

Society President

Robert Donahoo
English & Foreign Language
Department
Sam Houston State
University
Huntsville, TX 77341
(936) 294-1421
FAX: (936) 294-1408
eng_rxd@shsu.edu

Cheers! Editor

Avis Hewitt
Department of English
Grand Valley State University
1 Campus Drive
Allendale, MI 49401
(616) 331-3244
FAX: (616) 331-3430
hewitta@gvsu.edu

Cheers! Editorial Assistant

Katy Leedy
Department of English
Grand Valley State University
katyleedy@gmail.com

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Cheers!



A Closer Look: An Interview with Marion Montgomery

By Michael Jordan

Michael Jordan: It seems to me that O'Connor (in her letters, essays, and fiction—all three) is the most significant and perceptive Christian writer America has produced and that as Christian witness, apologist, prophet, and literary and cultural critic, she even rivals Chesterton and Lewis, though certainly not in terms of influence, at least not yet. In your estimation, does she have this profound significance?

Marion Montgomery: I'd as soon not attempt to pose O'Connor as rival to Chesterton or C. S. Lewis. Rather, let's suggest her as *companionable* to them in a shared vision, each as pilgrim bound for eternity. We might note of all three you mention a common resistance to Modernist ob-



Marion Montgomery recently published *With Walker Percy at the Tupperware Party: in Company with Flannery O'Connor, T.S. Eliot, and Others*. He is also the author of the two-volume *Hillbilly Thomist: Flannery O'Connor and the Limits of Art*.

stacles to their proper journeying as intellectual souls incarnate. They sense danger in the Modernist religion that we experience as pervasive in our "national spirit." It is the danger recognized by John Milton and put aptly in Sa-

tan's mouth in the first book of *Paradise Lost*, presenting Lucifer Fallen as Satan. To rally and encourage his fallen peers festering in Hell, Satan declares himself to be

One who brings
A mind not to be chang'd by
Place or Time.
The mind is its own place,
and in itself
Can make a Heav'n of Hell, a
Hell of Heav'n.

O'Connor and Percy recognize this as an actual diabolic distortion toward reducing persons through presumptions of "self" autonomy. It is *actually* diabolic. Without limits, no "thing" would even be, despite that Sartrean diabolism to which both O'Connor and Percy respond in their fiction.

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O'Connor Cartoonist Jo Keese King Reminisces

By Avis Hewitt

Cheers: What was your childhood like?

King: I was born in Macon, Georgia. My mother was a first grade teacher, but I was not in her class. My dad died when I was three. Macon is a wonderful place to grow up. We could go out on our bikes and explore for the whole day. I often went looking for my dad's grave. I actually grew up a block away from the boarding house that is featured in the film version of *Wise Blood* and was always haunted as a child by that second-story door that opens out onto nothing. That house still stands in Macon.

Cheers: What was your formal education like?

King: I went through Macon Public Schools. Being a great student is what came easily for me. I was a teacher pleaser.

Cheers: Do you remember any times when you were a less-than-model child?

King: A major memory from primary school is that Buford Birdsey pulled my pigtails, and I threatened him and then socked him.

Cheers: Did you manage to sock him with impunity? If not, then did you worry—as the *Misfit* does—whether the punishment fit the crime?

King: I didn't get punished. I was not a troublesome child. I just did what I wanted to do. And what I wanted to do was read. I worked my way floor by floor through the Washington Public Library in

Macon. My mother had to write a note for me to allow me to check out books from the main reading room because I'd finished all the children's books years before the qualifying age of twelve, and the librarian would not accept my frequent arguments that I was now old enough to browse among and choose from the adult books. But once I was admitted to those coveted stacks, I was hindered only by height—that is, I could read only the books that I could reach. From the beginning, I was attracted to books with ink illustrations: Eric Gill and Ludwig Bemelmans (memoirs and collections of essays). I loved Bemelmans' *Made-line*. He is such a wonderful prose artist and has such a love of life. I have also always valued humorists. They make up a prominent cate-

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A Man of Many Talents: Cheers! Profiles Hank Edmondson

By Katy Leedy

Hank Edmondson, although a distinguished professor of political science and public administration at Georgia College and State University, has managed to be a key contributor to literary studies through his work on Flannery O'Connor. As a political philosopher, Edmondson brings a unique perspective to O'Connor studies. His most prominent work is the highly successful *Return to Good and Evil*, first published in 2002 and still in print today. His most recent accomplishment is being one of the primary catalysts and planners of the recent international conference on Flannery O'Connor. The success of that conference has led him to begin planning the next international O'Connor conference with Farrell O'Gorman of DePaul University, to be held in Ireland in 2014, the 50th anniversary of Flannery's death.

Planning for the Rome conference began about two years ago when Edmondson was in Rome to give a lecture on Flannery O'Connor and the problems of modernism. Father John Wauck, of Pontifical University of the Holy

Cross (PUHC), attended the lecture, and the two hit it off right away. When Edmondson mentioned he wanted to do an international conference in Ireland, Father Wauck suggested Rome, and within a month they began planning. In Edmondson's words, "From then until now, hundreds of emails, but an instant meeting of the minds."

