THE IMAGE OF THE INVISIBLE GOD (COL. 1:15): FORMING A SACRAMENTAL IMAGINATION THROUGH THE WORKS OF HOPKINS AND O'CONNOR

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Abstract

by

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This thesis considers the role that literature and language can play in forming the imaginations of students, specifically high school students, to see and respond to the world sacramentally, or in a way that affirms and participates in the sacramental act of God being made present in nature and human beings. This is undertaken by first considering the role of memory in forming the imagination. It considers how the prosody, images, and metaphors of Hopkins's poetry and the images and symbols of O'Connor's short stories can create a storehouse of images, sounds, patterns, symbols, and metaphors that can be used to recognize likenesses among realities, specifically among visible and invisible realities.

Once the memory is sufficiently stocked with these images, the students can begin to engage with them dialectically as they are led through discussions on both Hopkins and O'Connor. In Hopkins's poetry, the sacramental presence of God in the created world is best revealed in nature. By using the sacramental imagination to read Hopkins's poetry and engage with the natural world, a cosmology of Wisdom emerges in and through poetry. In O'Connor's short stories, the sacramental presence of God in the created world is best revealed in the human person. When applied to O'Connor's short stories, the sacramental imagination reveals an anthropology of Wisdom in and through storytelling.

Once they have engaged the literature dialectically, the students can then consider it rhetorically, as they learn to communicate through speaking and writing the arguments discovered in specific works, in particular, arguments concerning the presence of God and Wisdom in the created world. The sacramental imagination then becomes societal as it is embodied and communicated in the words and writings of students.

In addition to a critical consideration of how to form a sacramental imagination through the works of Hopkins and O'Connor, this thesis also includes an appendix of lesson plans and writing assignments that correspond to each stage in the development of such an imagination: memory, dialectic, and rhetoric.

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CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION

How one's imagination has been formed and trained to engage with and respond to the world around one and the things that are in it is fundamental to determining how one lives one's life. An ill-formed or neglected imagination can lead to a life that is static and uninspired, or, what is perhaps more dangerous, a life that lacks cohesiveness. If the imagination is understood very loosely to be a way of looking at and responding to life, then it is critical in forming a link between external realities and the interior self. In his book, *Tending the Heart of Virtue*, Victor Gurorian defines the imagination as the "process by which the self makes metaphors out of images given by experience."[1] To engage in this process of imagining, therefore, requires a "carrying over" or "carrying beyond," as the origins of the word *metaphor* suggest. Metaphorical language carries us from one thing to something else by suggesting a likeness or analogy.

Imagining is fundamentally a process of forming links between things, of discovering likenesses, and, therefore, of discovering meaning. As Stratford Caldecott explains in his book, *Beauty in the Word*, "it is the imagination that interprets, that gives meaning to the world, by 'joining the dots,' discovering the otherwise invisible connections between things, events, and qualities," since "to discover meaning is to connect, to travel from one thing to another, or to go on a journey."[2] Without a well-formed imagination, one's life will not only lack cohesiveness, but it will also lack meaning. It is therefore critical to not only encourage students and young people to cultivate their imaginations, but to also actively form and train their imaginations so that they will best understand how to discover meaning in their lives and the world around them.

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[1] Vigen Guroian, *Tending the Heart of Virtue* (New York: Oxford UP, 1998), 24.
[2] Stratford Caldecott, *Beauty in the Word: Rethinking the Foundations of Education* (Tacoma: Angelico Press, 2012), 121

The imagination is a comprehensive thing, as it deals with all images given by experience. In this thesis, I will consider a specific kind of imagination that is distinct not in the types of images that it deals with, but in the types of metaphors it makes from those images. That specific kind of imagination is the sacramental imagination, which takes the images given by experience and responds to them sacramentally. Sacraments as defined by the Catechism of the Catholic Church are "efficacious signs of grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church, by which divine life is dispensed to us."[3] What is unique about a sacrament is that it is a visible sign which signifies an invisible reality—grace and participation in divine life—but also which makes present and contains that which it signifies. As an "efficacious sign," a sacrament not only signifies and gestures towards this invisible reality, but it also makes the reality present by conferring grace upon the one receiving the sacrament. To apply sacramental theology to language means to consider how language can also play a role in relating visible—or at least imaginable—realities and images to those realities that are unimaginable apart from divine revelation: mysteries. The language of the imagination, or metaphorical language, becomes sacramental when it makes invisible realities—or mysteries—present and apprehensible through written or spoken words. A sacramental imagination, therefore, makes metaphors out of the images given by experience that allow for the apprehension of divine mysteries through language.

In his book, *Letters to a Young Catholic*, George Weigel succinctly captures what is most commonly meant by the term "sacramental imagination," a term often used but not often clearly defined. He notes that the sacramental imagination is "the core conviction that God saves and sanctifies the world through the materials of the world."[4] Therefore, the sacramental imagination places special emphasis on the material realities of the world, which include both physical objects and the physical body, as instruments through which God carries out his plan for salvation. At the same time, while the sacramental imagination emphasizes the importance of the physical realities of this world, it always does so in order to establish a link between this world and what Weigel calls the "*really* real world that makes this world possible, the world of transcendent Truth and Love."[5] The sacramental imagination pays special attention to this "ordinary stuff of the world," which is "the material God uses to bring us into communion with the truly extraordinary—with God himself."[6]

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[3] Catechism of the Catholic Church, https://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/p2s1c1a2.htm#1127, 1131

Although Catholic theologians and writers have long recognized the significance of the sacramental imagination as a way of perceiving and responding to the created world, very few scholars have considered how such an imagination can and ought to be cultivated and its place in the formation and education of the child and young adult. A recent publication, *Seeing with the Eyes of the Heart: Cultivating a Sacramental Imagination in an Age of Pornography*, presents the sacramental imagination as the cure for imaginations wounded by a pornographic age. The book argues, through a number of essays, that by cultivating the sacramental imagination, the erotic can be readopted into the "rich memorial culture"[7] of the Church, so that the erotic image can once again recall "the compassion and the love of the Trinity in the Incarnation and the institution of the Eucharist."[8] Throughout the book and in most of the essays, the essayists consider how to cultivate the sacramental imagination through the visual arts and through holy images and iconography.

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[4] George Weigel, *Letters to a Young Catholic* (New York: Basic Books, 2004), 86.
[5] Ibid., 87.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Ann W. Astell, "Memory, the Sacrament of Marriage, and the Song of Songs" in *Seeing with the Eyes of the Heart: Cultivating a Sacramental Imagination in an Age of Pornography*, ed. Elizabeth T. Groppe (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2020), 179.
[8] Ibid., Kimberly Hope Belcher, "Sacramental Exposure," 159.

However, only Ann Astell's essay, "Memory, the Sacrament of Marriage, and the Song of Songs," concerns itself primarily with poetry as a means of cultivating the sacramental imagination. Astell reflects on the Song of Songs as a poem that, when read sacramentally, is powerful enough to "be both preventive medicine and palliative balm in an era of pornography, forming our memory with erotic imagery that symbolically represents Christ's love for the Church and each human soul and celebrates marriage and religious life as a sacramental participation in divine love."[9] Her reflections on the Song of Songs as a way to cultivate the sacramental imagination, especially her reflections relating to memory, are certainly helpful when considering how to form a sacramental imagination through literature. However, this thesis will further and more specifically consider how literature—both poetry and fiction—can be taught in a classroom to high school students so that it actively trains their imaginations to make metaphors from the images given by experience that relate visible and invisible realities.

In order to do this, it is helpful to consider two specific writers whose works are deeply concerned with revealing divine presence in the created world and with creating a language of mystery: Gerard Manley Hopkins and Flannery O'Connor. As Catholic writers, both were greatly influenced by their faith—Hopkins as a poet and O'Connor as a storyteller—and both lend themselves especially well to a sacramental imagination and to the formation of the sacramental imagination in high school students.

Hopkins's theology and poetic theory center on a radical belief in presence—the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Belief in the Real Presence caused Hopkins's conversion from Anglicanism to Catholicism and the sacramental teachings of his faith also defined Hopkins's poetics. In a letter to his father, Hopkins wrote that this belief in the Real Presence "once got is the life of the soul and when I doubted it I should become an atheist the next day."[10] Such a radical belief as this transformed Hopkins's world view and poetic theory. The literal embodiment of Christ, a divine person, in physical matter as small and fragmentary as a piece of bread meant, for Hopkins, that something of the divine life dwells in all physical matter. The embodiment of divinity in the physical world is the key to understanding Hopkins's poetics. It also forms the foundation of his concepts of inscape and instress, which emphasize the distinct design of each individual thing in the world. Everything in the universe has a distinct design, or inscape, and has been made sacred because of the incarnations of Christ, both into human flesh and physical matter. Hopkins is especially concerned with the incarnation of Christ into physical matter through the Eucharist and, therefore, with the embodiment of Christ in other created things in nature. When read with a sacramental imagination, Hopkins's poetry, especially his nature sonnets, reveal that both the origin and end of the universe is Christ, who is the Wisdom of God.

