

Everything that rises must converge

Literature



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Order #562085 Everything that Rises Must Converge “ Everything that Rises Must Converge” on the surface appears to be a story about a young college-educated man, Julian, who believes he has rejected his mother’s values in favor of his seemingly more liberal attitudes. The story takes place in the south during a time when the buses have been newly desegregated evidenced by the way Julian’s mother and the other white woman on the bus discuss the change. Julian thinks his mother is racist and she is, but he also demonstrates his racism and his bigotry against his mother. In fact, Flannery O’Connor may have had the words of Jesus in mind when she wrote this story. “ Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you” (Matthew 7: 1-2). The very actions and values for which Julian condemns his mother, he also demonstrates and they are both judged harshly: she loses her life, and he, who has rejected his familial past, loses the only family he has.

Julian’s mother comes from a family that at one time were quite wealthy and who owned slaves. But, the plantation system in the south by the 1960s when the buses were integrated had disintegrated along with the value set that kept the system alive for so long. Julian’s mother boasts about how she is related to prominent southern families, but Alice Hall Petry points out that “ the mother’s glorious ancestry is meaningless” evidenced by the fact that she has had to work to put her son through a third-rate college and must attend a weight reduction class at the YWCA. “ The startling decline of the once powerful, liberal, and comforting YWCA parallels the decline of the Old South—and the old America—embodied in Julian’s mother” (Petry 51).

Because Julian and his mother are poor, they must ride the bus with other

<https://assignbuster.com/everything-that-rises-must-converge/>

poor people both white and black.

While Julian condemns his mother for her “ old ways,” he hypocritically acts the same way only he includes his mother in his bigotry. In fact, he includes anyone who is not as smart as he thinks he is because of his college education. Julian feels he is better than the people he must ride the bus with even though he is apparently not smart enough to have a good job or a car. “ He had tried to strike up an acquaintance on the bus with some of the better types, with ones that looked like professors or ministers or lawyers” (OConnor). Julian thinks he is so enlightened, yet he feels no moral distress about living with his poor mother and selling. Julian was only fortunate enough to college because his mother scraped and saved to send him there. Now, after having graduated a year previous to the time the story takes place, Julian lives with her because he cannot support himself and yet he has a condescending attitude toward his mother. “ In spite of going to only a third-rate college, he had, on his own initiative, come out with a first-rate education; in spite of growing up dominated by a small mind, he had ended up with a large one; in spite of all her foolish views, he was free of prejudice and unafraid to face facts” (OConnor). Of course, even though the narrator conveys this, it does not prove to be true.

Julian does not see his own hypocritical condemnation of his mother, but readers do. He even contemplates leaving her to get off the bus and walk the four blocks to the Y by himself because he is so angry with what he perceives as her racist behavior, yet he is oblivious to his own. Bryan Wyatt says, “ In the end what blinds her to him, beyond any recognition, is his rejection of her. . . . Ultimately this rejection is recognized for the evil that it was, and Julian tries to (re)establish genuine familial ties” (Wyatt 66). At that

point though, it is too late, and Julian must go on to live in a world of “ guilt and sorrow” knowing that the last moments with his mother, his only family, were hate filled ones. Julian’s mother suffers a stroke and presumably dies. That is her judgment. Julian, though, must live the rest of his life knowing his hateful behavior may have contributed to her death.

O’Connor’s story serves as a moral lesson not only for racists but also for those who would judge others. Racism is bad enough, but to be judgmental about someone who is a racist and to also be a hypocrite is far worse. The moment Julian experiences when his mother dies in front of him could have been an epiphany, but O’Connor does not reveal whether Julian regrets his behavior or continues on blind to his own racism and bigotry. Sadly, it seems Julian’s penalty for his hypocrisy may be a lifetime of anguish.

Works Cited

Matthew. New International Bible. 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011. 7: 1-2.

OConnor, Flannery. " Everything that Rises must Converge." Three by Flannery OConnor. New York: Penguin Signet, 1964, 1983.

Petry, Alice Hall. Explicator, Spring87, Vol. 45 Issue 3, p51. " OConnors " Everything that Rises Must Converge"." Explicator 45. 3 (1987): 51. Academic Search Premier. EBSCO. Web.

12 Aug. 2011.

Wyatt, Bryan N. " The domestic dynamics of Flannery OConnor: Everything That Rises Must

Converge." Twentieth Century Literature 38. 1 (1992): 66. Academic Search

Premier.

EBSCO. Web. 12 Aug. 2011.