"Reason, Fiction and Faith: An International Flannery O'Connor Conference," the fourth Poetics and Christianity conference, was held April 20-22, 2009, at PUHC, Father Wauck's university, in Rome. There were dozens of panels that were tracked by language: English, Spanish, and Italian; and an estimated attendance of two or three hundred. The conference provided translation devices, and Edmondson noticed "lots of people taking advantage of them, particularly when the conversation was in English, so you knew it was a rich international mix."

Each day offered three of the plenary speakers: Edmondson,

Davide Rondoni, Bill Sessions, Guadalupe Arbona Abascal (in Spanish), Ralph Wood, Susan Srigley, Irwin Streight, Father John Wauck, and, in Edmondson's words, "A special treat: an intimate talk by Ughetta Fitzgerald Lubin, daughter of Sally and Robert Fitzgerald, who shared her memories of O'Connor's long stay with her family."

The panels offered papers with far-ranging topics, for example, O'Connor and Greek tragedy; O'Connor and bioethics; and various interpretations of, and commentaries on, her stories. There were even a few "interfaith" papers, such as a Muslim approach to reading O'Connor.

Edmondson noted that "the highlight of the conference for many was the dramatic presentation of 'Everything That Rises Must Converge,' directed by Karin Coonrod. It was held on two successive nights in the courtyard of the University of Santa Croce. It was stunning, even magical. Not only was it a beautiful interpretation, but each of the

two nights, a rainy day gave way to clear skies for the outdoor dramatic presentation." The conference website is still up and contains a great deal of information, pictures and videos, including a high quality video of part of the play. The address is <http://www.pusc.it/pec/conv2009/index.html>

In a closing note about the conference, Edmondson added, "Proceedings from the conference will be published of course, but I imagine that the conference has spawned much more scholarship and collaboration that will be appearing over the next few years."

It seems the path from political philosophy to literature would be a convoluted one, but Edmondson explains that "political philosophers have long had an interest in literature. Many of the connections are natural: it's hard to find a better context in which to study leadership than with Shakespeare's works—consider, for example, *Coriolanus*, *Julius Caesar*, *Troilus and Cressida* and the two historical tetralogies." He first became interested in

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Ms. King had a headache but of course I am quite knowledgeable and, truth to tell, far more articulate than she. I do have some of the sketchbooks here, but you will probably find Vol. I of Peacock, A Hero for Our Times more useful.



I note your camera is rather simple - are you sure it has a setting that will capture the true amber of my eyes?

THE INTERVIEW

King, cont'd from pg. 1

gory in my library: I admire *Alice in Wonderland*. I like Charles Dickens. What Dickens does is present a picture of life that is humorous, not a set piece. I also read P. D. Wodehouse and Robert Benchley.

Cheers: When did you begin to study art formally?

King: My first opportunity to study art was in high school. In twelfth grade, I had a pretty good art teacher. Then it suddenly dawned on me that I'd soon be through with high school, which I found excruciatingly boring, so I was glad. But that

meant I'd have to do something. So I went to the Art Institute in Atlanta, but after one quarter, I had to return home because my mom was ill. That meant attending college in Milledgeville. First thing I remember about the town is that when my mom, my Aunt Cassie, and I arrived for the interview that was part of my entrance application, we ate at the Sanford House. We had roasted butternut squash as part of the meal. I just loved the ambience.

Cheers: In the Sanford House Cookbook (2008), which contains an introduction that you wrote and twenty of your illustrations to highlight its seventy recipes by Mary Jo Thompson, you speak of "the aroma of stuffed pork chops, asparagus soufflé, and butterscotch cheesecake drift[ing] to the dark wood and crisp linen and eager diners" with "the disciplined but benign spirits

of Miss White and Miss Thompson, making sure everything is—of course—perfect." What else do you remember about your college years?

King: The dean was a visceral enemy of my mother, who almost dared me to do well. And I did do well academically, but I liked to leave the dorm without checking in and out. Consequently, I was sent to the honor's council, and as my punishment, I was asked to draw posters. They didn't realize that I loved to draw and loved to see my work all around campus.

Cheers: How did art and literature come together in your career?

King: I was majoring in art, but then was tempted away by an English professor who gave me a good hard shake and told me to make up my mind. I opted for

Cont'd, pg. 3

From the President's Desk: Matching Funds Campaign Continues

Whenever I've taken on one too many projects whose deadlines are marching towards me with military precision and my department chair has called for some new abstruse administrative report ASAP and my car opts to pay a surprise visit to the repair shop on the same day my children have launched themselves into teenage outer space using my credit card for fuel—on those days I always lean back and compare myself to the poor folks who have to conduct pledge drives on public radio or public television. Then I say to myself, "At least I'll never have to make a fool of myself begging for money from strangers. Those guys really have it bad."

But in the past few months, that refuge has evaporated as I've found myself making announcements, sending letters and e-mails, and conspiring with *Cheers!* editor, Avis Hewitt, to find ways to drum up donations from O'Connor Society members to match a gift to the O'Connor-

Andalusia Foundation to assist in the restoration of the house and farm where Flannery wrote most of her fiction. I can report that I've gotten the patter down almost as well as a sidewalk potato peeler salesman, but I still squirm in the asking. My only solace has been my conviction of the value of the cause and the kind and generous ways so many people have responded. We've gotten no checks so big the woman at the bank drive-up window gives me that eye that comes when she's wondering about pressing her hidden button. But we've heard from dozens of O'Connor readers ready to give what they can. We're still a long way from our \$10,000 goal, and if you know anyone with money to spare, please send them our way. But in the meantime, I ask everyone to give and to encourage every O'Connor reader they know to make that \$25.00, \$50.00, or \$100.00 donation that will take us ever closer to our goal of claiming a matching gift of an-

other \$10,000 that depends on our success.