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[9] Elizabeth T. Groppe, *Seeing with the Eyes of the Heart*, 10.

O'Connor's writing is also greatly concerned with the presence of divine life in the physical world; however, whereas Hopkins focuses on the incarnation of Christ into physical matter through the Eucharist, O'Connor focuses on the incarnation of Christ into human flesh and the consequent redemption of our bodies. Many consider O'Connor to be a "modern representative of Christian humanism" as she set out to critique the Gnosticism of her day, which set up a spirit and body dualism, by revealing through her fiction that "grace 'penetrate[s] the natural human world as it is,' concrete and embodied."[11] Therefore, despite the often violent and grotesque aspects of her fiction, the human body always acts as the "seat and subject of grace and sanctification in the human being."[12] O'Connor's short stories reveal that the life of God in the human soul, or grace, comes to us through the body because of Christ's incarnation into human flesh and the redemption of our bodies. Therefore, her stories are very helpful in forming a sacramental imagination because they reveal the presence of God in the physical body and offer a way of approaching the infinite not directly but indirectly, through storytelling that emphasizes the body and material creation. O'Connor's storytelling reveals that both the origin and end of mankind is Christ, the Wisdom of God.

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[10] Gerard Manley Hopkins, *Gerard Manley Hopkins: The Major Works*, ed. Catherine Phillips (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002), 224.

To teach these two writers in a classroom to high school students with the specific intent of forming a sacramental imagination, it will be helpful to rely upon a specific philosophy of education that provides a method for such a task. In his book, *Beauty in the Word: Rethinking the Foundations of Education*, Stratford Caldecott presents one such philosophy of education that lends itself well to the formation of imaginations and to the teaching of literature. Caldecott sets up a trinitarian structure of education by dividing the education of children into three stages, each of which corresponds to a liberal art of the *Trivium*: remembering, thinking, and speaking.[13]

The first stage, remembering, corresponds to the liberal art of Grammar. As Caldecott explains, there is a profound link between language and memory, since "to fill a word with meaning is an act of *remembering the being of the thing itself*."[14] It is therefore necessary that before students can use language to make meaning and discover truth, they must practice the art of remembering. This stage of remembering is the best place at which to begin forming a sacramental imagination because only as students fill the storehouses of their memories with images, symbols, patterns, and sounds will they then be able to recognize likenesses among realities and make metaphors that relate visible and invisible realities. Remembering is also “an essential foundation for any education,” but especially for a Catholic education that seeks to educate the whole human person as created in the image of God, since remembering is “the beginning of our participation in a tradition of culture and learning, a community that transcends time and connects us with the origin of things.”[15] Students must first remember their origin and end before they can gather together in the present “the self in the light of consciousness.”[16]

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[11] Vigen Guroian, *Rallying the Really Human Things: The Moral Imagination in Politics, Literature, and Everyday Life* (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2005), 20, 23.
[12] Ibid., 23.
[13] Caldecott, *Beauty in the Word*, 15.
[14] Ibid., 37.

In the second stage of education that Caldecott sets up, thinking, the students move from Grammar to Logic, or Dialectic, as they begin the mental processes “by which we separate truth from falsehood.”[17] In other words, the students move from “the art of ‘interpretation’ or ‘reading’ (Grammar) to the art of analysis or *discerning the truth*.”[18] In this stage, the students can then begin to take the images, sounds, symbols, and patterns which now fill the storehouses of their memories and discover likenesses among them so as to create meaning from them. In the formation of a sacramental imagination, the stage of thinking corresponds to the act of recognizing and analyzing the metaphors that relate visible and invisible realities, and it is the point at which students will begin discussing each writer (Hopkins and O’Connor) in order to discover what mysteries they are revealing through their poetry and short stories.

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[15] Caldecott, *Beauty in the Word*, 52, 59.
[16] Ibid., 51.
[17] Ibid., 60.
[18] Ibid.

In the final stage, speaking, the students can then take those revelations and what they have discovered to be true in what they have read and analyzed and communicate it to others.[19] This stage corresponds to the art of Rhetoric and it establishes a community between speaker (or writer) and audience, one that allows the students to engage not just with the self, but with society. In this final stage of the formation of the sacramental imagination, the students can begin to not only communicate what mysteries are being revealed in the writings they encounter, but they can also begin to create new metaphors of their own. They can participate in the imaginative act begun by Hopkins and O'Connor of making metaphors that allow for the apprehension of divine mystery through language.

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[19] Caldecott, *Beauty in the Word,* 83.

CHAPTER 2:

MEMORY AND THE SACRAMENTAL IMAGINATION

Remembering is the foundation for an education that seeks to educate the human person not just for *doing* but for *being*. In order to *be* and to gather the self together in the light of consciousness, we must first remember our origin and end, which Caldecott calls "the grammar of our existence."[20] When setting out to form a sacramental imagination in students, no matter their age, it is also important to begin with remembering and with first training the memories of students before training their imaginations. Remembering is also profoundly linked to the sacraments, since to participate in the sacramental life is to recall and perpetuate the life of Christ. This occurs most frequently in the sacrament of the Eucharist, which is a "memorial of [Christ's] death and resurrection."[21] Therefore, a well-trained memory is necessary not just for forming a sacramental imagination, but also for participating in the sacramental life and for a moral and spiritual formation more broadly.

In medieval tradition memory was viewed not as a tool, but as an "important dimension of human personhood and community."[22] In his essay, "Vision, Memory, and the Eucharist's Reformation of the Mind," Nathaniel Peters considers the role that memory played in the medieval mind, specifically its role in a person's moral and intellectual development. He states that "memory was a means of recalling and connecting truths," and that memory is therefore meant "to be used creatively" and not just "for the sake of exact recall" because it is also necessary for forming links between truths.[23] Memory was viewed by medieval thinkers as a *thesaurus*, a store-room or dovecote, made up of different compartments from which particular doves can come and go as needed.[24] This view of memory is concerned not just with retaining information, but also connecting and associating different particular truths with one another at different times. As a way of recalling and connecting truths, the medieval understanding of memory was also closely tied to a person's holiness and moral formation, a point which Peters makes when commenting on Mary Carruthers's book, *The Book of Memory*:

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[20] Caldecott, *Beauty in the Word*, 15.

[21] Catechism of the Catholic Church, https://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/p2s2c1a3.htm, 1323.

[22] Nathaniel Peters, "Vision, Memory, and the Eucharist's Reformation of the Mind," in *Seeing with the Eyes of the Heart*, 190.

> The training of memory was not a matter of convenience or even merely of necessity; it was a matter of ethics and character. A person without memory would be not just a person with inadequate intellectual ability, but someone without moral and spiritual formation. If a person wanted to become holy, he or she needed to fill the storehouse of memory with holy things.[25]

Similarly, in order to form a sacramental imagination, it is necessary to fill the storehouse of memory with images and symbols that can be used to create metaphors which work sacramentally, that is, which make present immaterial and infinite realities.

The practice of filling up one's memory with sacred things has long been carried out in the monastic life. By practicing *lectio divina*, monks memorize Sacred Scripture in order "to understand and to recall it in prayer, to make its vocabulary one's own."[26] This practice "effectively reprogram[s] one's memory and affect[s] one's experience of everything else by building up a biblical pattern of associations, wherein personal experience, past and present, [finds] its meaning."[27] This is the end to which training the memory and filling it with images and symbols that can be used sacramentally is ordered. Instead of memorizing Scripture, students will read literature that is rich with images of visible realities that can be linked to invisible realities. Their "experience of everything else" will be affected by the sacramental pattern of associations built up through reading literature and they will be able to find meaning in their personal experiences through this sacramental vision, or imagination.

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[23] Peters, "Vision, Memory, and the Eucharist's Reformation of the Mind," 190-191.
[24] Ibid., 191.
[25] Ibid., 192.
[26] Astell, "Memory, the Sacrament of Marriage, and the Song of Songs" in *Seeing with the Eyes of the Heart*, 185
[27] Ibid.

