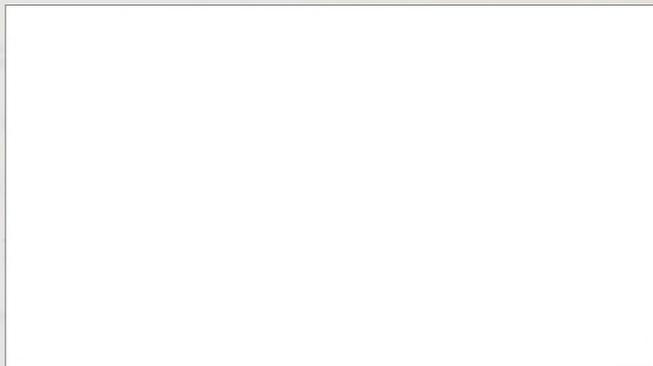


THE BACKROAD TO REDEMPTION: FLANNERY O'CONNOR'S WISE BLOOD
THE BACKROAD TO REDEMPTION: FLANNERY O'CONNOR'S WISE BLOOD
AND
MARK TWAIN AND HIS CRITICS: AN ANALYSIS
MARK TWAIN AND HIS CRITICS: AN ANALYSIS
OF FOUR CRITICAL WORKS

ROosalind Marilyn O'BRASKY, B. A.

Presented to the Faculty
The University of
in Partial
of the Re
for the degree of



MASTER OF ARTS

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

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AND

MARK TWAIN AND HIS CRITICS: AN ANALYSIS

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by
ROSALIND MARILYN O'BRASKY, B. A.

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THESIS

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In the twentieth century, man's spiritual values have suffered neglect at the hands of a complex chaotic world. One, if he examines the century's literary and artistic products, finds the immediate effects of this neglect--an abundance of nihilistic works, songs of experience and negative characters, to say I find in these works the roots of a new mythology, or as old one inverted, one in which God has little if any role. But this absence of the Deity

This volume is dedicated to E. R. O., J. S. O., J. W. C.,
THE BACKROAD TO REDEMPTION: FLANNERY O'CONNOR'S WISE BLOOD
and P. C. R.

...the majority of men 'without religion' will hold to pseudo-religious and degenerated mythologies. Perhaps the tendency of modern man to hold to these shadow forms of religious and mythological concepts the startling reversals of traditional values seen in both modern literature and life itself.

...the presence of Man's story in Flannery O'Connor, a novel in which the story of Christ's life is inverted or 'reversed'... The aim of this study is to examine the work of Flannery O'Connor to achieve her reversal, that this goal might be recognized, I have chosen to discuss

Miss Blood (1) as an inversion of the story of Christ
presented in a novel framework, setting the traditional
In the twentieth century, man's symbolic values
of a Christian world, using Miss Blood as a vehicle,
have suffered neglect at the hands of a complex chaotic
world. One, if he examines the century's literary contri-
butions, finds the immediate effects of this neglect--an
abundance of nihilistic works, songs of experience and
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of a new cosmology, or an old one inverted, one in which
God has little if any role. But this absence of the Deity

is only superficial; one is more apt to accept Mircea

THE BACKROAD TO REDEMPTION: FLANNERY O'CONNOR'S WISE BLOOD

Eliade's evaluation of the man who lacks religion: "In
short, the majority of men 'without religion' still hold
to pseudo religions and degenerated mythologies."¹ Perhaps
the tendency of modern man to hold to these abased forms
of religions and mythologies causes the startling reversals
of traditional values seen in both today's literature and
life itself.

Pseudo religions and degenerated mythologies create
the framework of Wise Blood by Flannery O'Connor, a novel
in which the story of Christ's life is inverted or "stood-
on-its-head." The aim of this study is to examine the
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Wise Blood (1) as an inversion of the story of Christ

(presented in a quest framework, echoing the traditional journey of a Christian soul), using Biblical parallels, and (2) as a novel of initiation and sacrifice. In so doing, one may see the reversals of traditional Christian values and chart the progress of the protagonist, Hazel, from his call (or lack) to duty to his redemption. The marriage of a pseudo religion and a degenerated mythology in *Wise Blood* treats the protagonist as a most unusual Christian quester who lacks the qualities of a hero. The marriage of a pseudo religion and a degenerated mythology in *Wise Blood* treats the protagonist as a most unusual Christian quester who lacks the qualities of a hero. In short, the majority of men 'without religion' still hold to pseudo religions and degenerated mythologies."¹ Perhaps the tendency of modern man to hold to these abased forms of religions and mythologies causes the startling reversals of traditional values seen in both today's literature and life itself.

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The marriage of a pseudo religion and a degenerated mythology in Wise Blood creates the conditions for a most unusual Christian quest, traditional in form (complete with calls, struggles, tests, helpers, etc.) but with the values drastically altered. The landscape, for example, is not the traditional realm, not a genuine threshold of adventure. Rather, it is the grotesque South. As protagonist, Hazel Motes possesses few if any of the heroic qualities of his literary predecessors: ex., he has not the superhuman powers of a hero and is forced to depend upon the power of physical objects. He moves from light and vision to the Light and physical blindness. Even his name, Hazel Motes, implies a haze in the eyes, a mote or a particle of dust obscuring vision. He is not a hero in the traditional sense; rather, he is an inverted hero in a grotesque world.

Just as Jesus carries the

Before the distorted foundations of Wise Blood may be understood, the values of Miss O'Connor herself must be considered. She is a devout Catholic who writes about the loss of values in the fundamentalist Protestantism of the South. Why she chooses this background to assault is seen in her letter to Robert Fitzgerald, Milledgeville, 29 September 1960: "One of the good things about Protestantism is that it always contains the seeds of its own reversal. It is open at both ends--at one end to Catholicism, at the other to unbelief." In Wise Blood, Hazel Motes discovers the built-in reversals of Protestantism and, in so doing, explores the two alternatives: one sees the orthodox Catholic, Flannery O'Connor, tracing the journey of a "somewhat" Protestant soul in the terms of Catholicism. of Matthew xvii.12, "If a man have a hundred

sheep, The journey of Hazel Motes shares numerous similarities with the life of Christ. Although little or nothing is known about the birth of Hazel, the first parallel to Jesus in the novel concerns childhood and the call to the ministry. Whereas the young Savior teaches in the temple at the age of twelve (Luke ii.42), saying, "'Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?'" (Luke ii.49), "He [Hazel] knew by the time he was twelve years old that he was going to be a preacher."² Just as Jesus carries the

message of His Father, so Hazel takes on the role of his grandfather, "a circuit preacher with Jesus hidden in his head like a stinger." (20) But the figure of the grandfather is more powerful than a mere suggestion of a role. He makes possible Hazel's journey "from the [grand] father to the Father." Hazel rejects the "soul-hungry Jesus," (22) the Lord who could not forget even one insignificant soul:

Did they know that even for that boy there, for that mean sinful unthinking boy [Haze] standing there with his dirty hands clenching and unclenching at his sides, Jesus would die ten million deaths before He would let him lose his soul? He would chase him over the waters of sin (22)

His grandfather, like a voice of prophecy, tells Hazel, "Jesus would have him in the end!" (22) This passage is reminiscent of Matthew xvii.12, "'If a man have a hundred sheep, and one of them stray, will he not leave the ninety-nine in the mountains, and go in search of the one that has strayed?'" It is at this point that Hazel discovers that which is to be the major tenet of his theology: "the way to avoid Jesus was to avoid sin." (22)

Also, the figure of the grandfather foreshadows the appearance (physical) of Hazel Motes as preacher. The grandfather's traveling pulpit, a Ford automobile, functions

GRANDFATHER

in an almost identical capacity as Hazel's Essex. Both preach from the hoods of their cars, both almost dare their audiences to listen. But perhaps the most important similarity between the grandfather and grandson is the likeness of their faces: ". . . his own face was repeated almost exactly in the child's and seemed to mock him." (22)

It seems reasonable that the word religion may be substituted for the word face, for Hazel's religion seems to be a distorted reflection, a reversal, and a mockery of his elder's. And other characters see in Hazel's face his legacy, his silent calling. "'It ain't only the hat,' the driver said, 'It's a look in your face somewheres.'" (31)

The significant action of Wise Blood seems to center around Hazel Motes's call from God and how he executes it. In terms of Flannery O'Connor's Catholicism, such a call would indicate a Vocation, an invitation to serve God and the Church that is personal, supernatural, and sacrificial. Although the action begins with what appears to be the innocent purchase of a hat and a suit, these objects take on a certain sacredness. It might be said, in the words of Eliade, that they become hierophanies, "the manifestation of the sacred in some ordinary object, a stone or a tree."³

but he The hat takes on stronger religious meaning than the suit. People who have never seen Hazel Motes before find themselves asking him if he is a preacher. "'You look like a preacher,' the driver said. 'That hat looks like a preacher's hat.'" (31) And, strangely enough, the hat is noticed much more than the signs that Hazel gives of his power, particularly, the "'Take your hand off me'" (45), the Noli me tangere of the risen Christ in the Gospel of John (xx.17), which he gives to the policeman and the truckdriver. Even Mrs. Leora Watts, the prostitute whom Hazel visits, sees the sacred quality of his hat: "'That Jesus-seeing hat!'" (60) And the qualities are not destroyed when she cuts "the top of his hat out in an obscene shape." (110) As the story moves, Hazel is forced to purchase another hat and this time he wants "one that was completely opposite to the old one." (110) But the power of the hat (any hat belonging to Hazel) does not weaken. "When he put it on, it looked just as fierce as the other one had." (111) Miss O'Connor's initial description of Hazel foreshadows the role that the hat will play in the novel; i.e., it will not only become a hierophany, it will also provide an ever-present link to the grandfather: "He [Hazel] didn't look, to her, much over twenty, clearly through the glasses (they create another "haze");

but he had a stiff black broad-brimmed hat on his lap, a hat that an elderly country preacher would wear." (10)

The blue suit worn by Hazel Motes acts in much the same way as does the hat. It is purchased at the same time and, like the hat, becomes part of his vestments. "His suit was a glaring blue and the price tag was still stapled on the sleeve." (10) The garment takes on its religiosity as soon as Hazel walks out of the store and into the sunlight, where "the new suit turned glare-blue." (25) Only after Hazel blinds himself does the suit's color dim, but it retains its "glare-blue" fierceness. Frederick J. Hoffman suggests, "The color of the suit matches that of a cloudless sky, as if man's limits were nature's own."⁴ At only one point in the novel is the suit given any additional color references and at this time it becomes purple, the color associated with kings, bishops, and princes of the Church.

Other symbols of Hazel's office take on similar religious powers. He keeps with him always "a black Bible and a pair of silver-rimmed spectacles that had belonged to his mother." (23) The Bible is the only book that Hazel reads and he does not read it often, but when he does, he wears his mother's glasses. He cannot see clearly through the glasses (they create another "haze");

in using them to read the Bible, he attempts to interpret its message as his mother had seen it. Curiously, both of these sacred objects remain at the bottom of his duffel bag; he keeps the Bible because it comes from home. (25) His reason for keeping the glasses is far more philosophical and ironical, "in case his vision should ever become dim." (25) It is not unusual that these two sacred objects should represent a religion never consciously practiced and a power of vision distorted and eventually destroyed.

Armed with these vestments and tools of religion, Hazel Motes sets out in Talkinham and there he discovers the "blind" preacher, Asa Hawks, and decides to become his disciple temporarily. Hawks, as an inversion of the values of the traditional preacher, haunts Hazel with his brand of religion: "'Help a blind preacher. If you won't repent, give up a nickel. I can use it as good as you . . . Wouldn't you rather have me beg than preach? Come on and give a nickel if you won't repent.'" (40) The "blind" preacher's child hands Hazel a leaflet that silently announces his mission: "The words on the outside of it said, 'Jesus Calls You.'" (41) And Hazel, because his religion will attempt to denounce the Savior, tears it into shreds. Nevertheless, it is Hazel's disbelief that draws

him to the advocate of the very fundamentalism from which he is rebelling. Hawks can "hear the urge for Jesus in his [Haze's] voice." (50); and he commands the young man to repent, saying, "'Listen boy,' . . . 'you can't run not away from Jesus. Jesus is a fact.'" (51)

The fact that Hazel thinks the man to be blind compels him to try to see behind his dark glasses. And the more Haze tries to see, the more Hawks derides his [Haze's] spiritual blindness and, in so doing, pushes him to set up his own church. Hawks says, "'I can see more than you!' . . . 'You got eyes and see not, ears and hear not, but you have to see some time.'" (54) This statement repeats almost verbatim the warning of Jeremiah v.21: "O foolish people and without understanding; which have eyes and see not; which have ears, and hear not." In answering Hawks's condemnation, Hazel sows the seeds of reversal, proclaiming the ironic understatement of his call:

'Don't I know what exists and what don't' he cried.
'Don't I have eyes in my head? Am I a blind man?
Listen here,' he called, 'I'm going to preach a new
church--the church of truth without Jesus Christ
Crucified.'

(55)

In making this statement, Hazel provides the watchword of the entire novel: "None so blind as those that will not see."