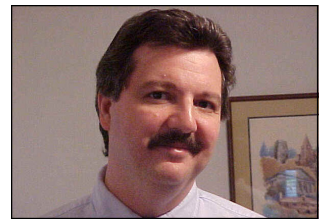
Of course, the Society is doing more than fund raising. We have two great panels of O'Connor papers set for the American Literature Association meeting in San Francisco this May. They feature papers from renowned scholars as well as from some fresh faces in O'Connor studies. Meanwhile, Bruce Gentry of Georgia College & State University has kindly taken on the task of organizing panels for the ALA's Third Symposium on American Fiction, set for October in O'Connor's birth place, Savannah. We also have members active in several regional MLAs with panels set for both the Rocky Mountain MLA and the South Central MLA meetings this fall, and a cfp for the fall South Atlantic MLA convention.

We're also asking members to think about and even volunteer to help establish a presence for the Society on the internet. Several other author societies are active there. We need to hear from you

about what kind of presence we should consider on the web and how it could be managed and maintained.

I could go on, but I do have papers to grade, reports to write, an article to finish, the dryer just buzzed . . . "Ben and Kate! Could you guys stop the squabbling upstairs for five minutes? I'm trying to finish my article for *Cheers!*"

Oh, and did I mention the matching funds campaign?



Robert Donahoo, author of articles on Horton Forte, Leo Tolstoy, and Larry Brown, as well as numerous articles on O'Connor, is president of the F O'C Society and teaches at Sam Houston S U in Huntsville, TX.

King, cont'd from pg. 2

English and soon had no doubts. I have taught mostly college with a brief interlude of secondary teaching. In 2003 (the year the *Flannery O'Connor Bulletin* became the *FO'C Review*), I began cartooning. As I was sitting editing the premiere issue of the *Flannery O'Connor Review*, I pulled out my cartoon of the preemie "for kicks" to relax the staff and get them laughing. I had in my folder four or so cartoons. It was a gutsy thing to do because it is a serious journal of critical commentary. But the cartoons were included in that first issue. Then Craig Amason, Executive Director of Andalusia, commissioned me to do a perpetual calendar and sets of note cards to sell in the Andalusia Gift Shop.

Cheers: Besides having grown up only children of widowed mothers, having loved both literature and art—specifically, cartooning—and having both graduated from Georgia College, do you and Flannery O'Connor—in addition to

the aforementioned early loss of your fathers—have anything else in common?

King: Yes! She and I both served as the editors of college publications: I the Georgia College newspaper and she its literary magazine and the yearbook.

Cheers: What was O'Connor's status and position locally when you were an undergrad?

King: The Literary Guild of Dr. Rosalee Walston's English class would go in spring to her farm. I don't remember the peacocks, but I remember the henneys. O'Connor would sit quietly on her porch while Dr. Walston and her mama sat with her and would talk, talk, talk. O'Connor just listened. It was such a contrast that those women talked so much while she said almost nothing, but she had a quality of nearly total absorption. We undergrads lined up in a row if we had O'Connor's books. She would scrawl her name across the title page of *The Violent Bear It Away*. She never taught at GCSU while she

lived here. Dr. Walston talked about her in a way that showed she thought her to be really special. She came to speak at chapel. She was hard to understand. She mumbled, swallowed her words, and had a strange rhythm, but I immediately sensed that she was really worth listening to.

Cheers: What has it been like to discover this second and highly successful career as a cartoonist and illustrator?

King: It has been a joy for me to connect with drawing again. When I take pen in hand, it's a physical sensation that goes from my mind to my fingers in a way that I'd forgotten. During my work on the perpetual calendar, I found that after teaching her works for years, it was wonderful to have a chance to put her works into visual

art. I'm glad it's O'Connor that I mainly do because people tell me she would much enjoy my cartoons.

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Montgomery, cont'd from pg. 1

MJ: In "Writers Cramped" (*Touchstone*—September 2007, 20.7) Donald Williams observes that the important Christian writers of the twentieth century (he lists Chesterton, Lewis, Tolkien, Eliot, Green, Solzhenitsyn, Percy and O'Connor) all come from liturgical rather than evangelical churches. Is this true, and if so, why?

MM: Donald Williams's proposition is intriguing in its complexities, but your "why" would require volumes in response. Perhaps only a beginning, then, and on the theme of "liturgy—"public signs"—signs ordered in this strange world by our *manners toward* some other; intellectual actions speaking a gift natural to the pilgrim intellectual soul incarnate. Signs speak our communal unity as pilgrims of this world. My old Webster's observes of *liturgy* that it is "often Eucharistic." As such, it signals a spiritual yearning in the intellectual soul for union beyond our inadequate self-sufficiencies, a yearning consent of manner seeking communion, *con-union* beyond any isolated sovereignty of our self-awareness as *homo viator*, "man on his way." Through this yearning, we discover membership in family and thus in a community of families.

