



The Critical Response to Flannery O'Connor (Critical Responses in Arts and Letters)

Douglas Robillard

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As the author of such classic American short stories as *A Good Man Is Hard to Find*, *Everything That Rises Must Converge*, and *Revelation*, Flannery O'Connor has always been recognized as a distinctive voice in American literature. A devoutly Catholic, Southern author with serious literary ambitions, she dealt with topics such as the operation of grace in ordinary life, and the nature of evil, sin, and redemption. Fifty years after the publication of her first novel, *Wise Blood*, her fiction is acclaimed for its high literary value and with the publication of her *Collected Works*, her work has become part of the canon of American literature. This volume includes articles on the racial, critical, and theological controversies surrounding O'Connor's work. And, rather than presenting a consensus of literary opinion, it shows how different critics arrive at radically different interpretations of a given O'Connor story or novel.

An introductory essay examines the growth of O'Connor's literary reputation and outlines the major approaches taken by literary scholars to interpreting and elucidating her work. The 47 pieces collected in this volume represent the diverse reactions her work has created. The items are grouped into three sections, each representing a chronological period: the first section compiles the reactions of critics during her lifetime, the second section compiles criticism from the 25 years that elapsed between her death in 1964 until the 1989 publication of her *Collected Works*, and the third section brings together new critical approaches that foreshadow future trends in O'Connor criticism.

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