The literature with which this thesis is concerned is the poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins and the fiction of Flannery O'Connor. Hopkins's poetry is especially useful material for building up the storehouse of memory and patterns of associations because it is so particular and designed in both form and content. Not only the images and metaphors of the poems themselves, but also the sounds, sprung rhythm, rhyme patterns, and poetic forms lend themselves to the building up of patterns and associations. Hopkins's unique rhythm, sprung rhythm, is helpful in training the memory because although it is patterned and ordered, it remains distinct enough to be memorable.

Sprung rhythm is a rhythm that uses only stressed syllables to count feet. Lines of the poem have a given number of stresses, but the number and placement of unstressed syllables is highly variable. Hopkins still imagines he is writing in feet, but those feet can vary from one to four syllables, and one can find extra-metrical syllables, and many syllables counting as a single stress or even a half stress.[28] It is an inimitable style and one that once learned, is difficult to forget. Teaching sprung rhythm to students and filling their memories with as many examples of it from Hopkins's poetry as possible would certainly help train their memories. Furthermore, the rhythm itself acts sacramentally, as it relates concrete realities—sounds and stressed syllables—to invisible realities, such as "the conflict between inclination and intention"[29] of a divided will and the “distinctive design that constitutes the individual identity” of each thing.[30] Therefore, remembering specific lines of sprung rhythm will fill students’ memories with the material necessary for a sacramental imagination to form associations and make metaphors.

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[28] *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, 9th Edition (W.W. Norton & Company, 2012), 1546-48.

[29] Joshua King, "Hopkins' Affective Rhythm: Grace and Intention in Tension," *Victorian Poetry*, vol. 45, no. 3, (West Virginia UP, 2007), 233.

There are many examples of memorable uses of sprung rhythm throughout all of Hopkins’s poetry. One such example is lines 30-34 of “The Woodlark”:

> The blood-gush blade-gash
> Flame-rash rudred
> Bud shelling or broad-shed
> Tatter-tangled and dingle-a-danglèd
> Dandy-hung dainty head.[31]

Each line consists of four feet, since there are four stressed syllables per line, but the number of unstressed syllables varies from zero to six. Line 31, “Flame-rash rudred,” has zero unstressed syllables, whereas line 33, “Tatter-tangled and dingle-a-danglèd,” has six unstressed syllables; however, both consist of four feet since both have four stressed syllables.[32] Having so many stressed syllables in a row sometimes makes Hopkins’s poetry difficult to pronounce and forces one to emphasize the particularity of each sound, just as his poetry emphasizes the particularity of each created thing, or the inscape of each thing. The rhythm acts as a sign of the mystery of inscape, that multiple, non-contradictory presences exist in particulars and in language, giving them a distinctive identity. Additionally, the rhythm reminds one that the poem is meant to be an act of the will, as shown by the deliberativeness of line 31, but also allows for a graceful flow of language in line 33, which unites the words through similar sounds while allowing them to remain distinct and particular.

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[30] *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, 9th Edition (W.W. Norton & Company, 2012), 1546-48.

[31] Gerard Manley Hopkins, “The Woodlark” in *Gerard Manley Hopkins: The Major Works*, ed. Catherine Phillips (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002), lines 30-34, pages 122-123.

[32] Ibid.

In “Hurrahing in Harvest,” the sprung rhythm of one line in particular conveys the reality of the tension “between inclination and intention,” which Joshua King argues for in his essay, “Hopkins’ Affective Rhythm: Grace and Intention in Tension.”[33] Line 5 of the poem reads, “I wálk, I líft up, Í lift úp heart, éyes.”[34] The placement of the accent marks in this particular line is contrary to a natural inclination of how the poem ought to be read and, therefore, creates a conflict between intention and inclination in the will of both the poet and reader, reminding the reader that the creation and apprehension of the poem are both acts of the will.

Besides sprung rhythm, Hopkins’s poems also use rhyme and poetic forms, specifically the sonnet, to create patterns that can help train the memory, and that also act sacramentally. Emily T. Merriman argues in “Corresponding Grace: Hopkins’ Theory and Use of Rhyme,” that although Hopkins’s greatest technical innovation was probably sprung rhythm, his poetry also “eloquently testifies to his inventive, lively skill in the craft of repeating similar spoken sounds.” Rhyme as the repetition of sounds lends itself well to the training of memory, and once again, Hopkins uses this technique to serve a theological end. Merriman argues that Hopkins uses rhyme to express a theological truth as well as to create an aesthetic effect, reflecting the will’s free correspondence with grace in the paradoxical harmony of the divine and human will. The poet “freely consents to a pre-ordained pattern” of rhyme but remains open to “the rhyme granted by inspiration.”[35] He can either reject or accept this correspondence of sound, just as the human will can freely reject or accept corresponding grace offered by divine power.

Hopkins also relied on the sonnet as a poetic form that gave shape to his poems and again served a theological end. Memorizing the forms of Hopkin’s sonnets is helpful in training students to look for both patterns and deviations from prescribed patterns in poetry, but also more broadly in the world around them. Moreover, the patterns and deviations from patterns in Hopkins's sonnets also act sacramentally to reflect the sacrifice of Christ. Jennifer A. Wagner argues in her essay, "The Allegory of Form in Hopkins's Religious Sonnets," that the form of the sonnet acts as an analogy of Christ's sacrifice in becoming man and dying through the paradoxical diminishing from the octave to the sestet alongside an expansion from particulars to universals. Curtal sonnets like "Pied Beauty" and caudate sonnets like "That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire and of the comfort of the Resurrection" also act as appropriate allegories in specific poems, as the form of the poem is always "the making visible of divine presence."[36] For example, in "Pied Beauty" the sonnet form is condensed into ten and a half lines to emphasize "the divine accommodation necessary for containing the infiniteness of the divine in the perceptible minutiae of nature."[37]

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[33] King, “Hopkins’ Affective Rhythm: Grace and Intention in Tension,” 233.
[34] Hopkins, *The Major Works*, 134.
[35] Emily T. Merriman, “Corresponding Grace: Hopkins' Theory and Use of Rhyme,” *Hopkins Quarterly*, vol. 32, no. 3 (International Hopkins Association, 2005), 88, 89.

Hopkins's commitment to using every aspect of his poetics sacramentally, that is, to make invisible realities visible, makes his poetry especially helpful in training the memory in order to then train the imagination. Once students' memories are filled with the patterns and forms of Hopkins's poetry, they will then be able to link the visible realities of the poems to the invisible realities they reflect.

Although fiction and short stories lend themselves less well to training the memory than poetry since they rely less on repetition and patterns, Flannery O'Connor's short stories are filled with memorable symbols that can also fill the storehouse of the memory with images for the sacramental imagination. Symbols were “a matter of course” for O’Connor as a fiction writer.[38] In her essay “The Nature and Aim of Fiction” from *Mystery and Manners*, O’Connor remarks that “in good fiction, certain of the details will tend to accumulate meaning from the story itself, and when this happens, they become symbolic in their action.”[39] Memorable symbols appear everywhere in O’Connor’s short stories and in many ways, the symbols are more closely related to sacraments, which make present that which they signify, than to mere symbols, which only gesture towards that which they signify. This is because most of the symbols in O’Connor’s short stories in some way cause or make present an actual moment of revelation or grace for O’Connor’s characters.

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[36] Jennifer A. Wagner, "The Allegory of Form in Hopkins's Religious Sonnets," *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, vol. 47, no. 1 (University of California Press, 1992), 41.
[37] Ibid., 42.

One of the most memorable of these symbols is the wooden leg in the story, “Good Country People.” The main character of this story, Joy, or Hulga as she renames herself, is a thirty-two-year-old woman with a Ph.D. in philosophy and a wooden leg who lives with her mother. Joy/Hulga’s problem is that she thinks she can separate her intellect from her body, and she denies her “embodied [self] to live in the mind.”[40] Inevitably, she comes to terms with the reality that her physical body does matter and cannot be disregarded through a “shocking, bodily experience that [defies] dualism and [begins] the process of spiritual growth.”[41] This occurs when a Bible salesman visits her house, seduces her in a hayloft, asks if he can remove her wooden leg, and then runs off with it, leaving her legless and alone in the hayloft. O’Connor commented on the symbol of the wooden leg herself in “Writing Short Stories”:

> If you want to say that the wooden leg is a symbol, you can say that. But it is a wooden leg first, and as a wooden leg it is absolutely necessary to the story. It has its place on the literal level of the story, but it operates in depth as well as on the

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[38] Flannery O’Connor, “The Nature and Aim of Fiction,” in *Mystery and Manners* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1961), 71.
[39] Ibid.,” 70.
[40] Christina Bieber Lake, *The Incarnational Art of Flannery O’Connor* (Mercer UP, 2005), 123.
[41] Ibid., 128.