Concerning our membership one of another, then, O'Connor as a writer is concerned for that mystery. It is a mystery hinted in our *manners* and to be made centrally enjoined through liturgy for her, as it is for those other writers Donald Williams names as being liturgical rather than evangelical. They increasingly inclined to serve (by their gifts as makers of signs) a sustaining of liturgical consensus to the restoration and health of community, formulated by their art in making as a stewardship to a common (a *communal*) desire for union more mysterious in spiritual depths than suspected by mere cultural sophistication in manners as but social spectacle—or the manners of a sophisticated intelligentsia which O'Connor speaks of scath-

ingly as "New York critics."

MJ: The South was fertile ground for O'Connor and Percy, both for them as persons and for the settings of their fictions. But do you think the South is still fertile ground for the author and his fictional settings?

MM: In *this* place, at *this* moment—even in the "provincial" South? There survives in us, by our "natural law," a common "Southernness" as our given nature, waxing and waning in history and geography—regardless of cultural place or time. It speaks an inclination "at hand" in our South still—a proper concern of the person as pilgrim even when he suspects himself but a fugitive. That is why *place* is important to the person. He is *here*, and it is *now*, whatever his calling and whatever the circumstances to his actuality as *this* person now living. In response to present experience in a place, such a pilgrim may (in Dante's phrase) "come to himself."

How could it be otherwise, at least from a "liturgical" perspective of address to the mystery of existence as self-evident? This is a truth of human nature more self-evident to some "Southerners" than to others. O'Connor, perhaps more than her companionable "Southern Catholic" poet Percy, sets her pilgrim protagonists in spiritual crisis, by her art "incarnating" surrogate persons through local actualities she knows. She is, as "a realist of distances" (her epithet for her manner as poet), more comfortable with her decidedly "provincial" segment of "Southerners," their cultural ambience deeper in spiritual dimension as self-evident to her. The vicinity of Milledgeville, Georgia, in a limited time for her, is rich in implication of spiritual distances.

MJ: Initially, both writers were misread: O'Connor has been read as a satirist of South-

ern rednecks and preachers, Percy as a Sartrean existentialist and so more sophisticated than O'Connor—not so limited as she by the "local." Was this—is this—a valid reading?

MM: They are differently "limited" in respect to the texture of their fiction as dependent upon "cultural" moments in particular places. Percy is concerned with the "losangelization" of American culture, through which largely suburban manifestations of that Hollywood enculturation blurs the significance of place and of its history for Percy's characters. That is one of his concerns, this blurring to-

ward a boring sameness of selves whereby people become increasingly "lost in the cosmos." If Percy at first seems further removed from the local as actual in a

"Southern" place than is O'Connor, they nevertheless share an understanding of the immediacy of experience to an intellectual soul as a thing recognized to be actual in itself. And such "things" (including persons) have to be somewhere at some moment in actuality. O'Connor and Percy are true to the possibilities implicit in their "givens," both in their inherited language and in the truth of things as immediate to their own experiences.

Flannery O'Connor engages the mystery of our desire for a rescue beyond the limits of our finite understanding. She does so with comic humor. Not the "Southerner," then—a ready comic butt for TV "sit-coms"—but our Modernist culture which Percy sees as more comfortable at Tupperware parties than in the formulaic Eucharist that lifts creation up to its Cause. Alas, that San Andreas Fault in human nature called Original Sin is increasingly conflicted by Cartesian confusions of the mind as its own place.

MJ: The subtitle of Williams's *Touchstone* essay is "Three Things Evangelical Authors Can Learn from Flannery

O'Connor." These three things are a true worldview, encapsulated in dogma; purposeful art; and fictional mystery. Would you add anything to this list? What can authors—secular, evangelical or otherwise—learn from O'Connor? What might they learn from Walker Percy?

MM: Again, a question requiring a volume or two—in respect to O'Connor and Percy my own two recent attempts. Both poets know, through their labors of making, a responsibility to the thing they are making here and now, the form of which through reason in making depends necessarily on givens that are antecedent to their labors in making. They both see this responsibility in a metaphysical dimension as enlarged by St. Thomas out of Aristotle, who distinguishes *history* as the actual in time, from *art* as dependent upon that history but concerned with the *possible or probable*. Each person is responsible to his calling as peculiar to his particular nature as *this* person. (I write because I'm good at it, O'Connor puts it). What they (O'Connor and Percy) understand is the limits of their calling as poets, requiring responsibility to a *perfection* of those limited gifts through reason in making. Modernist circumstances required O'Connor's manner of the "grotesque" to alert the almost blind or the hard of hearing. It is a gift which she humbly but unapologetically accepts and devotes herself to, but not at the "personal" cost of a presumption of comprehensiveness. Rather, she pursued in responsibility to remove obstacles to grace supportive of her making as she sees it. Percy comes more

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With Walker Percy



at the Tupperware Party

Marion Montgomery

With Walker Percy at the Tupperware Party: in Company with Flannery O'Connor, T.S. Eliot, and Others by Marion Montgomery. St. Augustine's Press, 2009. 420 pp.

Montgomery, cont'd from pg. 4

gradually to that same understanding—after long wanderings (especially intellectual wanderings) but at last coming “home” in Covington, Louisiana.

MJ: O'Connor's religious, literary, and critical perceptions account for clear, cogent, insightful, and prophetic qualities in her writings, according to some of her critics—you among them. How do you account for this? Was exposure to the writing crowd at Iowa and to the literary world surrounding the Fitzgeralds sufficient to account for the quality of her work?