The role played by Asa Hawks in Wise Blood must not be underestimated. Even after Hazel has started to establish the Church Without Christ, he still seeks Hawks and he still wants to know what lies behind the old man's dark glasses. Hazel, unaware that Hawks is attempting to use him to escape his degenerate daughter, Lily Sabbath (possibly a play-on-words referring to Lilith, the first but unsuitable wife of Adam in Hebrew folklore), is told of how the old man supposedly blinded himself for Jesus. Hawks shows him a newspaper clipping that says, "EVANGELIST PROMISES TO BLIND SELF," to justify his belief that Christ Jesus has redeemed him. (112) And the elderly preacher refers to the blinding of Paul, an act which he cannot imitate because he cannot complete it. For, although Paul is blinded by Jesus ("And Saul arose from the ground, but when his eyes were opened, he could see nothing." [Acts ix.8]), the Lord allows Paul to "'recover [his] sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.'" (Acts ix.17) Nevertheless, the depth of Hawks's alleged commitment bothers Hazel; it makes him question his own easy doubt.

In Hazel's determination "to see, if he could, behind the black glasses" (145), he finally decides to pick the lock of the old man's room to see for himself, to question his apparent total commitment:

Haze squatted down by him and struck a match close to his face and he opened his eyes. The two sets of eyes looked at each other as long as the match lasted; Haze's expression seemed to open onto a deeper blankness and reflect something and then close again.

(162)

At this point, Hazel sees no merit in being the disciple of a false prophet and sets out in earnest to preach the reversal of traditional orthodox values, to preach something that is true.

After discarding Hawks, Hazel channels all his energies into preaching his new church, a church founded on inverted values. Unlike Jesus, who promises redemption, Haze preaches the denial of the saving power of Jesus. And the very fact that Christ can heal and Hazel cannot necessitates the latter's creation of a church where such works are easily disregarded: "I'm member and preacher to that church where the blind don't see and the lame don't walk and what's dead stays that way." (105) That one may understand this religion as Hazel sees it, he must turn to another hierophany, Haze's forty-dollar Essex

AUTO

automobile. The Essex functions on several levels, in many capacities. On one level, it is "a high rat-colored machine with large thin wheels and bulging headlights." (69) On another, it is to be a house for Hazel (73), a traveling ark of the covenant, a box of great sanctity representing the presence of the Deity, like the one borne by the Israelites in their desert wandering (Num. x.35). (There is a kind of connection in the fact that the car costs forty dollars and that the Israelites wandered in the desert for forty years.) The car also serves as a replacement for Jesus just as Leora Watts did previously ("I don't need Jesus," Haze said. 'What do I need with Jesus? I got Leora Watts.'" [56]); Hazel contends that "nobody with a good car needs to be justified." (113) Stanley Edgar Hyman's evaluation of Hazel's Essex seems to be correct:

CAR

The Essex is Haze's religious mystery: It is . . . Ordination (haze preaches No Jesus from its hood, as his grandfather preached Jesus from the hood of his car in Hazel's childhood), and Redemption ('Nobody with a good car needs to be justified,')⁵

The car also leads Hazel to signs of his own future, to still another hierophany, a gray boulder bearing the inscription, "WOE TO THE BLASPHEMER AND WHOREMONGER! WILL HELL SWALLOW YOU UP?" (75) Hazel notes that on the bottom, in smaller letters, is written, "Jesus Saves." (75)

This stone seems to be an axis mundi, a point of communication with the divine forces at work in this grotesque universe; Hazel has preached truth through blasphemy, has been a whoremonger, and he will not be saved unless his salvation comes through Jesus.

The Essex is the implement Hazel uses to destroy the false prophet of Solace Layfield's business venture, the "selling" of his false prophet to a hungry public. "The Essex stood half over the other Prophet as if it were pleased to guard what it had finally brought down." (204) The car leaves (generally, on the ground or on the road) signs of its religious qualities. One is reminded of the rosary when the car deposits "little bead-chains of water and oil and gas on the road." (207) The constant spilling of gasoline seems to symbolize either the overflowing of Hazel's religious zeal or the free bleeding wounds of the Savior on his journey to Calvary. Regardless of its connotations, Hazel may preach the reversals of traditional values from such a vehicle because "nobody with a good car needs to be justified" (113), which may be a satire on the American assumption that it is better to have a car (or be a mobile escapist) than to have faith.

Hazel has his pulpit from which to preach in the form of the Essex; he has a doctrine to promote, that is, the inversion of traditional Christianity, the Church Without Christ. All he lacks is a disciple and Miss O'Connor supplies one in the person of Enoch Emery, a young, very impressionable boy who works guarding the gate (a possible reference to St. Peter?) at the zoo. Enoch is always participating in one kind of religious experience or another, whether he knows it or not. When he is seen for the first time in the novel, he is standing before a man who is hawking potato peelers. Miss O'Connor's language gives the reader the idea, however, that the salesman is more, perhaps, a priest. "The man stood in front of this altar, pointing over it at various people. 'How about you?' he said, pointing at a damp-haired pimply boy [Enoch]." (38)

Enoch is the most alienated character in the novel; he is also the one who possesses the "wise blood," which he has inherited from his father, whom the welfare department considers an unfit parent. (Curiously, Enoch says, "'My daddy looks just like Jesus' . . . 'His hair hangs to his shoulders.'" [51]) With the Jesus-father connection in mind, one may understand why Enoch seeks,

as pointed out by Carter Martin in The True Country, "his salvation through his own blood and that of his father, not through the redeeming blood of Jesus Christ." Listening to his "wise blood," Enoch unconsciously unveils Hazel, saying, "'I knew when I first seen you you didn't have nobody nor nothing but Jesus. I seen you and I knew it.'" (58) No matter how much Hazel tries to dislike Enoch, he cannot and he finds himself compelled to go to the zoo to find him.

In a very Catholic sense, Enoch has his own mystery to show someone. "There was something, in the center of the park, that he had discovered. It was a mystery, although it was right there in a glass case for everybody to see and there was a typewritten card over it telling all about it." (81) Enoch knows he must initiate someone, a very special person, one chosen by his "wise blood":

Who he had to show it to was a special person. This person could not be from the city but he didn't know why. He knew we would know him when he saw him and he knew he would have to see him soon or the nerve inside him would grow so big that he would be forced to steal a car or rob a bank or jump out of a dark alley onto a woman. His blood all morning had been saying the person would come today.

(81)

And, not surprisingly, the someone Enoch's blood chooses is Hazel Motes.

That Enoch may reveal his mystery to Hazel demands the careful execution of fixed ritual stages. The first of these stages consists of purchasing a chocolate malted milkshake (possibly a crude form of communion) and making smart-aleck remarks to the waitress. Then he must take Haze through the zoo and make obscene remarks to the animals. To Enoch, this stage is "only a form he had to get through." (94) But to Hazel, it seems to be more. The latter stares into an empty cage (which reminds one of the women finding the empty tomb of the risen Christ) but discovers that is not really empty; rather, Hazel sees an eye (belonging to an owl) and interprets it to be the eye of God. "'I AM clean,' Haze said to the eye." (95) The third stage of the ritual consists in crossing a road and going down a hill (a reversal of the Calvary); and Enoch, knowing the requirements of a Christian pilgrimage, emphasizes, "'We got to go on foot.'" (96) Hazel and Enoch then approach the M V S E V M. "'Muvseevum,' he [Enoch] said. The strange word made him shiver." (96) Enoch's fear of repeating the word again is reminiscent of the orthodox Jew's refusal to pronounce the name of God (an extension of the Third Commandment: "You shall not

take the name of the Lord . . . in vain."). The pilgrims then go up the stairs of the museum, enter the wide door, and seek the resting place of the mystery. Enoch shows Hazel a man in a glass case, the object of their quest: "He was about three feet long. He was naked and a dried yellow color and his eyes were drawn almost shut as if a giant block of steel were falling down on top of him."

