



Flannery: A Life of Flannery O'Connor

Brad Gooch

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The landscape of American literature was fundamentally changed when Flannery O'Connor stepped onto the scene with her first published book, *Wise Blood*, in 1952. Her fierce, sometimes comic novels and stories reflected the darkly funny, vibrant, and theologically sophisticated woman who wrote them. Brad Gooch brings to life O'Connor's significant friendships--with Robert Lowell, Elizabeth Hardwick, Walker Percy, and James Dickey among others--and her deeply felt convictions, as expressed in her communications with Thomas Merton, Elizabeth Bishop, and Betty Hester. Hester was famously known as "A" in O'Connor's collected letters, *The Habit of Being*, and a large cache of correspondence to her from O'Connor was made available to scholars, including Brad Gooch, in 2006. O'Connor's capacity to live fully--despite the chronic disease that eventually confined her to her mother's farm in Georgia--is illuminated in this engaging and authoritative biography.

PRAISE FOR FLANNERY

"Flannery O'Connor, one of the best American writers of short fiction, has found her ideal biographer in Brad Gooch. With elegance and fairness, Gooch deals with the sensitive areas of race and religion in O'Connor's life. He also takes us back to those heady days after the war when O'Connor studied creative writing at Iowa. There is much that is new in this book, but, more important, everything is presented in a strong, clear light." --Edmund White

"This splendid biography gives us no saint or martyr but the story of a gifted and complicated woman, bent on making the best of the difficult hand fate has dealt her, whether it is with grit and humor or with an abiding desire to make palpable to readers the terrible mystery of God's grace." --Frances Kiernan, author of *Seeing Mary Plain: A Life of Mary McCarthy*

"A good biographer is hard to find. Brad Gooch is not merely good--he is extraordinary. Blessed with the eye and ear of a novelist, he has composed the life that admirers of the fierce and hilarious Georgia genius have long been hoping for." -- Joel Conarroe, President Emeritus, John Simon Guggenheim Foundation

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