MM: Perhaps not “clear”—judging from the range of responses to her work. And her prophetic qualities reveal themselves only slowly to a secular age such as ours. Her manner of engaging reality at ground zero, through her Thomistic perspective, tends to be slow to our discovery, let alone to our consent that it is insightful and cogent. O'Connor retained her experiences in the Iowa Writers Workshop and among the gatherings of intellectuals while with Robert and Sally Fitzgerald up East and far from Andalusia. Those experiences “abroad” confirmed her in what she already knew about things actual to her by her immediate responses of wonder to things—experiences enlarged through her reason. She got “scratched” along the way by encounter of persons—up in Iowa or Connecticut or New York or Massachusetts. Walker Percy was as well as a medical intern in New York at Bellevue and Cook County Hospital. Concerning O'Connor as no innocent abroad,

there is that anecdote reported of her, her response to a sophisticated discussion of the Eucharist as but a “symbol.” She is reported as responding, that if it is only a symbol, then “I say to Hell with it.” This is an issue for Percy as well, who at his life's end writes that essay “The Holiness of the Ordinary.” The sacraments, Percy says, and “especially the Eucharist, whatever else they do, confer the highest significance upon ordinary things of this world, bread, wine, water, touch, breath, words, talking, listening.”

MJ: O'Connor and Percy both write with spiritual purposes. How successful are they in conveying these spiritual concerns in their fiction and in their essays and letters?

MM: Concerning O'Connor's “spiritual purpose” in writing a story, she must remind her readers on occasion that a poet never *proves* anything by his art—not if it is art written with a high seriousness of concern for the good of the thing being made. By the choices necessary to the making, out of the realities of things—and particularly the common realities conspicuous in human nature—she accepts limits implicit in her choices of the matter she knows in the actualities of her own experience of things and persons. O'Connor is concerned for the *possible* as implicit to the realities of human nature as *understood*, though not *comprehended* in the absolute sense as related to Love Absolute. O'Connor is aware of her audience as a proximate concern of course, even concerned for its possible rescue from spiritual disorientation that affects us in circumstances of a

diminishing of community in her day. Her most fundamental concern, however, is for the good of the thing she *is making now*, requiring of her an accord to the limits of her gifts as maker. The end to her making in this world (as she observes to some of her correspondents and in her talks to interested audiences) is to *lift up* a well-wrought offering to her God. Insofar as it is good as a thing made, in consistency with the material given by her experiences of things in themselves (including persons), her made thing may become a worthy offering.

One might say that, unlike O'Connor, Percy is required a more considerable labor in coming to this same recognition, beginning as a skeptic nurtured in Aurelian Stoicism under the aegis of Uncle Will. He comes a cropper, as a “Southerner” might put it, having had a “scientific” education on his way to becoming a physician only to contract tuberculosis. Not an accident, he will say much later, and much more than bad “luck.” His is rather an experience of “Divine Providence.” Far from home, reading and reading, he becomes delighted at the prospect of *ideas* as fictional matter, as he encountered in Sartre. It is a possibility he pursues with wit, humor, and

some skepticism in his *The Moviegoer*. But having published that widely acclaimed novel, he comes to a recognition. In 1989, looking back at his *Moviegoer*, he says of it that it is a novel which “almost by accident—or was it accident?—landed squarely in the oldest tradition of Western letters: the pilgrim's search outside himself, rather than the guru's search within.” (Gurus were very popular in the 1960s and 1970s.)

Percy adds, “All this happened to the novelist and his character without the slightest consciousness of a debt to St. Augustine or Dante.” Indeed, he concludes of his character Binx that as fictional surrogate person Binx is “a microcosm of the spiritual history of the West, from the Roman patrician reading his Greek philosophers [*pace* Marcus Aurelius] to the thirteenth century pilgrim who leaves home and takes to the road.”

Much, much more might be said, alas, and so my attempt in a “trilogy”: *Hillbilly Thomist: Flannery O'Connor, St. Thomas, and the Limits of Art*, followed by *With Walker Percy at the Tupperware Party*. The third, in manuscript, is called “From Hawthorne, through James and Eliot, to O'Connor and Percy—and Back Again.”



Michael M. Jordan is Professor and Chairman of the Department of English at Hillsdale College. He received his B.A. in English from Bryan College, his M.A. in Literature and Moral Philosophy from International College, and his Ph.D. in English from the University of Georgia. For the Ph.D. he worked with Marion Montgomery, who directed Jordan's dissertation on “Donald Davidson's Agrarian ‘Creed of Memory.’” In 2005 Jordan selected and edited a collection of Montgomery's essays (*On Matters Southern: Essays About Literature and Culture, 1964-2000*—McFarland).

Edmondson, cont'd from pg. 2

cause of the way she “responded to the philosophical and cultural phenomenon of nihilism and [he] found a story like ‘Good Country People’ to be very helpful in a discussion of Nietzsche.”

After that initial interest, Edmondson “tried my hand at an essay or two and got modest encouragement and success in the effort. At an early stage sev-

eral people encouraged me—Sarah Gordon, Bill Sessions and Marion Montgomery—and for that I'll always be grateful.” Although it seems “those with a background in literature, comparative lit, and literary theory are the real scholars in all of this and some may regard what we do in political philosophy as dilettantish, we are having fun, and we are getting away with it.”