(98) Enoch awaits Hazel's reaction to the mystery and when Haze hurls a stone at him, he (Enoch) "knew whatever was expected of him was only just beginning." (100)

Hazel's throwing of the stone reminds one of the Old Testament tale in which Abraham destroys his father's idols.⁶

Hazel's initiation is more than a beginning for Enoch Emery; it changes his entire style of life. He begins to adopt, unconsciously, the ascetic way of life. He starts saving his money and cleaning his room; he makes his washstand into a gilded tabernacle-like cabinet (131). Although he has no idea why he is doing these things, Enoch has "dreamed of unlocking the cabinet and getting in it and then proceeding to certain rites and mysteries that he had a vague idea about in the morning."

(132) At the time appointed by his blood, Enoch begins to walk down the street led by a silent melody to Hazel Motes

(139), and when he arrives, Hazel is preaching the Church Without Christ and asking for a "new jesus":

'The Church Without Christ don't have a Jesus but it needs one! It needs a new jesus! It needs one that's all man, without blood to waste, and it needs one that don't look like any other man so you'll look at him. Give me such a jesus, you people. Give me such a new jesus and you'll see how far the Church Without Christ can go!'

(141)

Enoch recognizes his call and presents Hazel with the mummy, the "new jesus," but Hazel smashes it as if it were one of Abraham's idols. He cannot allow the degenerate daughter of Asa Hawks, Lily Sabbath, to take on the role of Mother of God; he has been given the "new jesus" he requested and he has shown how far the Church Without Christ can go. His church can go absolutely nowhere.

The world of Hazel Motes has become one of disillusionment and pain. Impostors surround him. Solace Layfield's False Prophet mirrors him. Hazel, in his anguish, sets out to kill the False Prophet and, in so doing, symbolically destroys himself. After Hazel has run down the man in his Essex, he explains to the dying man why he has taken such action. "'Two things I can't stand,' Haze said, '--a man that ain't true and one that mocks what is. You shouldn't ever have tampered with me

Enoch
End

Auto

if you didn't want what you got.'" (204) Hazel takes on the role of priest to hear the dying man's confession. When the man says, "Jesus hep me,'" (205), Hazel slaps him on the back and ends his pain.

The only road left for Hazel to take (after his priestly duties are executed) is to leave the city, but he never gets the opportunity. The Essex, Hazel's only remaining vestige of power, is pushed over an embankment by a police officer and is destroyed. The impact of this destruction upon Hazel is most disturbing:

Haze stood for a few minutes, looking over the scene. His face seemed to reflect the entire distance across the clearing and on beyond, the entire distance that extended from his eyes to the blank gray sky that went on, depth after depth, into space.

(209)

Hazel realizes that he has no place to go unless he chooses the road to redemption. At this point, he chooses to blind himself, to live the life of an ascetic hermit for the rest of his days. He has discarded the car, "the vestment of his other life, and with its death, Hazel is reborn."⁷

The Hazel Motes who blinds himself removes himself from the visible realm of worldly things. He has sacrificed

himself (or is in the process of so doing) to restore proper order to his life. In his penitence, he takes on the role of the ascetic. His landlady, Mrs. Flood, thinks, "He might as well be one of them monks, he might as well be in a monkery." (218) She discovers that he is throwing away all his extra money, that he is putting stones in his shoes and wrapping barbed wire around his chest. When she asks him why he is doing all these things, his only reply is, "'To pay.'" (222) Hazel reverses his ideas after his blinding. Whereas he "was clean" when he preached the Church Without Christ, he is now torturing himself because he is not clean. With his blindness comes the realization that his former vision was limited; with the loss of temporal light Hazel becomes conscious of the light of God. Hazel is reminiscent of St. Juliana of Norwich who wished for "no comfort in fleshly or earthly living,"⁸ so that she might come to God through extreme pain.

As a journey of the soul, Hazel's quest is one made in reverse. Hazel is portrayed as "a thin nervous shadow walking backwards." (37) When Haze buys his automobile, the symbol of his tabernacle, its first movements are backwards. (73) Mrs. Flood, the landlady who resembles Mary Magdalene (as a convert to Hazel's sacrifice), sees

him "going backwards to Bethlehem." (219) And this student sees Haze backing himself into Heaven. Hazel has dedicated himself to Christ's image (which has haunted him throughout the entire story) and has set up all the necessary preparations for a form of self-crucifixion. Haze is much like Francis Thompson in "The Hound of Heaven"; regardless of how much Haze flees "Him down the labrinthe ways," he cannot refute God's reality or escape His callings. In the words of Miss O'Connor, in her note to the second edition, Hazel's integrity lies in his not being able ". . . to get rid of the ragged figure [Christ] who moves from tree to tree in the back of his mind."

The world of reversals and inversion of *Wise Blood* is an excellent setting for the backward journey of a Christian heretic who eventually turns believer. As Miss O'Connor has suggested, Hazel Motes's fundamental Protestantism contains the seeds of its own reversal, and the protagonist journeys from his grandfather to his Heavenly Father in a most unusual fashion--in reverse. His initiations and his ultimate sacrifice are but steps in this inverted journey through a world of evil. Hazel Motes proves that if one man is willing to sacrifice himself in Christ's image, redemption is still possible in a world of debased values. He is, as Jonathan Baumbach points out,

". . . the fallen Adam . . . who achieves at last a greater innocence than that he lost, journeying into the hell of evil and returning, purged, purified, reborn."

Moreover, Hazel Motes is a fabulous voyager who makes a mythic journey in reverse across the threshold of man's spiritual possibilities, through Flannery O'Connor's "landscape of nightmare," one in which the journey back from hell is more difficult than the Descent.

⁴Frederick J. Hoffman, "The Search for Redemption," The Added Dimension: The Art and Mind of Flannery O'Connor, ed. Melvin J. Friedman et al. (New York, 1966), p. 39.

⁵Stanley Edgar Hyman, Flannery O'Connor: Pamphlets on American Writers, LIV (Minneapolis, 1966), p. 10.

