

Flannery's manifesto

by [Angela Alaimo O'Donnell](#) in the [February 28, 2018](#) issue

*“Do you think . . . that you are really using the talent God gave you when you don't write something that a lot, a LOT, of people like?”*

—Flannery O'Connor, quoting Regina O'Connor's commentary on her fiction

I do admire her confidence that my  
gift comes from God. That it's not a game or  
a trick, an affliction that she must endure.  
My gospel-knowing mother fears that I  
might be the fearful servant, the one who  
buries his treasure in the dirty ground.  
She might be right. But what else can I do  
but write what my crooked heart tells me to?  
I know I am a trial, hard to be around.  
But what else is making fiction for  
if not to trouble folks, mess with their heads,  
make them question why they rise from their beds  
if not to marvel that the world's still here,  
that some body watches and holds it all dear.