> surface. It increases the story in every direction, and this is essentially the way a story escapes being short.[42]

The wooden leg is a real, particular thing that both represents something else (Hulga's "difference, her uniqueness…her virginity") and operates within the story, causing an actual transformative moment to occur within Hulga.[43] When the wooden leg is removed by the Bible salesman and then stolen from her, Hulga is "made keenly aware of her body" and, therefore, "made aware of her dependence on others."[44] She realizes she is more like her mother than she ever thought: "Although [the Bible salesman] takes her leg and her pride, he leaves her with the much more precious gift of true self-knowledge."[45]

O'Connor uses symbols in her stories, which are usually very concrete and material objects, or else very "unexpected, yet totally believable" actions, to "[indicate] that grace has been offered" and it is "the action of grace" that is the primary subject of all of O'Connor's stories.[46] These memorable symbols, such as the wooden leg in "Good Country People," the water stain in "The Enduring Chill," the tattoo in "Parker's Back," the peacock in "The Displaced Person," or the sun in "A Temple of the Holy Ghost," are particular things that act sacramentally within O'Connor's short stories to make grace present to the characters. For this reason, they are especially useful material with which to fill the storehouses of the memories of students when forming a sacramental imagination. O'Connor's symbols, both the objects and actions that signify the offering of grace to her characters, are usually shocking and unusual, making them especially accessible to the sacramental imagination. When students' memories are filled with the patterns and forms of Hopkins's poetry and the symbols of O'Connor's short stories, they will then be able to recognize likenesses among these realities and relate them to the invisible realities—the mysteries—that they embody.

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[42] O'Connor, "Writing Short Stories," in *Mystery and Manners*, 99-100.
[43] Christina Bieber Lake, *The Incarnational Art of Flannery O'Connor*, 130.
[44] Ibid., 131.
[45] Ibid., 132.
[46] O'Connor, "On Her Own Work," in *Mystery and Manners*, 118.

CHAPTER 3:

THE NATURAL WORLD, COSMOLOGY, AND GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS

Once the memory is sufficiently trained and filled with the types of images and patterns that can act sacramentally to relate invisible realities to visible ones, the students can then begin the stage of thinking, or dialectic, in which analysis and discernment of the truth take place. Caldecott explains in *Beauty in the Word* that "to *think* arises out of memory" because memory is "not simply the recalling of past events but the gathering and focusing of attention in the present."[47] Now, rather than simply reading the texts in order to look for patterns or remember specific images and symbols, the students can read the texts so as to discover which mysteries the poet or story-teller wishes to embody and make present through the language of the poem or short story. It is in this next stage of forming the sacramental imagination that the training of thought occurs, and it can only occur after the training of memory. As students learn to think things out and move from "concrete, wordless thinking to abstract, logical thinking," they must use their imaginations, and so they train their imaginations as they train their thinking. According to Owen Barfield in *Romanticism Comes of Age*, between the stages of concrete and abstract thinking "there is an intermediate stage, at which consciousness takes the form of pictures and images."[48] This stage contains "the mystery of the Myth…the mystery of Poetry…the whole great mystery of Meaning" and it is "the Imagination."[49] Therefore, it is very important that this next stage of thinking takes place so that the students begin to exercise their imaginations as they compare particular, concrete things (visible realities) to abstract ideas or mysteries (invisible realities).

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[47] Caldecott, *Beauty in the Word,* 82.
[48] Owen Barfield, *Romanticism Comes of Age* (Wesleyan University Press, 1966), 79.
[49] Ibid.

The training of thought does not mean that the teacher manufactures or dictates to the students which thoughts they ought to be thinking. Rather, Caldecott argues that “we need to educate people to think coherently and independently—to take responsibility for their own thoughts.”[50] In her essay, “The Good Teacher,” Margaret Atkins describes this training of thought as more akin to gardening than manufacturing:

> Healing is done by our bodies; yet we need doctors. Growing is done by the plants; yet we need gardeners. Learning to think is done by young people. We need teachers, as we need doctors and gardeners, to provide and protect the conditions—in this case of good learning. This, I suggest, is done in three ways: by securing the appropriate environment; by guiding pupils towards the subjects and topics that are most worth learning; and by presenting ideas in an order that makes it easy for the learner to grasp for himself both this subject and its relation with others.[51]

In this chapter and the next, I will focus on the second of these three ways and explain which subjects and topics in Hopkins’s poetry and O’Connor’s short stories are “most worth learning” for the specific intent of forming a sacramental imagination.

Hopkins’s theology and his poetics center on his belief in the Real Presence of the Eucharist and the consequences of the Incarnation of Christ into so fragmentary a piece of matter as bread. Although he sought to embody many mysteries in his poetry, such as the internal struggle to submit and unite one’s own will to God’s will in “The Wreck of the Deutschland” and the later “Sonnets of Desolation,” the mystery of the origin and end of the natural world is “most worth learning” or paying attention to when considering the formation of a sacramental imagination. This is because Hopkins’s Eucharistic theology provides a radical and definitive answer to the cosmological questions about the origin and end of the natural world. Pope Francis explains the relationship of the Eucharist to the cosmos in his papal encyclical, *Laudato Si*:

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[50] Caldecott, *Beauty in the Word,* 64.

[51] Margaret Atkins, “The Good Teacher,” *Second Spring*, issue 5 (2004), 35.

> It is in the Eucharist that all that has been created finds its greatest exaltation. Grace, which tends to manifest itself tangibly, found unsurpassable expression when God himself became man and gave himself as food for his creatures. The Lord, in the culmination of the mystery of the Incarnation, chose to reach our intimate depths through a fragment of matter. He comes not from above, but from within, he comes that we might find him in this world of ours. In the Eucharist, fullness is already achieved; it is the living centre of the universe, the overflowing core of love and of inexhaustible life. Joined to the incarnate Son, present in the Eucharist, the whole cosmos gives thanks to God. Indeed the Eucharist is itself an act of cosmic love: "Yes, cosmic! Because even when it is celebrated on the humble altar of a country church, the Eucharist is always in some way celebrated on the altar of the world."[52] The Eucharist joins heaven and earth; it embraces and penetrates all creation.[53]

The Eucharist is "the living centre of the universe" because the Eucharist is Christ made present in matter and Christ, the incarnate Wisdom of God, is both the origin and end of the universe. When considering Christ's presence and role in the creation and renewal of the world, it is most helpful to use this title for Christ—the Wisdom of God—because Wisdom is God's "agent for creating the world and renewing the world" and "the beauty and marvels of nature are all the works of Wisdom."[54] The Wisdom of God is the title for Christ that best communicates Christ's work as a "living, active, personal presence" in the world that is both with God but distinct from God the Father, as a distinct person of the Trinity. Wisdom was present and active at the creation of the universe, and is, therefore, its origin, but it is also "busy saving the world" and renewing it to be reunited with itself and is, therefore, also its end.[55]

Hopkins's nature poems from around 1875 to 1880 are the poems that best reveal this mystery of Wisdom as the origin and end of the world. This thesis will especially consider four of those poems and how they can be taught in a classroom to form a sacramental imagination through dialogue and the training of thought: “As kingfishers catch fire,” “The Windhover,” “Pied Beauty,” and “Hurrahing in Harvest.”

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[52] John Paul II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (encyclical, April 17, 2003), 438.
[53] Francis, *Laudato Si'* (encyclical, May 24, 2015), 236.
[54] Father James Dominic Brent, "Interview on the Book of Wisdom 1" (talk, November 14, 2020).
[55] Ibid.

“As kingfishers catch fire” is perhaps the poem that most affirms that Christ and the Eucharist are at “the living centre of the universe.”[56] In this poem, Hopkins introduces the notion of “selving,” a term he used to explain that each particular thing in the created world has “a distinctive design that constitutes individual identity” and that each being in the universe “‘selves,’ that is, enacts its identity.”[57] The things of nature—kingfishers, dragonflies, and stones—all enact their identity by “[dealing] out that being indoors each one dwells” and “Crying *What I do is me: for that I came*.”[58] There is both a place of origin from which all things come and an end or purpose to which all things are ordered. The end to which all things are ordered is this very act of “selving.” However, in the poem’s sestet we learn that this act of “selving” unites all things in Christ, since because of the incarnations of Christ both into matter and human flesh, Christ is present in all created things. Therefore, when they enact their identities, they are being Christ:

> I say more: the just man justices;
> Keeps grace: that keeps all his goings graces;
> Acts in God’s eye what in God’s eye he is—
> Christ. For Christ plays in ten thousand places,
> Lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his
> To the Father through the features of men’s faces.[59]

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[56] Francis, *Laudato Si’*, 236.
[57] *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, 1546-48.
[58] Hopkins, “As kingfishers catch fire” in *Gerard Manley Hopkins: The Major Works*, ed. Catherine Phillips (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002), lines 6, 8, page 129.
[59] Ibid., lines 9-14, page 129.