⁶Sir Leonard Woolley, Abraham: Recent Discoveries and Hebrew Origins (New York, 1936), p. 200. "Of the Jewish sources the oldest written authority is the Book of Jubilees (after 135 B.C.); the versions in other Midrashim were mostly written in the Christian era, and it is impossible to trace their oral source; they are in some cases at least fanciful elaborations of the canonical books produced at a later period."

⁷Jonathan Baumbach, "The Acid of God's Grace: Wise Blood by Flannery O'Connor," The Landscape of Nightmare: Studies in the Contemporary American Novel (New York, 1965), p. 96.

⁸Paul Molinari, S. J., Julian of Norwich: The Teaching of a 14th Century English Mystic (New York, 1958), p. 15.

FOOTNOTES

¹Mircea Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion, trans. Williard R. Trask (New York, 1959), p. 209.

²All page references to Wise Blood are taken from The Noonday Press edition, 1962.

³Eliade, p. 11.

⁴Frederick J. Hoffman, "The Search for Redemption," The Added Dimension: The Art and Mind of Flannery O'Connor, ed. Melvin J. Friedman et al. (New York, 1966), p. 39.

⁵Stanley Edgar Hyman, Flannery O'Connor. Pamphlets on American Writers, LIV (Minneapolis, 1966), p. 10.

⁶Sir Leonard Woolley, Abraham: Recent Discoveries and Hebrew Origins (New York, 1936), p. 200. "Of the Jewish sources the oldest written authority is the Book of Jubilees (after 135 B.C.); the versions in other Midrashim were mostly written in the Christian era, and it is impossible to trace their oral source; they are in some cases at least fanciful elaborations of the canonical books produced at a later period."

⁷Jonathan Baumbach, "The Acid of God's Grace: Wise Blood by Flannery O'Connor," The Landscape of Nightmare: Studies in the Contemporary American Novel (New York, 1965), p. 96.

⁸Paul Molinari, S. J., Julian of Norwich: The Teaching of a 14th Century English Mystic (New York, 1958), p. 15.

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PREFACE

When Van Wyck Brooks wrote The Ordeal of Mark Twain (1920) he raised questions, some still unanswered, and started a dispute, which soon became bitter. Indeed, much since written about Twain has been mainly an attack upon Brooks' theories, or even upon Brooks himself for having advanced them.¹

I have had a rather difficult decision to make concerning the choice of texts to be examined in this study of Mark Twain's MARK TWAIN AND HIS CRITICS: AN ANALYSIS OF FOUR CRITICAL WORKS. The books on Twain by The Ordeal of Mark Twain may be called, in all honesty, literary criticism. After a thoughtful reading of the book, I find difficulty in considering it such; rather, I feel that the book contains attacks personal in nature and theories illogically conceived. Brooks does an excellent job of using Mark Twain as a scapegoat for all of the tendencies of which he disapproved in American life;² this, in my opinion, is not criticism; this is slander and misrepresentation of the facts.

In excluding The Ordeal of Mark Twain from my study, I am only denying its power as a literary study; it is not my intention to obscure its place in the literary history

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of Mark Twain. Surely Mark Twain criticism would have suffered grievously had The Ordeal of Mark Twain gone unwritten, but to give the book the foremost place in this body of criticism would be, in my opinion, an injustice, perhaps an insult, to the truly dedicated Twain scholar.

In examining the body of criticism surrounding Mark Twain, his life and his work, one is amazed, if not puzzled, by its uniqueness. Twain criticism does not divide easily into the familiar categories of biography, general critical studies, critical studies concerning a specific work, etc.; rather, the student encounters categories that merge one into another, producing such mavericks as general critical biography, critical studies in biographically oriented, and specific studies using a critical biographical approach. Why Mark Twain criticism defies the usual system of classification is a relatively simple question to answer: i.e., modern Twain criticism has used only two points of departure: 1) Albert Bigelow Paine's official biography (1912) and 2) the Brooks-Devoto feud. Attempts to tie these points together have succeeded in giving to the critical body of work such bastard forms as mentioned above.

In this study, four volumes of criticism are to be considered, and I have purposely chosen the following four types, each representing a different approach to the life and works of Mark Twain:

- 1) Bernard DeVoto's Mark Twain's America (1932), chosen as the "preface" to the man Mark Twain and his work;

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- 1) Bernard DeVoto's Mark Twain's America (1932), chosen as the "preface" to the man Mark Twain and his work;
- 2) DeLancey Ferguson's Mark Twain: Man and Legend (1943), selected because it is the only critical biography which covers Mark Twain's entire life;
- 3) Walter Blair's Mark Twain and "Huck Finn" (1960), chosen as the outstanding example of critical commentary concerning an individual work;
- 4) Henry Nash Smith's Mark Twain: The Development of a Writer (1962), picked as an example of a recent specialized critical study.

Although the four differ in approach, they have much in common. The three more recent writers (Ferguson, Blair, Smith) make great use of the DeVoto work; likewise, the Blair study profits from the Ferguson, the Smith from the Blair, etc. The books also give to the reader a fairly reliable record of the growth of Twain criticism and allow him to speculate as to what new contributions to this body may look like.

In considering Bernard DeVoto's Mark Twain's America (1932) as literary criticism, one must remember at all times that the author did not intend his reader to do so. In the "Foreword," DeVoto explicitly states his position: "Nor have I adventured far into literary criticism: that department of beautiful thinking is too insulated from reality for my taste." (xi) He prefers to

call the volume "an essay in the correction of ideas," (xi) "based . . . solidly on the books of Mark Twain." (xiii) The author's interests do not go beyond Twain's books and the major effort "has been to perceive where and how they issue from American life." (xiii) However, Mark Twain's America is one of the masterpieces of Twain criticism, in that it is not only a chronicle of Mark Twain and the American frontier but also a masterly tracing of the man's literary development. The style, the subject matter, and the structure make DeVoto's study the masterpiece it is. The history of the frontier and the history of Mark Twain's writings fuse together beautifully. DeVoto structures the paragraphs and chooses the words in such a fashion that this process occurs naturally. Very little in the book is forced.

DeVoto sets forth the frontier as it appeared during Twain's time in the descriptions of St. Petersburg and its people. For the most part, the frontier exists "as a condition of simplicity, isolation, and noncompetitive society." (30) But the frontier humor exists in itself. DeVoto cites as contributions of this humor many concepts which later worked themselves into the writings of Twain--the itinerant actor (33), the laughableness of the stage Negro (33), American folk music as an art form (36)--but

he is quick to remind us that his "preface" concerns itself "with the frontier only in so far as the frontier may have begotten the books of Samuel Clemens." (42)

In attempting to give the reader a picture of life on the frontier, DeVoto turns to St. Petersburg, that he might describe the effect which growing up in such a town would have upon a boy, and the author does this superbly:

Three sides of the village were prairie and forest, where boys found an enchantment that was to become the very tissue of certain books. The village itself was the abode of the common man and, while it remained St. Petersburg, had the graces of leisure, and humanity, and sun. The actual frontier had withdrawn westward and northward: here remained an ease in its wake. Life was without pressure. There were no castes, except three constant ones,--the respectable, the squatters, and the slaves. Neither wealth nor poverty really existed, for the earth was opulent to all and disproportionately enriched no one. The village was a little world, where an abservant boy laid the basis for five sevenths of his books, but a somewhat simplified one.

