

Three by Flannery O'Connor: Wise Blood ; the Violent Bear It Away ; Everything That Rises Must Converge Study Guide

**Three by Flannery O'Connor: Wise Blood ; the Violent
Bear It Away ; Everything That Rises Must Converge
by Flannery O'Connor**

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Wise Blood

Wise Blood Summary

Chapter one: The story begins with Hazel Motes riding a train to his hometown. Motes has just been released from the army after four years and is eager to return home. The story opens with Motes attempting to ignore the chatty conversation of another passenger, Mrs. Wally Bee Hitchcock. Mrs. Hitchcock is a friendly sort, eager to make conversation to pass the time. Motes tries, often unsuccessfully, to ignore the woman. Finally, Motes excuses himself to go and speak to the porter. Motes attempts to engage the porter in conversation, but the porter is not interested in knowing where Motes is from or where he is going.

When Motes returns to his seat, he finally answers one of the questions posed by Mrs. Hitchcock. Motes ignores her chatter and asks her if she had been redeemed. At the table in the dining car, Motes begins to ask various people if they have been redeemed and ends up being combative to several, saying that if they have been redeemed then he does not want to be.

Motes arranges for a sleeping berth, which is a claustrophobic and uncomfortable space but at least it will give Motes some peace and quiet. The author details some of Motes's dreams, including the one involving his father's funeral.

The author flashes back to Motes before he joined the army, stating that the only things Motes took with him were his grandfather's Bible and his mother's reading glasses. O'Connor also mentions that after a few weeks, Motes began to extend invitations to fellow GIs to visit any time they were in the area of Eastrod, Tennessee, his hometown.

In the present, O'Connor relays that the only thing Motes wants out of life is to become a preacher like his grandfather. However, Motes has a peculiar way of looking at religion and has little reverence for Jesus.

Motes reaches the nearby town of Melsy at five o'clock in the afternoon where he catches a ride on a seed truck. Once Motes reaches the town of Eastrod, he discovers that much has changed in the time he was gone. Motes reaches his old homestead at nine o'clock at night when it is too dark to notice that nothing has been left. The home has long since been abandoned. There are weeds growing up through the porch floor. The old homestead is little more than a shell; the only thing left is an old armoire in the kitchen, Motes' mother's chiffarobe, which had been labeled with Hazel Motes's name and the threat of death should anyone steal it.

Motes lights one envelope after the other to light his way as he investigates the old house, both upstairs and downstairs. The sight is depressing. Motes decides to sleep in the kitchen for the night. In the morning, Motes is hit in the head by a board that had fallen from the roof. Motes's face is cut. Motes leaves the house never to return.



Chapter two: Motes arrives in the city of Taulkinham at six o'clock the next evening. Motes had expected to be there much earlier but had missed re-boarding the train at a routine stop. Motes was forced to wait for six hours for the next train.

Motes is amazed at the sights in Taulkinham. There are electric signs everywhere advertising everything from Western Union to peanuts and taxis. Motes wanders aimlessly through the town and finally takes refuge in a men's toilet at a gas station. On the wall, Motes sees an advertisement for a boarding house and decides to lay his head there for the night. Motes takes a taxi and ends up explaining that he is neither a preacher nor a friend of Mrs. Watts, the owner of the boarding house. Motes meets Mrs. Watts, a single woman of somewhat questionable respectability. Motes settles in for the night.

Chapter three: Motes wanders through Taulkinham on his second night, a Thursday. Motes stops at a storefront to watch a demonstration of a potato peeler. A young man in the crowd speaks up, Enoch Emery. Motes talks to the pitchman as well and becomes aware of Emery. A blind man approaches the crowd, asking for help for an old blind preacher or perhaps a nickel if one does not want to repent. The pitchman becomes angry while a young girl with the preacher hands out religious tracts. To appease the pitchman, the girl buys a potato peeler. Motes lets it be known that he is not much into that Jesus stuff.

Motes leaves the scene and is dogged by Emery, who seems desperate for attention. Emery is a young man who claims to have been born and raised in Taulkinham but tells Motes otherwise. Emery is also new in town and lonely. Emery attempts to befriend Motes. Motes does not want to be bothered but has a hard time getting rid of Emery, who seems to show up around every corner.

The men happen upon the old blind preacher and his daughter, who are waiting for an event to let out so that the blind preacher can address his "congregation." Motes and Emery look on as the man spreads the word of God.

Motes does not approve of the way the blind preacher handles his ministry. Motes finally ditches Emery and heads back to the boarding house. Mrs. Watts proves to be the one thing that encourages Motes to stray from his credo of living a sin-free life and the couple has sex. As penance, Motes fills his shoes with rocks.

Chapter four: Motes goes out and buys a used car. The entire chapter details Motes haggling with the car dealer and reacquainting himself with driving, which he hadn't done in four or five years.