To "selve" is to be Christ and all things in the universe, not just human beings, are capable of this action. Moreover, this action of "selving" is the reason for which all beings came, i.e., were created by God.

Another poem that looks at a specific example of a created thing "[dealing] out that being indoors each one dwells" is "The Windhover," which captures the exact moment of the poet instressing the inscape of a bird. Hopkins was greatly influenced by the 13th century theologian, Scotus. Hopkins's concept of inscape corresponds very closely to Scotus's concept of *formalitates*, which are the aspects of a thing perceived that are separable realities and yet do not violate the unity that makes that entity a single thing. Bernadette Waterman Ward notes in *World as Word: Philosophical Theology in Gerard Manley Hopkins* that, "being real, formalitates are independent of individual perceivers, but they require for their existence the possibility of a perceiving intellect."[60] Inscape rests in the tension between a unity perceived in an object and the multiplicity of its possibilities. Instress follows from inscape as the "apprehension of an object in an intense thrust of energy towards it that enables one to realize its specific distinctiveness."[61] These concepts of inscape and instress depend on an imagination that sees the presence of the divine, or mystery, in everything—a sacramental imagination.

Because of Hopkins's sacramental theology and his concepts of inscape and instress, the bird in "The Windhover" cannot be reduced to a mere allegory for Christ. The "thingness" of the bird is stressed in the poem because a mere allegory cannot be instressed; only a particular thing with an individuating design can be instressed. What the poem achieves and creates, then, is not a mere allegory for Christ, but something more akin to a sacrament. Waterman Ward notes in

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[60] Bernadette Waterman Ward, *World as Word: Philosophical Theology in Gerard Manley Hopkins* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2002), 162.
[61] *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, 1546-48.

World as Word that “the sacramental language of Hopkins functions” so as to create “a reality that is itself a symbol.”[62] This reality is the poem, which, like a sacrament, contains and makes present that which it signifies. The poem does not merely signify the inscape of the bird; it actually is itself an inscape, with an individuating design due to its form, rhyme pattern, and sprung rhythm. Consequently, the reader of the poem can respond to it by instressing the individuating design of the poem in the same way that the poet instressed the inscape of the bird. A poem like “The Windhover,” therefore, and any poem that can be instressed in this way, allows the poet to participate in that “work of Wisdom” which from the beginning has been a “living, active, personal presence” in the world.[63]

Two other poems that affirm that Christ as Wisdom is present in nature and is both the origin and end of the universe are “Pied Beauty” and “Hurrahing in Harvest.” “Pied Beauty” is a shorter poem that stresses the origin of all of creation. Paul Mariani notes in his *Commentary on the Complete Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins* that this poem is “a prayer, a meditation, a *Laus tibi Deus* for the variety and individuality of all of creation, which is founded on the eternal bedrock of permanence, on Being itself.”[64] Most of the poem simply names the beauties of God’s creation in all their variety and individuality, like “skies of couple-colour as a brinded cow” and “landscape plotted and pieced.”[65] However, the poem ends with the lines, “He fathers forth whose beauty is past change: / Praise him.”[66] The infinite, immutable God is the origin of all of the particular things in nature and is also present in all of these particular things sacramentally, since Christ, the Wisdom of God, became incarnate.

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[62] Waterman Ward, *World as Word: Philosophical Theology in Gerard Manley Hopkins,* 133.
[63] Brent, “Interview on the Book of Wisdom 1.”
[64] Paul Mariani, *Commentary on the Complete Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins* (Cornell UP, 1970), 114.
[65] Hopkins, “Pied Beauty” in *Gerard Manley Hopkins: The Major Works*, ed. Catherine Phillips, lines 2, 5, page 132-133.
[66] Ibid., lines 10-11.

In “Hurrahing in Harvest,” the presence of Christ is again affirmed in the particular things of nature, but this time, the poet considers not the origin of all of creation, but the end, which is to reveal Christ’s presence in all things in order to unite all things to him. As the poet “[gleans] our Saviour” in all of the “glory of the heavens,” the apprehension of Christ embodied in nature (“And the azurous hung hills are his world-wielding shoulder”), causes the poet to “[hurl] for him, O half [hurl] earth for him off under his feet.”[67] Ironically, the end or purpose of nature is to prompt man to leave earth behind so as to be fully united with Christ. The end of nature is to reveal Christ so as to lead mankind to Wisdom.

It is these mysteries concerning the active presence of the incarnate Wisdom of God in the natural world as its origin and end that are of most concern when forming a sacramental imagination. Therefore, when each of these poems is taught in a classroom, the teacher ought to lead students through discussion and dialogue to both recognize and contemplate these mysteries in order to form a sacramental imagination. The students will train their thoughts as they analyze the metaphors in each poem and come to recognize which mysteries are revealed by the language of the poem, and as they train their thoughts, they will also train their imaginations. Since the imagination works by taking the images given by experience and making metaphors from them, an imagination that is trained to recognize and analyze the sacramental metaphors in Hopkins’s poetry will then be able to recognize and make its own sacramental metaphors from experience. To the student in whom a sacramental imagination is at work, all of the images of the natural world he/she experiences will serve to relate a visible reality to an invisible one and will reveal the mystery of the Wisdom of God as the origin and end of all of creation.

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[67] Hopkins, “Hurrahing in Harvest” in *Gerard Manley Hopkins: The Major Works*, ed. Catherine Phillips, lines 6, 9, 14, page 134.

CHAPTER 4:

THE HUMAN PERSON, ANTHROPOLOGY, AND FLANNERY O'CONNOR

It is not within nature alone that Wisdom performs its work, however. The Wisdom of God is also actively and perpetually at work within the hearts of human beings, offering them grace and stirring them to love. Just as the origin and end of nature is Christ, the incarnate Wisdom of God, so, too, is the origin and end of man. This is the mystery that Flannery O'Connor was most concerned with in her fiction. Without contact with mystery, she saw no point in fiction:

> I often ask myself what makes a story work, and what makes it hold up as a story, and I have decided that it is probably some action, some gesture of a character unlike any other in the story, one which indicates where the real heart of the story lies. This would have to be an action or a gesture which was both totally right and totally unexpected; it would have to be one which was both in character and beyond character; it would have to suggest both the world and eternity. The action or gesture I'm taking about would have to be on the anagogical level, that is, the level which has to do with the Divine life and our participation in it. It would be a gesture that transcended any neat allegory that might have been intended or any pat moral categories a reader could make. It would be a gesture which somehow made contact with mystery.[68]

Because she is writing fiction and short stories rather than poetry, her writing centers around action, and usually one final, transformative action in particular. This action is always both external and internal, operating as both a part of the story's plot and as a moment of revelation or transformation within the heart of the character. It is an action that, as O'Connor herself states, makes "contact with mystery," specifically, the mystery of what takes place within the hearts of human beings due to their origin and end as established in Christ.

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[68] O'Connor, "On Her Own Work," 111.

Whereas Hopkins's poetry emphasizes the incarnation of Christ into the objects of nature as a result of Christ's Real Presence in the Eucharist, O'Connor's short stories emphasize the incarnation of Christ into human flesh and the redemption of man, both body and soul. Because Christ took on human flesh, the body is redeemed as well as the soul, and O'Connor found this reality to be of great concern for the fiction writer, since "fiction is so very much an incarnational art."[69] She believed that fiction "is about every thing human and we are made of dust," therefore, her stories seek to show that grace and redemption occur in and through concrete realities, specifically the concrete reality of the human person, which is the body.[70]

Flannery O'Connor wrote a total of thirty-two short stories and two novels, many of which often perturb readers due to their grotesque and violent scenes. One of the most famously unsettling of these stories is "A Good Man is Hard to Find," wherein six murders occur in about as many pages. For O'Connor, violence was often the best means of "returning [her] characters to reality and preparing them to accept their moment of grace."[71] In "A Good Man is Hard to Find," the violence done by the murderous Misfit and his gang causes "the action of grace in the Grandmother's soul."[72] Violence in her stories is, therefore, always necessary to shock or awaken her characters to the reality of their existence—that because of the Incarnation, "the body is the seat and subject of grace and sanctification in the human being."[73] The "action of grace" that O'Connor talks about is also the action of "the incarnate Wisdom of God" who is always "busy saving the world."[74] What O'Connor's stories ultimately prove over and over again is that human beings, since created by God in the image of God, are destined to return to him.