(46)

From this paragraph the student learns much of the influences that worked upon Mark Twain. DeVoto has, with greatest economy of words, presented the physical surroundings, the conditions the town imposed upon its inhabitants, the life style, the social order. And, using this paragraph as a point of departure, DeVoto sets out to describe that fourth side of St. Petersburg, the

Mississippi River. Almost idyllically, the author's manner of narration changes when the river is mentioned. Gone is the succinct style, the economy of words, which only one-half an inch above described the town. In this reader's opinion, the reason for the shift lies in the subtlety of Bernard DeVoto as literary artist and critic. He builds his description out of the very meat of Mark Twain's first half of Life on the Mississippi, and, by doing so, gives his statements authenticity and the flavor of Twain himself:

And on the fourth side, where the roads ran down--the Mississippi. Cosmopolis. For on the fourth side St. Petersburg opened on the world. Here the energy of America boiled violently, and here passed, daily, all that St. Petersburg was not. The village slumbered in its sun till smoke was black above the bluffs and some one cried 'Steam-boat a-comin'!' Then it woke and went to the wharves to touch the infinite. This was pagentry. For the rivers were the conduits of the national adventure and the Mississippi was fable itself given life.

Jackass Hill. In the chapter entitled "Washoe" (48) Both DeVoto and Twain share in the statement that on the river, "Here passed the world." (48); Twain said that he had found no one whom he had not met before on the river and DeVoto maintains "He spoke the truth." (50) In speaking of the river as symbol, the critic launches

a historical, biographical, personal account, tying the town of Hannibal and the river together for all time:

All the world moved down the Mississippi. And here was Hannibal, at the waterside. It was an idyll and a cosmos. The democrat possessed America and his incandescent energy was making it something it had not been. This was the democracy of the New Jerusalem. The dilemma of democracy has been insoluble to more minds than Mark Twain's. Here at least was its lovier horn, a waterside village drowsing in the sun between the prairies and the chocolate waters of the Mississippi.

One would record the idyll. One would make Hannibal into St. Petersburg with the forests and the river. Then, after a time, there would be something else. St. Petersburg would grow into Hadleyburg and Dawson's Landing, for the dilemma had another horn. And then Nigger Jim and Huckleberry Finn would put out on a fragment of a lumber raft, by night, and the current would take them southward through eternity.

(52)

DeVoto's account of Mark Twain's America does not end with the river; it only starts there. The writer takes the student on similar tours, of Washoe and of Jackass Hill. In the chapter entitled "Washoe" one finds Virginia City described, learning that in this town Mark Twain picked up "the plain song of American drinking" (124) and found the "embryo of the Wild West Show." (127) DeVoto's literary opinions come into full force in this chapter when he attributes Samuel Clemens' literary maturity to Washoe:

Mark Twain's America is a superb piece of

It was Washoe that matured Sam Clemens, that gave him, after three false apprenticeships, the trade he would follow all his life, and that brought into harmony the elements of his mind which before had fumbled for expression. In the desert air a writer grew to maturity. Sun Mountain brought him to recognition of himself. In Washoe he took the name that is known more widely than any other in our literature and will be known as long as any. It was in Washoe on February 2, 1863, that Mark Twain was born.

(133)

Huckleberry Finn:

On Jackass Hill, DeVoto says, Twain made the last discovery of his literary apprenticeship, a way of converting humor to the embodiment of his perception of character. (159)

DeVoto as critical writer does, however, have faults and shortcomings. One cannot help thinking that the work might be better off organically without the recurring attacks upon Van Wyck Brooks. DeVoto makes his point in the beginning of the "preface," through his introduction, and, particularly, in his statement that the book is "an essay in the correction of ideas." (xi) But Brooks is assaulted in every chapter and the one entitled "The Critics of Mark Twain" is dedicated to his literary demise. Also, one cannot fully commend a style which, though it is beautiful and appropriate, has a tendency to find itself ensnared in its own sentimental hyperbole. Nevertheless, one has difficulty criticizing Bernard DeVoto; Mark Twain's America is a superb piece of

scholarship, regardless of what minor flaws it contains. One cannot deny that the final chapter, "The Artist as American," is the complete statement of what the author has been trying to say. DeVoto ties together all of the threads--the river, the frontier, the oral tradition, the craft of Mark Twain--and skillfully relates them to Huckleberry Finn:

But first he [Huck] is a shrewd boy who takes a raft down the Mississippi, through a world incomparably alive. With him goes a fullness made and shaped wholly of America. It is only because the world he passes through is real and only because it is American that his journey escapes into universals and is immortal. His book is American life formed into great fiction.

(320)

Of DeVoto's work, one can only say that his book is the American life of Mark Twain formed into great criticism.

Unlike Bernard DeVoto's "preface" to the writings of Mark Twain, DeLancey Ferguson's Mark Twain: Man and Legend concerns itself with being a critical biography, a book of broad focus and great size. But Mark Twain's America and Ferguson's biography share a common ground: they are both concerned with facts about Mark Twain and find little or no value in exploiting the works by means of literary theories.³ Ferguson's book has the distinction of being the only critical biographical work that

carries Samuel Clemens from birth to death; and, perhaps, because of its scope, is concise and not particularly decorative. It lacks the flamboyance of DeVoto's Mark Twain's America, but it covers three or four times as much material. He had only to learn to write as he talked." (87)

Within the framework of Mark Twain's life, Ferguson gives the reader indication of influences encountered by the boy. He, like DeVoto, considers the tradition of humor conveyed by word of mouth. But Ferguson describes the predominant form of humor as anecdote, saying, "The American was anecdotal, and on the frontier the anecdote served all purposes from laughter to sermonizing." (27)

Although Ferguson records this influence and many others, he does not attribute to them the power DeVoto sees in them. Ferguson does not see the river, for example, as a constant force in the life of Samuel Clemens. He says, "The river had furnished its one-time pilot with a name which was to become a household word. It was the river's best gift to him, and in 1863 it was all he wanted of the river." (85) Perhaps the explanation of this statement lies in the fact that Ferguson was compiling a critical biography, not a romantic treasurehouse of reminiscences, but one questions the validity of this statement.

February 2, 1863, in Washoe. (133) Ferguson has decided

One point which Ferguson makes strikes this reader as being extremely valid; i.e., while Twain worked for the Enterprise, "he had acquired the capacity for terse and picturesque expression, but his humor was still slapstick He had only to learn to write as he talked." (87) He sees humor as self-dramatization (107) and to get this self-dramatization on paper certainly is not easy.