Chapter five: Emery goes to work as a gate guard. Next door is the Forest City Park where Emery goes after day after work to watch women by the pool. Emery becomes obsessed with the zoo and its animals in addition to his voyeuristic tendencies regarding local women at the swimming pool.

Emery's actions are detailed and the women who are the objects of Emery's attention.



Emery meets up with Motes later that day. Emery tells Motes that he knows the address of the blind preacher, Asa Hawks, and his daughter, Sabbath. Emery strings Motes along until Motes becomes angry. Emery continues to string Motes along and ends up getting knocked unconscious by a blow to the head. When he awakes, Motes is gone.

Chapter six: Motes goes to a theater and waits outside to preach to the moviegoers as they exit the building. The first people Motes sees are three portly women and three boys in lumber jackets. Motes begins to talk loudly about his evangelism and begins to tell people about his "Church Without Christ", where Jesus plays no part, there is no building, and everyone is welcome.

Motes meets Asa Hawks and his daughter Sabbath at a street side gathering. Motes is taken with the blind Hawks and begins to follow them. Motes also has an attraction for Sabbath. Motes learns that Hawks was also a preacher and has deliberately blinded himself in front of a congregation to prove that he was redeemed. Since then, Hawks goes from place to place, handing out religious tracts and preaching to passers by.

Motes finds a room at the same place housing the Hawkses. Motes visits the father and daughter and gets a chilly reception from Sabbath. Sabbath tells her father that Motes was ogling her. At some point during the visit, Sabbath warms up only slightly. Asa Hawks decides he does not like Motes at all.

Motes eventually gets Sabbath's attention and the young woman wants to be with Motes. Things do not go well. Motes is more interested in being with Hawks than with Sabbath at the beginning. Motes is obsessed with Hawk's story of blinding himself and makes the old man tell the story in detail.

Chapter seven: Motes decides to go out for a ride in his new car. Sabbath appears in the back seat. Motes wants to know why she is following him. Sabbath formerly introduces herself and tells Motes about her history. Sabbath's mother died shortly after giving birth, and in essence, the girl is a bastard child. Motes says the Church without Christ does not believe in the concept of bastards. Sabbath also lends more insight into her father's blindness and that he blinded himself so that he could truly see.

Chapter eight: This chapter focuses on Emery. Emery prepares to leave town but is very mysterious about his plans. The boy saves his money and discusses his living arrangements. After making these arrangements as well as saying goodbye to a girlfriend, Emery hides out at the theater in a double feature.

After the movie, Emery runs into Motes, who is preaching outside the theater.

Chapter nine: Everywhere Motes is, Sabbath seems to be. Another preacher, Onnie Jay, one Motes refers to as a prophet, preaches alongside Motes and acts as if they have been working together for a long time, which is untrue.

Chapter ten: Motes preaches at the Odeon Theater. On the street, Motes talks about the Church Without Christ, redemption and judgment. Another prophet, Hoover Shoats, appears and attaches himself to Motes.



Sabbath continues to be a shadow to Motes. The girl is now sleeping in Motes's room. Asa runs off, leaving Sabbath, and ultimately Motes, to take care of her.

Chapter eleven: Emery waits for the rewards from his good deeds and is very restless. What happens next is somewhat unclear. Emery hijacks a truck with a gorilla in it, buries his clothes, and is attacked and killed by the gorilla. Emery is rapturous throughout the entire experience.

Chapter thirteen: Motes and Shoats are traveling along a country road. The men have an argument about something. Motes runs over Shoats with his car. Shortly after, Motes is stopped by the police. The officer is amazed that Motes would drive without a license. The men argue, and in the end, the officer pushes Motes's car over an embankment.

Motes stops at the store on the way home to buy lime. Motes follows Hawks's lead and blinds himself. The landlady wonders why one would purposely blind himself. Why not commit suicide instead?

Chapter fourteen: Motes realizes that going blind does not encourage his mind to see beyond the natural world. Sabbath remains by his side but only to collect the government check paid monthly to Motes for psychological damage done during the war.

The landlady, Mrs. Fortune, befriends Motes and tries to warn him about Sabbath. Motes does not care. At the end, Motes dies.

Wise Blood Analysis

Hazel Motes is a conflicted man who is obsessed with sinning to the point that he is afraid to get near any sort of temptation. The desire to be a preacher like his grandfather is great, yet Motes has fundamental issues with Jesus in that he does not believe that Jesus is a necessary element of the church. Therefore, Motes creates his own institution, the Church Without Christ. Motes preaches at everyone in a combative way and tends to alienate more than attract potential followers. Motes seems to be at odds with himself and isn't quite sure what to do or where to go, although every action seems to be filled with a sense of urgency.

