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Salem Press Announces *Critical Insights: Short Fiction of Flannery O'Connor*

Critical Insights: Short Fiction of Flannery O'Connor, edited by Robert C. Evans, an I.B. Young professor of English at Auburn University at Montgomery, explores Flannery O'Connor, an author who had an immediate and enduring impact on the American literary dialogue. Her short fiction is routinely included in standard anthologies. These books often offer several stories by O'Connor, while reprinting only single stories by numerous other writers. Her continuing prominence implies that she is certainly one of the greatest writers of short fiction the United States has ever produced. *Critical Insights: Short Fiction of Flannery O'Connor* places O'Connor's short stories in a variety of contexts and discusses them from many different points of view.

This title is divided into four main sections, starting with **Career, Life, and Influence**. This section opens up with a "lead" essay by Robert Donahoo that looks at O'Connor's stories in light of the impact of World War II and the veterans who returned from that conflict as well as from the Korean War. Donahoo's essay is then followed by a brief overview of O'Connor's highly successful but all-too-brief career, which was cut short by a terminal illness.

These two preliminary essays are then followed by four deliberately contextual pieces in the **Critical Contexts** section. Editor, Robert C. Evans sets O'Connor within the conservative political and cultural contexts of her times; emphasizing especially the ideas she shared with such political theorists as Russell Kirk and Brainerd Cheney. Evans also follows with an essay surveying, in great detail, the initial critical responses to O'Connor's short fiction-responses that set the tone and laid down the main themes of much subsequent criticism. Another essay by Evans then discusses the relatively neglected topic of *form* in O'Connor's stories, focusing especially on the use of foreshadowing in "A Good Man Is Hard to Find." Finally, the last contextual essay compares and contrasts O'Connor's works with those of the African American writer Alice Walker, whose interest in O'Connor began early and has lasted long.

The next section, **Critical Readings** offers nine individual "critical perspective" essays on O'Connor's work. This section is organized in roughly chronological order, moving in general from the beginnings to the final stages of her career. Brian Yothers begins by examining one of O'Connor's final stories, but he does so by setting it within a literal-historical context largely influenced by Edgar Allan Poe and other nineteenth-century writers. David A. Davis then looks at "A Stroke of Good Fortune," one of O'Connor's earliest stories, examining the ways its

references to food help illuminate the work's treatment of gender and gender's relations to the historical period that produced it. "Good Country People," one of O'Connor's most important stories, is a main focus of Doreen Fowler's essay, which additionally examines another of O'Connor's major tales: "A Good Man Is Hard to Find." Adopting a more overtly religious and theoretical approach to O'Connor's stories, Fowler explores the ways O'Connor treats the issue of Christian grace in her fiction. Spiritual issues remain a concern in the next essay, in which Jimmy Dean Smith studies the ways O'Connor uses silence and silences in her religiously inflected writings, including "Good Country People," "A Good Man Is Hard to Find," and "Parker's Back." In the ensuing essay, Christine Flanagan uses two stories not discussed at any length so far ("Greenleaf" and "A View of the Woods") to set O'Connor's writing and thinking within an ecological context that is also relevant to her deepest religious and spiritual concerns. Other essays include:

- "Evangelical Satire and Bodily Redemption in Flannery O'Connor's "A Temple of the Holy Spirit" and "Parker's Back" by Michael Odom
- "Black Doubling in Flannery O'Connor's "Why Do the Heathen Rage?" by Colleen Warren
- "Tenderness in Flannery O'Connor's "Introduction" to *A Memoir of Mary Ann* and "The Lame Shall Enter First" by Aaron D. Cobb
- "Flannery O'Connor's Letters to Betty Hester: Passages Omitted from *The Habit of Being* by Robert C. Evans

Each essay in *Critical Insights: Short Fiction of Flannery O'Connor* is 2,500 to 5,000 words in length, and all essays conclude with a list of Works Cited and detailed endnotes. Also included in this volume are **Appendixes** to provide readers with additional information and opportunities for further research, including a **Chronology of Flannery O'Connor's Life**, a list of **Works by Flannery O'Connor**, an annotated **Bibliography**, biographies of the **Editors and Contributors**, and an alphabetical **Index**.

The *Critical Insights* Series distills the best of both classic and current literary criticism of the world's most studied literature. Edited and written by some of academia's most distinguished literary scholars, *Critical Insights: Short Fiction of Flannery O'Connor* provides authoritative, in-depth scholarship that students and researchers will rely on for years. This volume is destined to become a valuable purchase for all.

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