He certainly is getting away with it! Joining *Return to Good and Evil* in his literary contributions will be a collection of essays he is editing on O'Connor “under the wide umbrella of political philosophy,” which he feels “offers an underutilized perspective on literature.” It is tentatively titled *Flannery's Politics*. Edmondson elaborates on the contents: “A couple of the essays

will be on actual politics, but others will address matters of ethics, culture, interpretation and O'Connor's intellectual and literary affinities.” He is working with a university press and expects to be “off and running with it soon,” with a tentative publication date of 2011. Edmondson added that he is “humbled that so many of the leading scholars in O'Connor studies have signed on.”

The Sarah Gordon Award

The Sarah Gordon Award is a \$500 Prize for the best article written by a graduate student on Flannery O'Connor and/or Southern Literature. Entrant must be a graduate student as of 1 August 2009. Articles must be submitted between 1 April 2010, and 1 August 2010, to be considered for the 2010 award. Contestants for the 2010 award are free to choose among critical approaches.

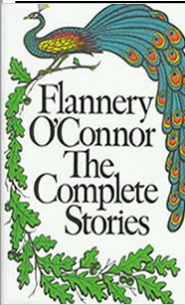
Please note: All entries will be considered for publication in the *Flannery O'Connor Review*. Articles must conform to the usual submission guidelines outlined in the *Review*. Send two copies (no name or identifying information on copies) with a cover letter.

Mail submissions to:
Flannery O'Connor Review

Sarah Gordon Award
Department of English,
Speech, and Journalism
Campus Box 44
Georgia College & State
University
Milledgeville, GA 31061

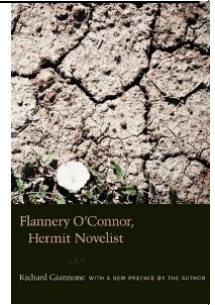


O'Connor News and Notes



The National Book Award for fiction named Flannery O'Connor's *The Complete Stories* the best work to have won the award in the contest's 60-year history. It was chosen as the result of an online poll conducted by the National Book Foundation. The other finalists in the poll were *The Stories of John Cheever*, William Faulkner's *Collected Stories*, *The Collected Stories of Eudora Welty*, Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*, and Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow*.

Richard Giannone's book *Flannery O'Connor, Hermit Novelist* (2000) is being republished by University of South Carolina Press in 2010 with a new preface by the author.

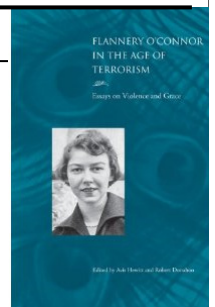


The City of Milledgeville declared March 25 "Flannery O'Connor Day," and celebrated at Andalusia with an official Proclamation from Mayor Richard Bentley. They also celebrated what would have been Flannery O'Connor's 85th birthday with a special cake.

New Essay Collection

Cheers! editor Avis Hewitt and Society President Robert Donahoo are publishing a collection of essays titled *Flannery O'Connor in the Age of Terrorism: Essays on Violence and Grace* with University of Tennessee Press in April 2010.

The collection will include contributions from Jon Lance Bacon, William Brevda, Doug Davis, Anthony DiRenzo, Robert Donahoo, Marshall Bruce Gentry, Thomas Haddox, Avis Hewitt, Christina Bieber Lake, J. Ramsey Michaels, William Monroe, Linda Naranjo-Huebl, Farrell O'Gorman, William Sessions, John Sykes, and Ralph Wood.



Recent Publications

Books

- Bloom, Harold. *Flannery O'Connor*. New York: Bloom's Literary Criticism, 2009.
- Browning, Preston, Jr. *Flannery O'Connor: The Coincidence of the Holy and the Demonic in O'Connor's Fiction* (Flannery O'Connor Studies). Oregon: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2009.
- Hewitt, Avis, and Robert Donahoo. *Flannery O'Connor in the Age of Terrorism: Essays on Violence and Grace*. Knoxville: U of Tennessee P, 2010.
- Mallon, Thomas. *Yours Ever: People and Their Letters*. New York: Pantheon Books, 2009.
- Montgomery, Marion. *With Walker Percy at the Tupperware Party: In Company with Flannery O'Connor, T.S. Eliot, and Others*. South Bend, IN: St. Augustine's P, 2009.
- Silver, Joan. *On Same and Other: Image and Reality in Flannery O'Connor's Story with the Unspeakable Name*. St. John's College Friday Night Lecture Serie. 30 Jan. 2009. Annapolis, MD: St. John's College, 2009.
- Watkins, Steven R. *Flannery O'Connor and Teilhard De Chardin: A Journey Together towards Hope and Understanding about Life*. New York, NY: Peter Lang, 2009.