Motes is returning to his hometown after a stint in the army. Motes is somewhat secretive about what he intends to do when he gets back and refuses to talk about it with fellow passengers on a train. Even when making the smallest attempt to be nice, Motes is argumentative, sullen, and rude. Motes also exhibits judgment, an especially negative quality considering his chosen profession.

The only business Motes seems to have in the town is to visit the old homestead. The man still has a great deal of reverence for his dead mother and also harbors some fear. The house is all but falling down, yet it offers some comfort to Motes just by the fact that it is still present.



Motes moves on to the city and there is a small shift at first in his manner. First, Motes sleeps with Mrs. Watts, something that is a definite sin in Motes's eyes. Later in the book, Motes attempts to run over Shoats, certainly another act which would be frowned upon.

Motes meets up with Asa Hawks and his daughter, Sabbath. Motes is fascinated by Hawks's ingenuity in finding a "congregation" out on the street. Motes watches Hawks and wants to know more about the man. The father and daughter disappear and Motes goes on a quest to find them. The quest becomes urgent for Motes, who seems to need direction despite his self-professed knowledge.

Enoch Emery is desperately lonely and wants nothing more than to have Motes as a friend. Emery wants to share many things with Motes, from the animals at the zoo to the women at the swimming pool. Motes is not interested and only agrees because Emery will not help him find Sabbath otherwise. Emery is representative of Revelations, in that he always expects something big to happen, although he does not know what it is or when it will happen, only that it will be a monumental event.

The relationship between Asa Hawks and his daughter is strange. Although Asa depends wholly on Sabbath for help with the ministry and his life in general, Hawks is also ready to have her start a life of her own, without him. This seems to be a natural thing for Hawks and he sees nothing wrong with it. It is clear that Hawks has his own agenda. The reader must also wonder about Hawks's mental stability, considering that he purposely blinded himself. Hawks is remorseful about the act.

Motes desperately wants to meet Hawks. Hawks is wary of Motes. Sabbath does not like Motes at first. Neither can put a finger on why they dislike the man above and beyond his generally obnoxious behavior. All at once, Sabbath does a turn around and is obsessed with the Motes. Sabbath begins following Motes everywhere.

While Sabbath is a large part of his life, Hawks intends to leave her in town and go on his own way.

Motes becomes obsessed with Hawks's story about the blinding himself and relates it to a type of penance or martyrdom. Motes already sees himself as a martyr.

The story with Emery just becomes strange and muddled. Emery hijacks a truck with a gorilla in it and the gorilla kills Emery by the side of the road, as if the boy is actually absorbed into the beast. Since Emery was lonely and wanted to be a part of the animals, it made sense to him to end it this way.

Motes cannot get rid of Sabbath. It is clear that Motes does not want to be tied to any one person or thing and constantly fights against any connection.

Hawks leaves town and Sabbath moves in with Motes.



After the incident on the road with the cop, Motes makes the decision to follow Hawks's lead and blinds himself. This act shows that he has great delusions about his own ministry and life's calling.

Sabbath stays by Motes's side, although Mrs. Fortune says that it is only for the money. Motes begins to decline and is eventually apprehended by police for not paying rent. Motes dies in the squad car.



The Violent Bear it Away

The Violent Bear it Away Summary

Part One

Chapter one:

"The Violent Bear it Away" is the story of Mason Tarwater, a man who considers himself to be a prophet. At the beginning of part one, Tarwater has been dead for half a day. His great nephew, Francis Marion Tarwater, is beside himself, not knowing what to do about the death and subsequent burial. This would be a difficult job for Francis, who would be required to dig a hole ten feet deep and then drop the old man and his wooden pine box inside. While looking around the farm, Francis finds Mason's still. The fact that Mason had a still is shocking to Francis, since Mason always professed to be a God fearing, non-sinning man. Francis stays by the still and gets unabashedly drunk on moonshine. Meanwhile, a Negro neighbor who comes to buy the liquor ends up burying Mason, just deep enough so that the dogs will not get at the body.

Mason Tarwater raised his great-nephew, Francis, from the time he was an infant. At this point in the story, Francis is fourteen. Mason was eighty-four when he died at the breakfast table.

Mason's kidnapping of Francis was not the first time such an event had taken place. When Francis's uncle, George Rayber, was seven years old, Mason kidnapped him and attempted to show him the ways of God. Unfortunately, part of that instruction included leaving Rayber out in the corn field alone with nothing. It did not turn out well. In Mason's eyes, Rayber grew up to be a heathen because he did not have the benefit of Mason's ways. Rayber had a nephew named Francis. During that time, Rayber, a schoolteacher, had given shelter to Mason and Francis under the guise of Charity. While Mason stayed at Rayber's home, he witnessed heathen-like behavior and decided that once again, the Lord wanted Mason to take control and save the child's soul. Mason kidnapped Francis.