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[69] O'Connor, "The Nature and Aim of Fiction," 68.
[70] Ibid.
[71] O'Connor, "On Her Own Work," 112.
[72] Ibid., 113.
[73] Guroian, *Rallying the Really Human Things*, 23.
[74] Brent, "Interview on the Book of Wisdom 1."

However, they will only reach this end if they accept the grace offered to them in the concrete and embodied world through the salvific work of the Wisdom of God.

This anthropological mystery—that the origin and end of human beings is Christ, the incarnate Wisdom of God—is the mystery that all of O'Connor's stories make contact with through their oftentimes violent actions. It is also a mystery that is of great concern when forming a sacramental imagination, since it is revealed sacramentally in O'Connor's fiction through the concrete, visible realities of the story. In the stage of thinking in the formation of a sacramental imagination, it is very important for students to read, discuss, and analyze O'Connor's short stories in order to discern this mystery as it is revealed sacramentally in each story. O'Connor, herself, wrote: "The result of the proper study of a novel [or short story] should be contemplation of the mystery embodied in it…."[75] Two stories in particular in which this mystery is profoundly affirmed are "Revelation" and "Parker's Back."

The main character in "Revelation," Ruby Turpin, is a morally smug woman who believes herself to be the first in line along the road to salvation. Her flawed understanding of who Christ really is leaves her with a distorted vision of salvation and of the hierarchy of judged souls. While waiting with her husband in a doctor's office, Ruby and the other women in the room exchange pleasantries. Although Ruby appears perfectly polite and well-mannered outwardly, her private thoughts reveal, as Peter M. Candler remarks in "The Anagogical Imagination of Flannery O'Connor," her complete failure to "discern the disclosure of God's glory in the most rejected and scorned members of her society."[76] Of all the characters in the story, only a pretty, well-dressed woman earns Ruby's respect and she thanks Jesus that he did not make her black, or white trash, or ugly. The climactic action occurs when the well-dressed woman's daughter can take Ruby's condescension no longer and hurls her book at her, telling her, "Go back to hell where you came from, you old wart hog."[77] Ruby is left to ponder this "revelation" for the rest of the story, and when she returns home and gazes upon her own pig parlor, she sees a vision "as if through the very heart of mystery."[78] In the sky above the hog pen, Ruby witnesses a procession of souls "rumbling toward heaven" and "shouting hallelujah."[79] However, in the vision Ruby's flawed societal hierarchy is flipped and all of the people that Ruby scorned are at the front of the procession while Ruby and those like her are at the back.

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[75] O'Connor, "The Teaching of Literature" in *Mystery and Manners*, 129.

[76] Peter M. Candler, "The Anagogical Imagination of Flannery O'Connor" in *Christianity and Literature,* vol. 60, no. 1 (The John Hopkins UP, 2010), 27.

Through violent action and the mundane reality of a pig parlor, Ruby receives a revelation that could ultimately save her. Her failure to love and recognize Christ in the other characters of the story reveals that she has a false understanding of who Christ is: "her Christ is not the scorned and rejected Jew, but a well-dressed savior with perfect pitch."[80] When Ruby is back home wrestling with the words spoken to her by the "ugly girl," she calls out to God, "Who do you think you are?"[81] Ruby does not understand who Christ is or who she is in relation to Christ, and she is horrified that she might be compared to a wart hog, not realizing that "if one is incapable of seeing in the pig parlor an anagoge of the Incarnation, one is therefore not entitled to see it in the more pristine exemplars of divine revelation."[82] What ultimately occurs through this encounter and vision is what Susan Srigley calls a "movement and reordering of Ruby's soul" to recognize that the Christ who is the origin and end of all mankind does not order society according to external realities, in the way that Ruby does.[83] Although Christ works to save mankind in and through these external, concrete realities, each "individual soul's orientation in relation to the divine" is a mystery.[84] In order to earn her own salvation and be counted among those processing through the sky, Ruby must be humbled and empty herself in imitation of Christ, who does not reject those scorned by society, but rather reveals his glory in and through them. "Revelation" affirms the reality that Wisdom is the origin and end of all mankind—even, and perhaps especially, those scorned by society.

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[77] O'Connor, "Revelation" in *The Complete Stories*, 500.
[78] Ibid., 508.
[79] Ibid., 508, 509.
[80] Candler, "The Anagogical Imagination of Flannery O'Connor," 27.
[81] O'Connor, "Revelation" in *The Complete Stories*, 507.
[82] Candler, "The Anagogical Imagination of Flannery O'Connor," 27.
[83] Susan Srigley, *Flannery O'Connor's Sacramental Art* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2004), 151.

One of the final stories that O'Connor wrote, "Parker's Back," is perhaps her most "profound affirmation of [an] incarnational and sacramental vision of human nature and destiny."[85] The main character of this story, Obadiah Elihue Parker, is almost nothing like Ruby Turpin. Whereas Ruby's satisfaction with her life stunted her ascension towards God, Parker's dissatisfaction with his life leads him to constantly search for meaning everywhere apart from in God.[86] At fourteen, Parker sees a man at a fair whose body was covered in tattoos from head to foot and from then on, Parker sets out to fill his own body with colorful tattoos, but only in places that he, himself, can see. However, he is left dissatisfied by each tattoo and when it comes time to fill the only place left on his body, his back, Parker decides to have the image of a Byzantine Christ tattooed on his back so as to satisfy his wife, Sarah Ruth, the daughter of a fundamentalist preacher. Instead, Sarah Ruth is appalled by the tattoo, at first not recognizing that it is Christ, and then beating Parker with a broom so that "large welts…formed on the face of the tattooed Christ."[87] In her failure to recognize Christ, literally embodied on Parker, and to see Parker's "body as good, as validated by the Incarnation," Sarah Ruth falls into the trap of

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[84] Susan Srigley, *Flannery O'Connor's Sacramental Art,* 151.
[85] Guroian, *Rallying the Really Human Things,* 26.
[86] Ibid., 27.
[87] O'Connor, "Parker's Back" in *The Complete Stories of Flannery O'Connor* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1971), 529.

Gnosticism—the belief that only spirit matters.[88] In "[closing] her eyes to the physical world, she also closes them to the only way of salvation."[89] Sarah Ruth is an example of someone who lacks a sacramental imagination and is unable to recognize mysteries as they are revealed in and through concrete matter, such as the body.

Parker, on the other hand, has been awakened, though violent, physical acts, to "the mystery of the divine as it intersects with the human, Christ as he chooses the lowliest human forms to display his glory."[90] Parker is determined to tattoo an image of God on his back only after he crashes his tractor into a tree and has a revelation before the burning tree, like Moses before the burning bush, that makes him cry out, "GOD ABOVE!"[91] Even while Sarah Ruth rejects him by failing to recognize Christ in him, Parker feels "the light pouring through him, turning his spider web soul into a perfect arabesque of colors, a garden of trees and birds and beasts."[92] He, himself, is an image of the invisible God, and even without fully realizing it, grace—the action of the incarnate Wisdom of God—is at work within him, transforming him into a visible manifestation of the glory of God.

These, and, in fact, all of O'Connor's stories, could only have been written by someone with a sacramental imagination who saw storytelling as a way of indirectly approaching the infinite. The visible realities of her stories reveal the anthropological mysteries of where man came from, where he is destined to return to, and how the Wisdom of God is actively working within the hearts of human beings to awaken them to these realities and offer them grace. As an example of a sacramental imagination at work, teaching O'Connor is extremely helpful in forming students' sacramental imaginations. Whereas Hopkins's poetry is especially concerned with revealing the divine presence in the natural world, O'Connor's short stories reveal over and over again that Wisdom is actively at work and present within the human person. Studying her short stories will not only train students to recognize and discern this mystery within each of her stories, but it will also train them to recognize Christ's presence in each person they, themselves, encounter and awaken them to the constant offering of grace that is taking place within their own hearts.

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[88] Bieber Lake, *The Incarnational Art of Flannery O'Connor*, 232.
[89] Ibid.
[90] Ibid., 231.
[91] O'Connor, "Parker's Back" in *The Complete Stories*, 520.
[92] Ibid., 528.