Ferguson places himself in opposition to Bernard DeVoto on two particular points. He considers Mark Twain and his contemporary humorists to be Victorians, calling The Prince and the Pauper (205) and Pudd'nhead Wilson (253) the products of Victorianism:

Artemus Ward and Goodman, Dan De Quille and Mark Twain were not frontiersmen; they were Victorians, even when they were drunk, and they accepted Victorian literary tender at face value. For them the fact that they were working in Virginia City instead of Boston was the most trifling of accidents. The suggestion that the 'frontier' had its own code of morals and esthetics they would have scorned. (90)

The notion of the frontier seen so vividly in DeVoto is all but denied by Ferguson. The exact date upon which Mark Twain matured into a writer is another source of controversy. As previously stated, Bernard DeVoto chooses February 2, 1863, in Washoe. (133) Ferguson has decided of

that the place was San Francisco, Maguire's Academy to be exact, on the second day of October, 1866:

. . . on the stage of Maguire's Academy of music, October 2, 1866, Mark Twain took the last step that was needed to make him one of the greatest writers of his century. He began the process of infusing into his writing the charm of his drawling speech. Where his writing was crude or stiff, the test of oral utterance exposed the weakness and taught him how to mend it. Though time was still needed to make his finished utterance second-nature, his apprenticeship to the craft of letters was complete, Mark Twain the personality had come to birth out of Sam Clemens, and all that he was to say and write for the rest of his life was to be merely an expansion and consolidation of this San Francisco achievement.

(113)

Ferguson describes Twain's writing method and its development, but, for the most part, sees little change in it throughout his (Twain's) literary career. He accuses the author of doing in his first book, The Innocent Abroad, the same things he does in almost every book that was to follow: he begins "with a burst of enthusiasm which carried him about halfway. Then the task became irksome; the enthusiasm waned, and he snatched at any material which could be levied on to fill up the contracted number of pages." (137) The critic also makes the statement that Twain's books seldom come to a natural end, he just gets tired and stops. (211) Ferguson, always working inside of

his critical framework, goes also into the structure of other books. His discussion of what happens to Life on the Mississippi; i.e., why the first part differs so radically from the second, is excellent. His case is cool, analytical, well-thought-out; and he documents his conclusions with articles and opinions which have pertinence.

As an innovation in Mark Twain criticism, Ferguson presents to the reader his description of the manuscript of The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, commenting upon changes and deletions. From this careful observation, Ferguson concludes that any editing done by Livy or anyone else was done for the sake of the book; that the changes made are necessary and that the majority of them are changes in detail only. (220) He also considers the necessity of editing in the light that Twain was "composing as he wrote, with only the vaguest general plan in mind." (223)

Huck Finn, for Ferguson (and for the majority of critics), does more than compensate for Twain's mistake of not writing Tom Sawyer in the first person. The former novel is also superior in structure:

Huck Finn owes part of its superiority over Tom Sawyer to the fact that for its main outline it has only the familiar journey motif which always

made Mark's thought flow most freely; . . . he simply took a clever and uninhibited boy, and let the whole world of the Mississippi happen to him. The big river itself bears Huck on from one experience to another, with none of the make-shift transitions that link Tom's adventures.

(227)

Ferguson is also in agreement with the greater number of Twain critics who see most of Mark's characterizations as being similar to each other in one aspect or another.

Because Ferguson's criticism is within the historical framework of Mark Twain's life, he is able to cite prototypes for characters and events. Furthermore, he traces the growth of Twain's bitterness but, from the chronological sequence, decides this trait was always a part of the artist. It merely had not surfaced completely in the earlier works.

The success of Mark Twain: Man and Legend may be attributed to several well-worked out schemes of the author. The primary device is, of course, the chronological framework; secondary devices include the predominance of a simple, easily understood syntax, the constant referral to facts, and the presence of the skillfully examined and digested Huck Finn manuscript. The device of combining biography and criticism has worked well in its own right, although this reader feels Ferguson's work to be greatly inferior to the DeVoto work.

Turning from critical biography to the field of critical commentary concerning an individual work of Mark Twain leads the student inevitably to Walter Blair's Mark Twain and "Huck Finn," (1960), a literary history of The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn from the book's inception through its foreign editions and various printings. Of the work, Edward Wagenknecht comments, in his Mark Twain: The Man and His Work (1967):

. . . Walter Blair's amazing adventure in scholarship, Mark Twain and 'Huck Finn,' a necessity not to be lamented since this is a reading adventure second in enlightenment and pleasure only to Huckleberry Finn itself and one of which no sensible admirer of Mark Twain would willingly deprive himself.

(65)

Of all the critics thus considered, Walter Blair has discovered the greatest amount of new material concerning his subject, and, in this reader's opinion, has arrived at the most new conclusions concerning what DeVoto and Ferguson have both considered Mark Twain's best work, Huck Finn. Blair's volume is truly a biography of the novel and he feels no pains of remorse in calling it more than collected reverie; Huck Finn is a masterpiece of the creative nature:

This biography of Huckleberry Finn will show that the novel which Mark Twain completed that summer afternoon in 1883 was something very different from

a simple recording of scenes, personalities, and events. It will show a great many forces transforming actualities into fiction which differs greatly from them--the author's infallible memory, his manipulation of facts for artistic purposes, his sharp recollections of recent experiences and emotions, his extraordinarily varied and influential reading, his philosophizing about moral motivation and the nature of depravity. (10)

Necessarily the Blair volume contains quite a bit of Twain biography, but it is skillfully handled and Blair chooses only the material he needs to tell the reader of the history of the book under investigation. Blair painstakingly examines every influence upon Mark Twain that might have led to the writing of Huck Finn; he researches the genre of children's fiction before the days of Tom Sawyer, he shows Tom Sawyer as Twain's rehearsal for the later work, he examines the manuscript as no other scholar has done previously, even to the matter of researching Twain's use of violet ink and the qualities and quantities of writing materials used, in order to determine when Huck Finn was recorded in its final manuscript form. following:

Blair, disagreeing with Ferguson, calls Twain's characters a select cross-section of American life--"He chose characters which suited his purposes." (53) But he

agrees with DeVoto concerning Mark Twain's truthfulness to his reader in Tom Sawyer:

The humorist's reading, past and present, contributed episodes, an all-over scheme, and a theme which concerned the true nature of boyhood. And parts of the book and the book as a whole benefited greatly from his skill as an artist. . . . He had learned how to utilize his memories to suit his purposes. These discoveries would be important when he embarked shortly upon the writing of a sequel.