Francis had come into the world right after a car wreck that killed his mother and grandfather. Mason was fond of telling Francis that he came into the world by a whore. Naturally, Francis believed it.

Rayber attempted to get Francis back. The Tarwater farm was somewhat secluded, which made it difficult. Finally, Rayber went to the farm with a social worker to retrieve Francis. Rayber and the woman had to forage through blackberry brambles and rows of corn to get to the house. When they arrived, Mason met them on the porch with a shotgun. Rayber disobeyed his uncle and stepped up on the first stair tread, which earned him a shot in the leg. The woman ran, screaming that Mason was crazy. Rayber



ended up marrying the much older woman, who forbade Rayber to go back to the farm ever again.

As a result, Francis lived with Mason for fourteen years until the day Mason died.

Several conversations occurred in the past between Mason and Francis, in which Mason did his best to scare the boy. At some point, although Francis still believed what Mason said, he began to think that his great uncle was bordering on madness. In one incident, Mason threatened to take Rayber's son to baptize him. Rayber said he would never baptize the child, on principle if nothing else.

Francis shares his stories with a stranger.

Chapter two:

Francis goes to Rayber's house to tell him what happened at the farm. Francis gets a ride with a copper flue salesman named Meeks. The salesman wanted to take Francis directly to Rayber's house, but Francis objects. Francis intended to go at first light so as not to appear needy. Francis remembers his great uncle's warning about Rayber and is convinced that his uncle might want to use him as a specimen of study for a paper to be published in the schoolteacher magazine.

Rayber's childhood is recounted and Mason's view of his nephew. Rayber had led his own sister into evil through success. As an educated man, Rayber does not believe in the afterlife, an issue that nearly kills Mason.

Throughout Francis's story, Meeks attempts to give advice, telling Francis that it is wise to listen to good advice from older people when it is offered. The best education, according to Meeks, is obtained through an H.L.L. degree from the school of Hard Lessons Learned. Those are the lessons quickest learned and the ones that will stay around forever.

The author recounts Mason's stint in an institution where he had been committed for a period of four years. Mason never got better, he just learned how to stop prophesying to certain people so that the doctors believed he was cured, or at least improved enough to leave the hospital.

Mason finally gave up on trying to save his evil sister, a drunk. Mason kidnapped Rayber, who was all too happy to go with his uncle. Mason wanted to prove that Jesus would take care of little George and left him in a clearing for four days, with no necessities. The boy was no worse for wear but was eventually rescued and returned home.

Mason did not try to kidnap Rayber again. Rather, he set out to baptize whomever he could. Ever since that incident, Rayber knew Mason was crazy and tried to avoid him whenever possible.

Francis frequently interrupts the story as is it recounted by Mason.



Meeks asks what Francis intends to do. Francis says he is in charge of the farm now. He knows everything but how to work machines. Francis is especially awed when he uses a telephone for the first time. Meeks becomes frustrated at Francis's ignorance and is relatively sure that the boy is lying about Rayber being his uncle.

Chapter three:

Francis goes to the schoolteacher to tell him about Mason's death. Francis pounds on the door until someone answers, having abandoned the plan to wait until daylight. The schoolteacher is shocked and asks about the burial. Francis tells him that the old man was too big to move and so Francis set fire to him, burning the house down in the process. The schoolteacher doesn't believe him.

The schoolteacher tells Francis that the old man lived a useless life and it is a blessing that he is dead. It is not too late for Francis to be redeemed and to be set on the right path. Francis immediately balks at everything the uncle says, still believing that the man is a heathen. Francis sees himself as being grown up and able to take care of himself.

Francis is shocked to meet Bishop, Rayber's son, who is mentally disabled. Rayber's wife, the social worker, left them and Rayber took over the boy's care, teaching him more than it was believed to be possible. Francis seems offended by Bishop. In fact, Francis is offended by basically everything.

Rayber sees this as a monumental opportunity to set Francis on the right path.

Part Two

Chapter four:

Four days after Francis's arrival, Rayber begins to lose enthusiasm for this new mission. It is clear that Francis is a wreck and is basically a little version of Mason. Francis has been damaged and Rayber begins to doubt if there can be any salvation for the boy.

Francis sleeps in a store room that is bright pink. It was Mrs. Rayber's room at one time. Francis expresses Mason's dislike for the woman and it does not seem to matter that she is long gone. Upon seeing Rayber's hearing aid, Francis makes fun and wants to know if the wires leading into his uncle's ear will make his head light up. Rayber relates that he began to lose his hearing directly after Mason shot him in the leg.

Francis crudely questions Rayber about Bishop, who refers to his only son as a terrible injustice of nature. Francis also berates Rayber for not returning to the farm to get him after the first time. Rayber attempts to explain but it falls on deaf ears. Rayber also relays to Francis that his mother was not a whore.

Rayber tries to figure out what Francis wants since the boy keeps saying that he wants nothing from Rayber.



