



## Flannery O'Connor: A Life

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By Jean Cash

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Flannery O'Connor at her home in Milledgeville, Ga., 1962. Credit: Jay Leviton-Atlanta. At her mother's farm, Andalusia, in Milledgeville, Ga., she collected all manner of fowl: ducks, quail, mallards, swans and peacocks. In Christian art, the peacock appears as a symbol of immortality and the incorruptible soul. Who would dream of her strange life, the manners and mystery of it? Yet actually, much is known. There are the letters, and her occasional essays and articles have been collected. The worst that can be said about Brad Gooch's eminently readable and thoroughly enjoyable *Flannery: A Life of Flannery O'Connor* is that it is pedestrian, and I mean that mostly as a compliment. O'Connor criticism has flourished but also floundered upon an idea of the author that conflates her personality with the fiction she created, fiction that T.S. Eliot once begged off reading on the grounds that his nerves were "just not strong enough to take much of a disturbance" (272). What Gooch gives us is, as his title implies, just Flannery, an O'Connor without the mystique that troubles her social Mary Flannery O'Connor was born in Savannah, Georgia, the only child of Regine Cline and Edwin Francis O'Connor. Born in a Catholic family, she lived in the South in the beginning of her childhood. During her school years Mary showed profound interest in writing. It was here that her love for writing flourished. Mary spent the next fourteen years of her life here writing later to become the greatest short story writers of the twentieth century. Other works of O'Connor include *Wise Blood* in *Mademoiselle*, *Sewanee Review*, and *Partisan Review* in 1948 and 1949 which were chapters of the same novel which finally came out in 1952. The second novel *The Violent Bear It Away* was published in 1960. Both these novels had a similar subject matter. Both the stories revolved around religion.

Flannery O'Connor at her home in Milledgeville, Ga., 1962. Credit: Jay Leviton-Atlanta. At her mother's farm, Andalusia, in Milledgeville, Ga., she collected all manner of fowl: ducks, quail, mallards, swans and peacocks. In Christian art, the peacock appears as a symbol of immortality and the incorruptible soul. Who would dream of her strange life, the manners and mystery of it? Yet actually, much is known. There are the letters, and her occasional essays and articles have been collected.