Theses

- Adair, Joseph M. *The Monster and Monstrance: Divine Presence in Flannery O'Connor's "A Temple of the Holy Ghost" & Other Works*. Essay (M.A.)—John Carroll University (University Heights, OH), 2009.
- Cook, Robert. "You Are a Very Ignorant Boy": Romano Guardini's Theology of Dogma in Flannery O'Connor's "The Enduring Chill." Thesis (M.A.)—Sacred Heart School of Theology (Hales Corners, WI), 2010.
- Guevara, Erica K. *Identity Crisis: The Missing Female Self in Flannery O'Connor's Short Fiction*. Thesis (M.A.)—University of Texas at Brownsville, 2009.
- Klein, Franz S. *Thomas and the Hillbilly Thomist: Reading Flannery O'Connor's Wise Blood and The Violent Bear It Away Through the Lens of St. Thomas Aquinas' Summa Theologiae*. Thesis (M.A.)—Winona State University (MN), 2009.
- Paxton, Virginia A. *A Good Woman Is Hard to Find: Discovering the Voice of the Woman Satirist in Flannery O'Connor's Wise Blood*. Thesis (M.A.)—Florida Atlantic University, 2009.
- Simon, Katie E., Kaplan Page Harris, Jefferson D. Slagle, and Lauren Pringle De La Vars. *Violent Landscapes: O'Connor's, Oates's and Highsmith's Engagement with the American Terrain*. Thesis (M.A.)—St. Bonaventure University (NY), 2009.
- Strempeke-Durgin, Heather D. *Patriarchal Power and Punishment: The Trickster Figure in the Short Fiction of Shirley Jackson, Flannery O'Connor, and Joyce Carol Oates*. Thesis (M.A.)—Oregon State University, 2009.

Recent Publications continued on back page

Calls for Papers

67th Annual South Central MLA Convention

28-30 October 2010 ~ Fort Worth, TX

Deadline: 15 April 2010

Flannery O'Connor as History/Historian

While this panel will consider any paper that takes up the gauntlet of "New Frontiers," the conference theme, as it relates to O'Connor studies, we are particularly interested in papers that explore how the author places her work in time. Critics such as Jon Lance Bacon have opened up new frontiers in O'Connor criticism by looking at her work in extended dialogue with Cold War culture. This panel invites papers that continue that tradition, challenging readings of O'Connor as ahistorical, anachronistic, and/or anomalous by showing how she engages with her times and situates her work historically.

Please submit abstracts of 250 words or less to Scott Daniel by April 15, 2010 at scottdaniel69@yahoo.com.

Southern Writers/Southern Writing Graduate Conference

15-17 July 2010 ~ Oxford, MS

Deadline: 5 April 2010

The 16th Annual Southern Writers/Southern Writing Conference is a University of Mississippi Graduate Student event held in conjunction with the university's Annual Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha Conference (www.outreach.olemiss.edu/events/faulkner).

Our conference regularly features panels on William Faulkner, Flannery O'Connor, Eudora Welty, and Zora Neale Hurston, and we would like to promote panels this year on the work of Larry Brown and Barry Hannah, among others.

Conference directors welcome papers on any aspect of Southern literature and writing. Suggested topics (including but are not limited to): the Southern Renaissance, Southern literature viewed from regional and historical

perspectives, Southern literature and film, Southern literature and Modernism, Southern crime fiction, Southern literature and the blues, stylistic studies.

Please send 150-250 word abstracts of critical works or entire creative works to swwgrad-conference@gmail.com by 5:00pm on Monday, April 5th, 2010. Please send your submissions as Word attachments and include your university affiliation, mailing address, and e-mail address.

South Atlantic MLA Convention

5-7 November 2010 ~ Atlanta, GA

Deadline: 30 April 2010

This panel affiliated with the Flannery O'Connor Society welcomes papers that explore the SAML 2010 special focus "The Interplay of Text and Image" in O'Connor and film. While papers dealing with film adaptations of O'Connor's works will be considered, the session's specific goal is to expand our understanding of how filmmakers have incorporated and/or have contrasted O'Connor's themes, character types, etc. in their own works. Preference will be given to papers that seek creative connections between O'Connor's works and films that are not obvious adaptations of O'Connor's fiction.

Please e-mail abstracts (500 words) to Amy K. King at akking@olemiss.edu before April 30, 2010.

ALA Symposium on American Fiction 1890 to the Present

8-9 October 2010 ~ Savannah, GA

Deadline: 7 May 2010

Session One: New Religious Readings of Flannery O'Connor's Fiction: This session will present innovative readings of O'Connor's fictional works based on analyses of O'Connor's use of the Bible, her religious symbolism, her response to theological thought, etc.

Session Two: Barbecued Sandwiches and Other

Delicacies: Close Reading the Tower Scene in Flannery O'Connor's "A Good Man Is Hard to Find": This panel will present analyses of the scene in O'Connor's famous story in which the vacationing family visits the Tower, run by Red Sammy Butts and his wife, for lunch. The passage is found on pages 120-22 of *The Complete Stories* and on pages 140-42 of *Flannery O'Connor: Collected Works*. All sorts of methods of analysis are welcome.

Anyone interested in being part of either of these sessions should send the following by 7 May 2010: Title of presentation, 100-word abstract for presentation, and 50-word biographical statement about presenter, including academic affiliation, mailing address and email address of presenter

Email these materials to Marshall Bruce Gentry at bruce.gentry@gcsu.edu or mail them to him at English, Campus Box 44, Georgia College & State University, Milledgeville, GA 31061

Revelation and Convergence: Flannery O'Connor among the Philosophers and Theologians

6-8 October 2011 ~ Loyola University Chicago

An academic conference looking at the literary, philosophical, and theological influences that converge in the works of Flannery O'Connor. Committed speakers include Ralph Wood, Susan Srigley, Farrell O'Gorman, Hank Edmondson, Christina Bieber Lake, and Avis Hewitt.

