reader of these early understandings. When humans insist on breaking the bond that ties them with the world soul, nature rebels. . . even machines rebel! Nature is not Edenic, sentimental, or romantic, but Other. Sometimes O'Connor focuses on a final epiphany about the Other, gleaned by a human character. At the end of "Greenleaf," Mrs. May is brought into relation with her animal Other, the bull, in a mysterious embrace that passeth understanding. O'Connor withholds Mrs. May's "discovery" from the reader for, I suspect, a reason: we must find our own discoveries if we are to re-imagine soul in the world. Some other times O'Connor's ending is a miraculous showing forth of the miracle of nature's Other. At the end of "A View of

the Woods" the sky has a little opening the grandfather notices, where sky reflects water and triumphs over him, a puny, self-centered, old man. He is alone. His earlier throw-away phrase about "the marcher time" literally comes back to taunt him as he witnesses a vision of the trees "marching across the water" (p. 356). We are given to understand that the old man, unlike Mrs. May, does not "discover" what he sees. But this time, we do.

For O'Connor (1978) the country of soul is pervaded by a profound and mysterious Otherness which never stops manifesting itself. As Dorothy McFarland (1989) puts it, nature, for O'Connor, is "unsubdued" (p. 642). No matter how much humans attempt to manipulate the world and its creatures, O'Connor insists on bringing us face to face with the Other in its many natural manifestations: sky, sun, bull, pasture, dirt and humans of all stripes. The understanding of the presence of soul in the natural world may be new to modern readers. O'Connor's is a vision that requires us to look back, to see for a second time, to think differently, to connect better. All these "back" and "again" functions of our senses re-positions the subject and re-minds us of what we in our human development have forgotten. The country of the soul is around us and within us and above us and below us if we but have the eyes to see and the ears to hear.

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