CHAPTER 5:

SOCIETY AND THE SACRAMENTAL IMAGINATION

A sacramental imagination is one that makes metaphors from the images given by experience that allow for the apprehension of divine mysteries. In other words, it finds ways to embody and make present, through language, the otherwise unimaginable mysteries of God. Therefore, the formation of a sacramental imagination would not be complete if it did not include some training in communication as well as training in remembering and thinking. In *Beauty in the Word,* Caldecott names the final stage in his philosophy of education as the stage of speaking, which corresponds to the liberal art of Rhetoric. This is the point at which the student must learn not only how to discern what is being argued or revealed in a given text, but how to communicate and convince someone else of that truth. As Caldecott puts it, "being capable of knowing the truth, we are capable also of speaking it."[93]

Rhetoric is very much concerned with the truth and not simply communication for the sake of persuasion. In *The Office of Assertion: the Art of Rhetoric for the Academic Essay*, Scott Crider distinguishes between rhetoric and sophistry in the same way that Aristotle does: "rhetoric is persuasion aimed at the truth; sophistry is persuasion aimed only at the appearance of truth."[94] Rhetoric can, therefore, only follow after Dialectic, as students must first learn to discern the truth before they can communicate it to others. In the formation of the sacramental imagination, this is the stage at which the students, themselves, begin to participate in the making present of mystery through language.

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[93] Caldecott, *Beauty in the Word*, 83.

[94] Scott F. Crider, *The Office of Assertion: An Art of Rhetoric for the Academic Essay* (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2005), 4.

Thankfully, Hopkins and O’Connor have already modeled for them how this can be done. Both Hopkins and O’Connor had a sacramental imagination, and so they used language and literature to embody the mystery of Christ’s presence in the natural world and in the human person. However, to persuade another that this is true—much like what I have tried to do in this thesis—is also an imaginative act that requires one to recognize likenesses among the realities within a poem or story. Moreover, it may also require one to make metaphors of one’s own that will relate these realities to invisible ones so that the mysteries can be better apprehended by another. Writing an academic essay helps train the sacramental imagination by requiring that it be put to use.

Developing a sacramental imagination can also help make students better writers and rhetoricians. Caldecott remarks that “we can only communicate a truth that has changed us” and that “in the sacraments we do not simply read about Christ or learn about him, but are touched by him, and changed.”[95] Students who read literature, specifically the literature of Hopkins and O’Connor, with a sacramental imagination will experience a real encounter with mystery as it is made present in the language of the text. It is impossible to come into contact with mystery and not be changed by it, and so the student who has developed a sacramental imagination will be better able to communicate truth.

The act of communicating to another, whether in speech or in writing, the sacramentally revealed mysteries of a poem or short story expands the sacramental imagination so that it affects not just the self, but society. Rhetoric establishes a community among the rhetorician and his audience and this community allows the sacramental imagination to become societal as it awakens others to the presence of mystery in the created world. This act of awakening others to mystery is also an act of love, as it leads others to a good. Because rhetoric is not just concerned with the truth, but with leading others to that truth, it is a kind of "soul-leading," which "in its finest and fullest manifestation is a form of love: the finest rhetorician not only loves wisdom, but also loves others who do so."[96] Caldecott echoes this claim when he writes, "real human communication is only possible in the context of love, without which the self can neither be given in an act of speech…nor received in an act of sympathetic hearing…Human speech and thought need to correspond with the order of the cosmos, the order of love."[97] When the sacramental imagination becomes societal through rhetoric that leads others to apprehend the mystery of God's presence in concrete, visible realities, it also becomes an act of love.

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[95] Caldecott, *Beauty in the Word*, 103.

Both Hopkins and O'Connor believed that by writing with a sacramental imagination and putting the concrete, finite things of this world within the context of the infinite, they were performing a good act, one that leads others to truth and is motivated by love. Hopkins expressed this in a letter he wrote to his friend Bridges in 1886:

> To produce then is of little use unless what we produce is known, if known widely known, the wider known the better, for it is by being known it works, it influences, it does its duty, it does good…. Art and its fame do not really matter, spiritually they are nothing, virtue is the only good; but it is only by bringing in the infinite that to a just judgment they can be made to look infinitesimal or small or less than vastly great; and in this ordinary view of them I apply to them, and it is the true rule for dealing with them, what Christ our Lord said of virtue, Let your light shine before men that they may see your good works (say, of art) and glorify yr. Father in heaven (that is, acknowledge that they have an absolute excellence in them and are steps in a scale of infinite and inexhaustible excellence)…[98]

O'Connor saw her role as a fiction writer in much the same light. She believed that "the artist penetrates the concrete world in order to find at its depths the image of its source, the image of ultimate reality," which image can then be reflected in art.[99] In her essay, "The Nature and Aim of Fiction," she quotes Joseph Conrad to explain her intentions as a fiction writer:

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[96] Crider, *The Office of Assertion*, 12.
[97] Caldecott, *Beauty in the Word*, 85.
[98] Hopkins, *The Major Works*, 264.

> My task which I am trying to achieve is, by the power of the written word, to make you hear, to make you feel—it is, before all, to make you *see*….If I succeed, you shall find there, according to your deserts, encouragement, consolation, fear, charm, all you demand—and, perhaps, also that glimpse of truth for which you have forgotten to ask.[100]

It is only fitting, therefore, that the final stage in the formation of the sacramental imagination is a stage that calls for students to continue the work begun by Hopkins and O'Connor. By writing about and communicating the mysteries revealed sacramentally in the literature of Hopkins and O'Connor, the students will create new metaphors that will allow their audience to apprehend divine mysteries. They will be participating in the "soul-leading" work begun by Hopkins and O'Connor.

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[99] O'Connor, "Novelist and Believer" in *Mystery and Manners*, 157.
[100] Ibid., "The Nature and Aim of Fiction," 80.

CONCLUSION:

THE IMAGE OF THE INVISIBLE GOD (COL. 1:15)

The embodiment of mystery through language has been the primary concern of this thesis, since that is the aim of a sacramental imagination, as well as the aim of both Hopkins and O'Connor in all of their poetry and storytelling. It is also of great concern for the teacher of literature, especially a teacher of literature in a Catholic school. O'Connor believed that "mystery is a great embarrassment to the modern mind" because modern man has been taught that "the aim of learning is to eliminate mystery."[101] Rather than seek to eliminate mystery, the student must be taught to recognize and affirm the mysteries that are present everywhere in the created world, both in nature and the human person. In his talk entitled, "Chesterton on Saints Francis and Thomas Aquinas," Thomas Hibbs confirms this belief:

> We have cheapened the training of the imagination as believers. It is very important that we look for those opportunities where our imaginations are brought into the vast creation of God and where beauty calls us to want to imitate other beautiful lives, but also to want to ponder our place within the whole cosmos. This is important for how we educate young people—that we take upon ourselves the mystery of things. We've got to be people who are deeply attuned to the wonder and mystery that God is always more than what we have imagined.[102]

Without a sacramental imagination that can recognize the presence of God in the things of the world, the student will be unable to participate in the ongoing act of praise which all of creation takes part in due to its origin and end being Christ—the incarnate Wisdom of God. And without this participation alongside all of creation in an act of praise affirming God's presence in the world, it will be difficult to make sense of the world as meaningful and cohesive: "The news of the Incarnation is not some piece of information that, once communicated, can be filed away, and which changes nothing. If true, it changes everything. It reveals the meaning and purpose of life, and this releases the floodgates of human creativity."[103] Because of the Incarnation, "the image of the invisible God" is everywhere in creation, which once apprehended by the sacramental imagination, reveals the whole meaning of life.

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[101] O'Connor, "The Teaching of Literature" in *Mystery and Manners*, 124-125.

[102] Thomas Hibbs, "Chesterton on Saints Francis and Thomas Aquinas" (talk, Thomistic Institute at University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA, November 18, 2020).

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[103] Caldecott, *Beauty in the Word,* 14.

