



The Art and Vision of Flannery O'Connor (Southern Literary Studies)

Robert H. Brinkmeyer Jr.

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Flannery O'Connor believed that fiction must try to achieve something on the order of what St. Gregory wrote about Scripture: every time it presents a fact, it must also disclose a mystery. O'Connor's artistic vision was located squarely in her Catholic faith, yet she realized that to view life only through the eyes of the Church was to ignore a large part of existence. In her fiction, therefore, she explored a wider world, employing voices that challenged conceptions of both self and faith, ultimately enlarging and deepening both. In *The Art and Vision of Flannery O'Connor*, Robert Brinkmeyer presents an innovative study of O'Connor's fiction by exploring the dialogic forces at work in her writing.

Drawing on the insights of literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin, Brinkmeyer offers an explanation for the great depth and power of O'Connor's work, paying particular attention to the ways her art and audience bear upon her regnant Catholic vision. This pressure and resistance, Brinkmeyer writes, free O'Connor's vision from the limits of its perspective, opening it to growth and understanding. After a thorough discussion of the ways in which O'Connor's Catholic and southern heritage helped to form her artistic vision, Brinkmeyer shows how dialogic encounters are at work in O'Connor's interaction with her largely fundamentalist narrators, the stories they tell, and her readers. He focuses on several of her stories as well as her two novels, *Wise Blood* and *The Violent Bear It Away*.

As the first analysis of the dialogical dynamics of O'Connor's art and vision, this study offers an original approach to understanding O'Connor. But the significance of the book extends far beyond O'Connor scholarship, for Brinkmeyer presents a critical method that has value for exploring other writers, particularly other modern Catholic writers.

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