Rayber decides to take the boys into Powderhead to see the town. Francis becomes fascinated with a building advertising some kind of revival. To explain the fascination, Francis makes up a story about losing his hat at the building long ago. Rayber knows what Francis is really thinking and worries that the boy will not be amenable to being educated, that he has some of the family's inherent insanity. Still, Rayber thinks he can save Francis.

Francis goes through a series of experiences, realizing all that he has been missing while being stuck on the farm with Mason.

Once again Bishop is discussed, being called a mistake of nature.

Chapter five:

Francis sneaks out and Rayber follows. Francis returns to the revival and listens to a couple of evangelists witness to the townsfolk. Rayber is captivated when the couple brings out their child, a cripple.

Chapter six:

Everyone returns home. Rayber does not mention the incident. Francis goes to another church. Rayber's thoughts are confirmed, that Francis has been completely brainwashed.

Rayber takes Francis and Bishop to a lodge to stay. Francis becomes angry when Rayber calls him Frank and tells the innkeeper that Francis is his son. Francis also continues to exhibit bad manners.

Chapter seven:

Rayber takes Francis fishing alone with the hope of being able to convince a captive audience about his life's options. Francis keeps insisting that Bishop should be baptized.

Francis seems unhappy with the food he has been served since his arrival at Rayber's house. There is never enough.

Francis finally gives in and puts on the new clothes purchased for him by Rayber.

Chapter nine:

Rayber considers Francis's future and the possibilities that lie ahead for the boy. Rayber recalls his wife's reaction to Bishop and how she wanted to put the boy in an institution. Rayber was not about to give up on Bishop and he felt the same about Francis. In some ways, it seems that Bishop is the only thing that keeps Rayber going.



Rayber, Francis and Bishop stay at a lodge. Rayber takes the opportunity at dinner to talk straight to Francis. Rayber tells the boy that it takes guts to listen. Rayber reiterates Francis's choices but the boy shows little to no interest in the conversation.

Rayber finally tells Francis that he can make the choice of whether to baptize Bishop. Rayber would not stop Francis if that is what he wanted to do. Rayber simply attempts to explain both sides of the coin but Francis will not hear it.

Francis takes Bishop out onto the boat without Rayber. Francis promises to look out for the boy. After a while of watching the boys out on the lake, Rayber falls asleep. Emergency signals wake Rayber and suddenly he knows that Bishop is dead.

Francis sneaks away.

Part Three

Chapter ten:

Francis hitches a ride with a driver, who desperately needs help to stay awake. The man insists that Francis talk to keep him alert. Francis reluctantly talks and shares the story of how Bishop drowned.

Francis falls asleep and dreams about being out on the pond with Bishop. Francis keeps telling himself and the man that it was an accident.

The driver tells himself that the boy belongs in the booby hatch. The driver lets Francis out on the road.

Chapter eleven: Francis walks toward the farm. At a steady pace, Francis could make it to the farm by sundown. Along the way, Francis thinks about Bishop and the drowning.

Francis stops at a shack where a family of Negroes lives and demands a drink of water.

A second man picks up Francis on the road and gives him a ride. The man offers Francis a cigarette, which the boy accepts. Then the man offers whiskey. Remembering the moonshine, Francis eagerly accepts that as well. It does not take long for Francis to become drunk and to pass out. The man stops and takes Francis into the woods. An hour later the man returns to his car. His face is flushed. The man drives off. When Francis awakes, half of his clothes are on backward. Francis gets up and begins to walk again.

Chapter twelve:

Francis wants nothing more than to return to Mason's ashes next to the big tree. Francis is distraught to find that the ashes are gone, mingled with the wind and carried away.

Buford, the neighbor, sits on his mule and watches Francis. Buford notices what Francis is doing and approaches the boy. Buford tells Francis that Mason did not burn. Buford



buried the old man while Francis was off in the barn getting drunk from Mason's moonshine. Mason did not burn up after all.

Buford leaves Francis by the tree.

Francis sets fire to the trees. After a few minutes of watching them catch, he turns and walks back down the road toward the city.

The Violent Bear it Away Analysis

The story details the standard trials and tribulations of a teenager growing up with an old man. Mason declares that he has been called by God and until Francis, a fourteen-year-old great nephew, has been called, the boy must trust the old man's decisions. Mason Tarwater is a certified lunatic, complete with an erratic personality and delusions. There is no way anyone can talk to Tarwater. Anyone who does is considered to be evil.

One of Mason's first decisions mentioned in the book is to override an existing will and leave everything Mason owns to Francis, bypassing the heathen schoolteacher nephew. The lawyers are bound by law and cannot abide.

Mason Tarwater is a man who is completely convinced that God has called him and that the old man must devote his life to the Lord. Mason and Francis are completely separated from the rest of the world, save for a neighboring family who lives on the other side of the trees.

