

Topic and Panel Possibilities

We have chosen the age of terrorism as an overarching consideration and focal point for this event because it invites revisiting O'Connor's major works from a 2006 perspective. Five years after the attack on the World Trade Center, we note that O'Connor too came of age in a time of heated global conflict, graduating from college just as World War II ended. In those days, people had to learn to deal with the daily fear of a Communist attack. Today we face a war of nerves each time we pass through airport security. Whether from Ben Laden or Khrushchev, the ominous "We will bury you!" unwittingly unnerves us. Frederick Asals writes, regarding O'Connor's "primordial appeal," that she "captures a very old truth, that in the midst of life we are in death."

Several contemporary monographs address the current conundrum of why the search for grace is so frequently pursued with violence. In Terry Eagleton's *Holy Terror* (Oxford UP, 2005), Philip Jenkins' *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (Oxford UP, 2003), and Slavoj Zizek's *The Fragile Absolute, or Why Is the Christian Legacy Worth Fighting For* (Verso, 2000) the discussions of this paradox arouse in us equal measures of fear and hope. The fiction of Flannery O'Connor seems singularly well positioned to address that unsettling combination of responses, and we hope that many of you will take up the issues implicit in the conference title.

We also welcome, however, fruitful, innovative explorations of O'Connor's texts and contexts that are not directly linked to the intersection of violence and grace or the daily reality of terror: her earliest stories, unfinished late one, her nonfiction, her control of her reception, comparisons of her works to other classics of the day, the influence of Poe. All areas of O'Connor studies that motivate and delight are proposal possibilities we heartily solicit.