Paper proposals should focus on particular thinkers that O'Connor drew on directly (such as Sophocles, Dostoevsky, Chardin, Barth, Niebuhr, Bouyer, Adam, Mauriac, Maritain, Gilson, Guardini, Voegelin, D'Arcy, Lynch, Ong) or figures whose works help illuminate hers today (such as Gadamer, Ricoeur, Habermas, de Lubac, Balthasar, Rahner, Blondel, Benedict XVI).

For more information, contact Mark Bosco, S.J. mbosco@luc.edu

Recent and Upcoming Panels

Popular Culture Association / American Culture Association

March 31-April 3, 2010 ~ St. Louis, MO

Southern Literature and Culture: Southern Favorites in Perspective

"The Influence of Flannery O'Connor on John Kennedy Toole," Jane Harrington Bethune, Salve Regina U

Southern Literature and Culture: More Southern Favorites

"An Addition to the Legacy: Joyce Carol Oates as the Successor to Carson McCullers's and Flannery O'Connor's Feminine Grotesque," Erin M. Whitford, Angelo State U
"The Religious Existentialism of Flannery O'Connor: A Kierkegaardian Reading of *The Violent Bear It Away*," Tiffany Curtis, U of Southern Mississippi

American Literature Association 21st Annual Conference

May 27-30, 2010 ~ San Francisco, CA

Flannery O'Connor and the South

"The Material Culture of Race in Flannery O'Connor's South," Doug Davis, Gordon College

"Southern History as Monument and Sham in Flannery O'Connor's Fiction," Robert Donahoo, Sam Houston State U

"Border-Crossings in Flannery O'Connor's South," Doreen Fowler, U of Kansas

Flannery O'Connor's Fiction

"O'Connor Outside the 'Region-Religion' Boundaries," Sura P. Rath, Central Washington U

"Flannery O'Connor's Dark Theology," Denise Fidia, U of Ottawa, Canada

"Alone in Taulkinham: Idolatry and the Sacred in Flannery O'Connor's *Wise Blood*," James Hutchinson, Bard College at Simon's Rock

"Children's Escape Through the American Religion in Flannery O'Connor's 'The Lame Shall Enter First,'" Bridget A. Tomich, Independent Scholar

Rocky Mountain Modern Language Association 2010 Convention

October 14-16, 2010 ~ Albuquerque, NM

Flannery O'Connor Session

"Assemblage, Collage, Still Life, and the Poetry of Objects in Flannery O'Connor's *Wise Blood*," Ruth Mary Reiniche, U of Arizona

"Manners, Morals, and Mysteries: Flannery O'Connor's Segregated Sentiments," Brandon Gordon, U of California, Irvine

"Dead on Arrival: Time, Space, Race, and Salvation Through the Locomotive," Kelly Scott Franklin, U of Iowa

"The River' and *The Road*: Violence and Redemption in Flannery O'Connor and Cormac McCarthy," Henry T. Edmondson III, Georgia College & State U

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Recent Publications



Articles

- Choi, Insoon. "Flannery O'Connor and the Anagogical Vision." *British and American Fiction to 1900* 16.2 (2009): 227-46.
- Desblaches, Claudia. "'The Vocalic Uncanny' in Some Short Stories by Flannery O'Connor and by Barry Hannah." *Revue LISA/LISA e-journal* 7.2 (2009): 142-57.
- Desmond, John F. "Flannery O'Connor, Simone Weil, Writing, and the Crucifixion." *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture* 13.1 (2010): 35-52.
- Evans, Robert C. "A Sharp Eye for the Grotesque in Flannery O'Connor's 'Good Country People.'" *The Grotesque*. Eds. Harold Bloom (ed and introd) and Hobby Blake (series ed). Broomall, PA: Chelsea House, 2009. 75-85.
- Goodwin, James. "All God's Grotesques: Flannery O'Connor." *Modern American Grotesque: Literature and Photography*. Columbus, OH: Ohio State UP, 2009.
- Kilgore, Matthew. "Beauty and the Grotesque (Interpreting David Lynch and Flannery O'Connor through the 'light of faith.')" *The Heythrop Journal* 51.1 (2010): 34-44.
- McDermott, John. "Flannery O'Connor's Validation of the Unreasonable in 'A Good Man Is Hard To Find.'" *Notes on Contemporary Literature* 40.1 (January 2010): 10-12.
- Muller, Gilbert H. "The Grotesque Protagonist." *The Grotesque*. Eds. Harold Bloom (ed and introd) and Hobby Blake (series ed). Broomall, PA: Chelsea House, 2009. 177-187.
- Robillard, Douglas. "Diabolical Ventriloquism in C. S. Lewis, Flannery O'Connor and Clive Barker." *Philological Review* 35.1 (2009): 11-28.
- Usselman, Steven W. "The Historian of Technology and Her True Country." *Technology and Culture* 50.1 (2008): 110-126.
- Wood, Ralph C. "Personal and Communal Hope in Flannery O'Connor and J.R.R. Tolkien." *Cynicism and Hope: Reclaiming Discipleship in a Postdemocratic Society*. Ed. Meg E. Cox. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2009.

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