Mason kidnapped Francis when he was an infant. Mason's nephew, also Francis's uncle, George Rayber, attempted to get Francis back but was practically killed in the attempt. Rayber knows first hand what it is like to be in the clutches of the old man. Rayber, a schoolteacher, had been kidnapped as a child and lived with the old man for before being taken away. The schoolteacher made great efforts to save Francis from the same kind of fate but was met with hostility by the old man. Mason is so convinced of his role in Francis's life that he actually shoots the schoolteacher in an effort to deter him from ever returning to the farm. Mason's plan worked.

Mason's belief is that his lot in life is to save and baptize everyone he can. Mason has no tolerance for disrespect or the life of heathens like Rayber.

Francis is stunned to find Mason dead at the breakfast table. The boy does not know what to do and wanders around the farm looking for a pine box or perhaps some divine intervention. What Francis finds is Mason's still. While Francis gets stinking drunk, Buford buries Mason.

Francis knows that he has to tell someone about his great uncle's death. The only family he has is Rayber. At least the man is educated and must have some sense. Francis has no other choice.



The foray into the real world is a shock to Francis's system, nearly as much as discovering Mason's still. Francis does not understand how a man so devoted to God can make a living by manufacturing and selling moonshine.

Francis meets up with several people on the way into Powderhead where Rayber lives. Although Francis sees himself as a man in charge, it is clear that he is very backward and is not capable of taking care of himself, much less a farm. After some trials and tribulations, Francis gets to Rayber's home.

The schoolteacher is both disbelieving and relieved that Mason is dead. He does not, however, believe that Francis burned down the house. The main concern for the schoolteacher is that Francis now has a chance, even at age fourteen, to be redeemed and taught the truth about the world and religion.

Francis is determined to fight Rayber the whole way. Rayber does manage to make some small strides, but even the determined uncle begins to wane after a few days with the boy. Francis is constantly combative but will not show any type of weakness or need to Rayber. Francis hits back in the way of ill behavior, temper, rudeness, and disdain toward Bishop. Rayber takes it all very well, even when Francis says there is no difference between Bishop and a gorilla.

Rayber has his own issues and it becomes clear rather quickly that Bishop is not only his son but, in some ways, his own personal savior. Without Bishop, Rayber would most certainly fall apart.

Rayber finally sees that he will have to make some concessions for the greater good. Rayber tells Francis he may baptize Bishop if it is so important.

Rayber sees some promise in Francis and lets him supervise Bishop on a boat. It is never clear if Bishop's drowning is an accident or murder; even Francis does not seem to be sure. By the state of the boy's mind, the reader can conclude that Francis went too far in baptizing the boy by holding him under after coaxing him into the water.

Francis has cut himself off once again. The rape on the way back to the farm takes away the small piece of the boy that had not yet been broken. Francis's grief is palpable.

Buford feels sorry for Francis to some degree but knowing Francis and Mason, keeps his distance. Buford does tell Francis about the burial and the reader senses judgment in the man's words.

Francis gains closure by setting fire to the farm and turns around to head back into town. It is hard to tell what will await him there.



Everything That Rises Must Converge

Everything That Rises Must Converge Summary

"Everything That Rises Must Converge" is the story of a young man and his mother. The son, Julian, is a recent college graduate who has moved home until he is able to get a job and live on his own. The mother dotes on Julian and does everything for him. Julian appreciates some of what his mother does, yet is often rude and dismissive toward her and her ideals.

Julian must take his mother to the YMCA on Wednesday nights to take a reducing class. The mother needs to lose about twenty pounds and is excited that the class is free. The mother won't take the bus downtown alone since the system has integrated. The mother is fairly proper and this annoys Julian. The mother has purchased a new hat that she loves but feels is frivolous. Still, it is one of a kind. The mother fusses over the hat while Julian is impatient to leave. Julian hates the hat and thinks it is ridiculous and ugly.

The scene at the apartment before leaving for the bus seems to be routine. The mother fusses while Julian berates and criticizes. Now and again, Julian uses a softer tone with his mother, although not often.

Julian also resents that while the mother came from a prestigious family, the money was gone and she continued to be a struggling widow. The mother fondly recalls her family's former status and works hard to portray the same character and class. This also angers Julian.

On the way to the YMCA, Julian becomes increasingly sullen and rude. There is much discussion of the integration taking place and their differing views on it. Julian sees his mother as being old fashioned and prejudiced, while Julian believes that he is much more progressive and open.

The mother and son argue off and on the entire way downtown. Julian often does things to prove his mother's ideas are inferior. The mother operates the best she can, and regardless of what Julian says or does, she treats him well. The mother gets on well with the other passengers on the bus, particularly a small Negro boy that toddles around. The mother adores the little boy and holds him in her lap. When the ride ends, the mother does what she would do with all children, which is to offer him a penny. The boy's mother becomes enraged, misunderstanding the meaning and punches the mother in the face. As the mother collapses, Julian goes through a rant saying, "I told you so." Julian is awful to his mother until she begins to walk and it is obvious the woman is having a stroke.