(70)

One point upon which all of the mentioned critics agree is the reason for Twain's shift from third person in Tom Sawyer to the first person method of narration in Huck Finn; i.e., "The new novel would run its protagonist 'through life'! it therefore had to be written in the first person" (98)

Blair, however, is the first critic to differ with Bernard DeVoto's time schedule for the writing of Huck Finn, and Blair is the first person to discuss when the Grangerford episodes were written. Through a most tedious outline and a painstaking series of proofs, the critic arrives at the following:

In 1942 Bernard DeVoto published a careful study of the writing of Huckleberry Finn which held that the novel was written in the summer of 1876 and the summer of 1883 in Elmira. Persuaded by his convincing arguments, until recently scholars have

accepted his findings. I believe, however, that a recent study proves that Mark Twain wrote chapters xvii and xviii between mid-October, 1879, and mid-June, 1880, in Hartford; that he wrote chapters xix-xxi between mid-June, 1880, and mid-June, 1883, and that he wrote the rest of the novel at Quarry Farm in the summer of 1883.

(199)

After this statement, Blair presents several sets of proof.

Some of the proof comes from the Mark Twain Papers; other proof comes from Blair's almost comic adventures with the violet episodes. He says of this effort:

If all this work had proved useless, it is possible that I would have been somewhat irritated. For a time this seemed the likely outcome, because it soon became clear that Twain had been versatile and very unsystematic. During this period he used about thirty kinds of paper. He wrote with pencil, with a typewriter, and used at least five kinds of ink. Often his lack of system was awe-inspiring: he might use two kinds of paper in two letters during the same day--or even in one letter. And if he wrote a fairly long manuscript he was almost sure to use six different kinds of paper. This was discouraging.

(201)

Blair, as a critic and researcher, is probably the most truthful about his happy discoveries or disappointments. He shares with his reader the plight of the truly dedicated Mark Twain scholar, for, as one might imagine, Mark Twain criticism and scholarship are very difficult and not always successful. And Blair is not afraid to attack

the sacred cows of scholarship. He definitely disagrees in several instances with Ferguson and DeVoto; he takes issue also with Gladys Bellamy's Mark Twain as Literary Artist (193). (He accuses Twain of making false autobiographies in Huck Finn;) he enlarges the author's categories of fictional characters:

The humorist once distinguished three sorts of fictional characters: one the author draws 'from his recollection of someone he has known'; one he blends from 'two or more real characters in his recollection'; one he copies from 'a character which impressed itself upon [the author's] memory from some book.' The dauphin seems to be a fourth type in which the author blends a real character with a character about whom he has read or heard.

(278)

Blair, in his book, not only gives to the student a biography of Huck Finn, but also presents a history of the book's publication and criticism. One cannot deny that Mark Twain and "Huck Finn" is a truly scholarly adventure in Twain criticism. It is a book that is both instructive and enjoyable; and one feels as if Walter Blair enjoyed writing it as much as his readers enjoy the treasure of knowledge it makes available. The style is easily understood, the language is natural, and the logic is clear; it is, in short, excellent criticism, a unique blend of the modern and traditional.

As an example of recent specialized criticism of the writings of Mark Twain, Henry Nash Smith's Mark Twain: The Development of a Writer (1967) has been chosen as an example of just where future Twain criticism may be headed. The book is concerned mainly with style and Smith traces the handling of these problems in nine of Twain's works--The Innocents Abroad, Roughing It, Life on the Mississippi, Tom Sawyer, Huckleberry Finn, A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court, Pudd'nhead Wilson, The Mysterious Stranger, and The Man Who Corrupted Hadleyburg. Smith sees the problem of structure involved in the conflict of the dominant culture (the ideal) and the world of vernacular values (the commonplace) and Smith considers Huckleberry Finn to be the best example of Twain's reaching "the full embodiment of vernacular values in fiction." (vii)

Smith has been chosen as the final example of criticism because of his somewhat new approach to Mark Twain criticism; he also has been chosen because his criticism has taken much from the three earlier examples. In almost direct opposition to Bernard DeVoto, he tells the reader "to avoid seeing Mark Twain merely as a spokesman for the emergent frontier" (3) Also, in opposition to DeVoto, Smith turns from the world of facts and begins to expound a literary theory, using facts, but not

in a complete manner. This places him in opposition with Ferguson. From Ferguson, however, Smith borrows the chronological framework in which to show the development of Mark Twain as a writer. Walter Blair's contribution to Smith's study is a great deal of the material which composes the chapter on Huckleberry Finn, "A Sound Heart and a Deformed Conscience." In Smith's dealings with style, point of view, and the conflict of vernacular and dominant culture, one is reminded of the point made by Walter Blair and enlarged upon by Smith in his study:

Thinking back, one realizes that the selection of the narrator had long been an important concern of Twain and basic to his successes.

(97)

In the criticism, only two of the eight chapters stand out vividly in the mind of the reader, Chapter IV, "Discovery of the River and the Town" and Chapter VI, "A Sound Heart and A Deformed Conscience." The former deals with the writing of Tom Sawyer, and the concepts of the Matter of Hannibal and the Matter of the River sound, in description, as if they were strongly influenced by Bernard DeVoto's Mark Twain's America. The latter chapter, as mentioned previously, seems excellent, but one may easily discern the author's immense debt to Walter Blair and Mark Twain and "Huck Finn."

The weaknesses of Mark Twain: The Development of a Writer are easily seen. Stylistically, the book is inferior to the three earlier volumes. Because Smith uses the chronological framework to trace the development of a writer, the book, necessarily, ends in the middle, with the discussion of Huckleberry Finn; after this point, the rest is anticlimax. Smith has a tendency to overwrite his criticism and, in regard to this tendency, one may only offer the advice of DeLancey Ferguson, saying "He had only to learn to write as he talked." (87) Smith does, however, bring into the criticism of Mark Twain quite a few lofty ideas, but his manner of expression is more involved and harder to follow than the style of DeVoto, Ferguson, and Blair. Smith does not share their preoccupation with facts; rather, he takes his theory and proves it almost convincingly.

As to the future of Twain criticism, I feel as if it will be not so much in the direction of Henry Nash Smith's Mark Twain: The Development of a Writer but more in the tradition of Walter Blair's Mark Twain and "Huck Finn," for, as more new and previously unpublished material comes into the Twain collections, there will be new possibilities to explore and once again the emphasis will be on

the facts, on logical convincing proofs of how, what, when, where, and why Twain chose to write his stories. Hopefully, the trend in Mark Twain criticism will turn away from the theoretical; hopefully, the new criticism will pattern itself after the works of Walter Blair, whether it be biography, critical biography, selected or general criticism. If one may take the curiosity of Blair and a reasonable facsimile of his creative talents into new works of a critical nature, Mark Twain criticism may look forward to a glorious future, having already had a similar past in the works of Bernard DeVoto, DeLancey Ferguson, and Walter Blair.

BI FOOTNOTES

Blair, ¹E. Hudson Long, Mark Twain Handbook, p. 60.

²Edward Wagenknecht, Mark Twain: The Man and His Work, p. 164.

³E. Hudson Long, op. cit., pp. 48-49.

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