

Flannery's violence

by [Angela Alaimo O'Donnell](#) in the [December 6, 2017](#) issue

"Ladies don't beat the daylight out of people."

—Flannery O'Connor

The lesson every Southern girl must learn
if she's to grow up straight and proper.
But somehow I have always been bent
on fisticuffs. Guardian angels and nuns,
dumb country boys, foolish country women,
have long been objects of my quiet ire.
Even Christ used a whip when he needed to.
His mother never told him what to do,
and when she did, he didn't like to listen.
I had to find another way to vent—
stomp along the floors with my wooden leg,
hold folks at gun point and make 'em beg
for their lives. I've learned how to write my rage,
beat the daylight out of people on the page.