In "Greenleaf", Mrs. May is the owner of a farm. Mrs. May is a bit of a snob and constantly complains about the people that work for her, the Greenleafs. Mr. Greenleaf runs the farm, so it would seem. Mrs. May sees him as being a handful. Mr. Greenleaf



has worked for Mrs. May for fifteen years, and Mrs. May often says she does not know why she puts up with him. Mr. Greenleaf seems to work well, but it is the rest of the family Mrs. May dislikes the most.

Mrs. Greenleaf is a large, loose woman who has a tendency to practice prayer healing. According to Mrs. May, prayer healing has something to do with taking on the burdens of others so that they will no longer suffer. One of the examples used is that Mrs. Greenleaf will cut out articles and such from the local newspaper - anything that has to do with tragedy or illness. Mrs. Greenleaf will bury the clippings in the ground and cover them up with dirt. Then the woman will throw herself on the newspaper grave and wail up a storm, repeatedly saying things like "Jesus, stab me in the heart!" until the ritual is at an end. Mrs. May witnessed this activity once and interrupted, unsure of what to make of this rite. Mrs. Greenleaf informed Mrs. May that she could not speak to her until she was finished praying. Mrs. May says that the only way Mrs. Greenleaf is permitted to stay on the property and ensure that her husband keeps his job is to stay completely hidden away and not enter into Mrs. May's sight ever again.

In the beginning of the story, Mrs. May is awakened by the sound of a bull rummaging around and snorting in the garden under her window sill. Mrs. May is irate, which is quite normal. The woman insists that Mr. Greenleaf take care of the bull, knowing that it belongs to the Greenleaf family. It adds insult to injury for Mrs. Greenleaf that not only does the bull tear up her yard and garden, it also belongs to a Negro family, namely the Greenleafs.

The author describes briefly the Greenleaf family. There are five little girls, who are always filthy. Two older boys, twins, had joined the military and ended up marrying two nice French girls, a sign that at least someone in the family had sense. Mrs. May finds out that the bull belongs to one or both of the twins, O.T. or E.T.

Mrs. May does not have a husband any more but has two grown sons, Scofield and Wesley. The only thing the boys have in common is that they live to make their mother's life difficult. Scofield likes girls but they do not like him. Wesley, the more intellectual of the boys, not only dislikes girls but seems to hate basically everything and everyone. The boys constantly complain. In turn, Mrs. May complains about how she is the only adult in the house and there is no way that they could run the place after she is dead. Mrs. May talks a lot about what will happen after she's dead. The boys take great delight in torturing their mother, letting her know that they intend to marry trailer trash and let the ill-bred women take over the farm. That alone nearly puts Mrs. May in the grave.

Mrs. May is outside when she suddenly hears a noise and sees a large shadow. The bull is roaming around again. The bull must dislike Mrs. May as much as she dislikes it, or perhaps she startled him. The bull gores Mrs. May and the woman dies without hearing the four shots fired by Mr. Greenleaf.

In "A View of the Woods" Mary Fortune and her grandfather are sitting on the hood of a car watching a construction site. The story details the relationship between Mr. Fortune



and his nine-year-old daughter, Mary Fortune Pitts. The family lives on the Fortune family farm, a large dairy farm that started out at eight hundred acres of prime property. At seventy-nine years old, Mr. Fortune is in need of help around the farm. Mr. Fortune's daughter moved into the farm house along with her husband and children ten years ago. Mr. Fortune dislikes the husband, thinks his daughter is useless, and has no time for any of the eight children, save Mary, who is the youngest. Mary and Mr. Fortune are alike in every way, from their appearance to their boldness and opinions. Mary is Mr. Fortune's constant companion, and the two spend every morning watching workman dig up the ground recently sold off by Mr. Fortune.

Mr. Fortune decides that he might sell off another parcel of land. The previous year, Mr. Fortune had sold off twenty-five acres of land located at the back edge of the property. The son-in-law wanted to buy the land but Mr. Fortune forbade it. Mr. Fortune did not want the son-in-law to have any claim on anything that rightfully belonged to the Fortunes. Mr. Fortune did not charge the family rent so that he could lord over them the extent of his generosity. Mr. Fortune was not willing to give up that advantage.

A local gas station owner expresses interest in buying a parcel of land between the front of the house and the roadside. Mr. Fortune wants to sell for the money as well as the added traffic that a gas station will bring to the dairy. When Mr. Fortune tells the family of his plans, everyone argues with him, particularly the children. Mr. Fortune does not really care what any of the children think except for Mary. Everyone is upset because that particular parcel of land is where they play and it also offers a view of the woods across the road. A new gas station will take that away from them.