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APPENDIX:

PEDAGOGY PORTFOLIO

I. Lesson Plan 1: Memory and "The Windhover"

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">I. Stage 1 – Desired Results</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Established Goals:
Students will recognize patterns within a single poem and among multiple poems and create a storehouse of images, sounds, and metaphors that can be used to recognize likenesses among realities, specifically among visible and invisible realities.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Understandings:
<i>Students will understand…</i>
• What sprung rhythm is and how to scan a Hopkins poem (identify how many feet are in each line)
• What a Petrarchan Sonnet is (curtal and caudate) and how to name the rhyme scheme and form of the poem
• How to identify poetic devices (especially those related to repetition</td><td>Essential Questions:
• What sorts of patterns does the poet create through the language of a poem?
• How might these patterns be used to convey meaning?
• How does building a storehouse of images and patterns in your memory make it easier to make new metaphors?</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Stage 2 – Assessment Evidence</td></tr>
<tr><td>Performance Tasks:
• Name patterns in the poem
• Determine the rhyme scheme and type of sonnet
• Scan a poem using sprung rhythm</td><td>Other Evidence:
• Students must choose a poem to memorize (preferably a sonnet) and recite
• They will also need to scan this poem and name the form, rhyme scheme, and at least two poetic devices</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Stage 3 – Learning Plan</td></tr>
</table>

Learning Activities:

15 mins: Read the poem out loud to the students. Then, ask them to recount some of the words/images they remember from the poem before they have the poem in front of them. Explain why it is important to store these images/patterns in their memories.

30 mins: Now, have the students look at the poem. What other patterns do they notice in the poem? (sounds, rhymes, etc.) Explain the poem's form (Petrarchan sonnet) and variations of this form in other poems (curtal and caudate). Introduce sprung rhythm and scan the poem together as a class for feet and number of stressed syllables per line.

5 mins: Explain assignment. Choose another poem to memorize, recite, scan, and explain the poetic form.

II. Lesson Plan 2: Memory and "Parker's Back"

<table>
<tr><th colspan="2">II. Stage 1 – Desired Results</th></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Established Goals:
Students will recognize important symbols and concrete images within an O'Connor short story and create a storehouse of images, symbols, and metaphors that can be used to recognize likenesses among realities, specifically among visible and invisible realities.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Understandings:
<i>Students will understand…</i>
• O'Connor's definition of "symbol" from "The Nature and Aim of Fiction"
• How O'Connor used material things in her stories to create meaning and make present immaterial/invisible realities.
• That it is important to pay attention to and remember these concrete symbols and images.</td><td>Essential Questions:
• How do the concrete objects/images within a story affect the story's meaning?
• How do objects/images within a story become invested with meaning?
• How does building a storehouse of symbols and images in your memory make it easier to make new metaphors?</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><th colspan="2">Stage 2 – Assessment Evidence</th></tr>
<tr><td>Performance Tasks:
• From their memory, they must make a list of important objects they remember from the story.
• Work together/ discuss the story in small groups and share their reflections with the whole class.</td><td>Other Evidence:
• Students will have to write a short story of their own (only a couple pages) using at least four of the objects in "Parker's Back" as "material" for their stories.</td></tr>
<tr><th colspan="2">Stage 3 – Learning Plan</th></tr>
</table>

Learning Activities:

20 mins: Individually and then together as a class, make a list of the “things” of the story—tattoos, tractor, burning tree, bushel of apples, broom, pecan tree, etc. Ask the students to imagine the story without these objects/images. What would the story be/would it work without, say, the image of the burning tree or the broom that Sarah Ruth beats Parker with?

20 mins: Split the class into groups of three. Have each group pick one object/image from the story and replace it with another, entirely different image. Ask them to consider if/how this changes the specific scene in the story and the overall meaning of the story. For example, how would the story be different if Parker was obsessed with buying shoes rather than getting tattoos? Have each group share with the class their reflections.

10 mins: Explain assignment. Write your own short story (a couple pages) that includes at least four of the “things” from “Parker’s Back.” Create a narrative around these objects so that they are invested with meaning.

III. Lesson Plan 3: Discussing “The Windhover”

III. Stage 1 – Desired Results	
Established Goals: Students will think of poetry as a response to what is beautiful in the world, specifically, what is beautiful in objects in the world. Students will think of poetry as a vocation: to utter, or word, what is beautiful and mysterious in the world so as to reveal Christ’s presence.	
Understandings: *Students will understand…* • What inscape and instress are • How to be attentive to the inscapes around them and connect this to forms of art, specifically poetry. • That poetry requires one to actively engage with the world around one and can lead you closer to Christ.	**Essential Questions:** • How do you know that something is beautiful? •How do you respond when you encounter something beautiful or mysterious in the world around you? • How do things/objects in the world draw you closer to God or help reveal mystery?
Stage 2 – Assessment Evidence	

Performance Tasks:	**Other Evidence:**
• Ask opening questions about beauty and how they respond to it. • Discussion questions: What is the form of this poem? What is the rhyme scheme and rhythm? What is the action of the poem? There are two different motions occurring in this poem: one is the motion of the bird, the other is the motion of the poet’s heart and will stirring and being moved by the apprehension of the inscape of the bird.	• The students must keep a journal for a couple of days recording any inscapes they notice and reflect upon how they respond to these inscapes (how do they instress, or apprehend, them).

Stage 3 – Learning Plan

Learning Activities:

10 mins: Ask the students to think about a moment when they were struck by something beautiful. Ask a few of them to share their memory of beauty having an effect on them and how they responded to that moment.

30 mins: Explain/define inscape and instress. Inscape: “the distinctive design that constitutes individual identity.” Instress: “the apprehension of an object in an intense thrust of energy toward it that enables one to realize its specific distinctiveness.” Discuss “The Windhover” in light of inscape and instress. How does the poet instress the inscape of the bird? How does the poet create a new inscape through the poem that the reader can instress? (through rhythm, rhyme scheme, repetition of sounds, etc.)

10 mins: Explain the assignment to the students. Over the next few days, keep a journal recording the inscapes you encounter each day. Whatever you encounter that is beautiful—the beautiful distinctiveness of some object or scene in the world around you—take note of it. Hopkins kept an extensive journal, and it’s a wonderful practice, whether you’re a poet or not. Then you can refer back to that captured inscape and create a new inscape or distinctive design from it—whether that be a drawing, a poem, a photograph, some form of music, what have you. Practice being attentive to the inscapes around you and orienting yourself so as to apprehend those inscapes through the act of instress.

IV. Lesson Plan 4: Discussing “Parker’s Back”

IV. Stage 1 – Desired Results

Established Goals:
Students will discuss the action of grace in O’Connor’s short story, “Parker’s Back,” by looking closely at specific scenes and consider when such “moments of grace” have occurred in their own lives.

Understandings: *Students will understand that…* • The action of grace is at the heart of O'Connor's stories • How concrete realities serve to reveal these moments of grace in the story	**Essential Questions:** What constitutes an action or moment of grace? What role do the body, physical violence, and other concrete objects play in Parker's revelations?
Stage 2 – Assessment Evidence	
Performance Tasks: • Discussion of a specific scene in smaller groups • Share their reflections with the whole class and argue for why their scene is the most important/revelatory.	**Other Evidence:** • The students will have to write a short essay reflecting upon and arguing for which moment in their own lives has been the most altering or revelatory. Consider how it compares to Parker's "moments of grace" in the story.
Stage 3 – Learning Plan	
Learning Activities: 5 mins: Split the class into 4 groups. Each group will consider a different, pivotal scene in the book: 1) when Parker is a boy and encounters the tattooed man at the fair, 2) when Parker goes to the tattoo parlor and chooses the image of Christ for his back, 3) when Parker crashes his tractor into the tree, and 4) when Parker returns home and encounters Sarah Ruth. 15 mins: Together with your group, discuss why your scene is important and how Parker changes in that scene. Why might your scene be considered the most important moment of the story? 25 mins: Each group will present what changes about Parker in their scene and why it is a pivotal scene. Together as a class, discuss which scene could be considered the most revelatory in Parker's life and why. Is each scene/revelation necessary for the story's ending? 5 mins: Explain assignment. Consider the most important moments in your own life (when you experienced some major change or discovered some new truth) and make an argument for which moment has been the most altering or pivotal in your life. What smaller moments led to this moment?	

V. Essay Prompt 1: Writing about Hopkins

Choose a Hopkins poem to write about and analyze how Hopkins uses each aspect of the poem, from the poem's prosody to its imagery, to reveal and embody mystery. Consider what metaphors Hopkins makes by relating the visible, concrete aspects of his poem to invisible truths, or mysteries. That is, consider and analyze how Hopkins views his poetry and the world with a sacramental imagination.

VI. Essay Prompt 2: Writing about O'Connor

Choose an O'Connor short story to write about and analyze how O'Connor uses concrete objects and physical violence to reveal and embody mystery. Consider what metaphors O'Connor makes by relating the visible, concrete aspects of her story to invisible truths, or mysteries. That is, consider and analyze how O'Connor views her storytelling and the world with a sacramental imagination.