Mr. Fortune thinks that everyone will get over it ,but he is wrong. The deal goes through and the relationship with Mary disintegrates rapidly.

Mr. Fortune sees the son-in-law whip Mary for sassing him. Mr. Fortune asks Mary about it, but the girl denies it happened and says that no one ever beat her and if anyone tried, she would kill him. Mary repeats this often.

Mr. Fortune closes the deal with the gas station owner. Mary goes berserk, wrecking a local store, and throwing a bottle at Mr. Fortune. Mr. Fortune suddenly realizes his error. Mr. Fortune had never disciplined Mary and decides that it is time to do so.

Mr. Fortune stops on the way home from town and takes off his belt. When the man attempts to hit Mary with the strap, Mary launches a vicious attack. The pair struggle and eventually, Mr. Fortune bashes Mary's head against a rock and then dies.

In "The Enduring Chill" Asbury Fox returns home on a train to be greeted by his mother. For four months, Asbury knew the end was near. It was also clear to his mother who is in denial about the facts.

Asbury has no intention of going to a doctor; after all, there are much better doctors in New York where he had come from.



Mrs. Fox is thrilled when Asbury says his visit will be permanent. The son worries about his mother finding the letter he had written to her, the one that filled two notebooks and was to be read after he was dead.

The story details Asbury's last days.

"The Comforts of Home" details the story of Thomas, who lives with his mother, a compassionate woman with a bit too much naivete. Thomas is looking for his books as he unpacks, a chore he intensely dislikes. From the kitchen comes a shrieking laugh. Thomas thinks about the previous night when the girl entered his room. Thomas becomes angry and yells at his mother to get rid of the girl, who had been recently bailed out. The mother will not agree.

The girl, a dyed-in-the-wool nymphomaniac, is named Sarah Ham, but goes by Star Drake. Drake is loud and obnoxious, inserting herself wherever she can, particularly between the respectable Thomas and his mother. The situation grows steadily worse as Drake tries to become overly familiar with Thomas. One thing leads to another until there is a confrontation in which the mother is shot and killed.

"The Lame Shall Enter First" begins with Sheppard sitting on a kitchen bar stool eating out of an individually packaged box of cereal. While Sheppard eats, his son, Norton, enters the kitchen. Although his son is only ten years old, Sheppard already knows that his son will work for some sort of financial institution. The disheartening part to Sheppard is that the boy will not be kind or selfless, rather, quite the opposite.

Sheppard attempts to get through to Norton by talking about Rufus Johnson, a kind young man afflicted with a club foot. Sheppard points out many of Johnson's attributes, made only more outstanding by the fact that the boy has nothing. Norton, who has everything, has none of Johnson's hard won qualities.

Throughout the story, the two boys are compared. As Johnson's less than outstanding qualities begin to come to light, Sheppard sees Norton with new eyes. However, Norton has already hung himself in the attic.

Mrs. Turpin has many realizations throughout "Revelation," a story that takes place mainly in the waiting room at a doctor's office. Mrs. Turpin and her husband Claud are waiting to see the doctor due to an ulcer on Claud's leg. A cow had kicked Claud and caused a large purplish lump and the ulcer.

Mrs. Turpin is appalled that the waiting room is very small and that a young child does not have enough manners to move over so that she can sit down. Claud offers his seat but Mrs. Turpin tells Claud he needs to rest.

There are other people in the waiting room, including one other man, a stylishly dressed woman, a thin leathery woman, a white trash woman, and an ugly girl in her late teens or early twenties. Mrs. Turpin carefully observes each and is grateful that she is not ugly or unkempt or rude. Mrs. Turpin immediately determines that it would be better to be a nigger than to be like the white trash woman, whose lips are stained with snuff.



One of Mrs. Turpin's favorite pastimes is to categorize people by class. According to Mrs. Turpin, most colored people are at the bottom of the ladder, followed by white trash, then homeowners, then home and landowners, such as Claud and herself. Above them were people who own bigger homes, more land, and have much more money.

Claud is oblivious to everyone in the room as he reads a magazine. Mrs. Turpin chats with the other ladies about a wide variety of things, from the clock in the room to children, behaviors, and manners. Mrs. Turpin notices the ugly girl glaring and smirking at her from time to time. Mrs. Turpin starts a silent dialogue with the girl in her head, reminding the girl to mind her own and not to glare at strangers. The girl continues to behave in an inappropriate way.

Mrs. Turpin ponders over what type of person she might be if she wasn't herself. At first, being a nigger would be the worst. Then Mrs. Turpin decides that white trash is worse than that. Most of all, being ugly with an ugly attitude, like the girl across the room, would be the worst of all.

As time goes on, the girl begins to be openly hostile toward Mrs. Turpin. Mrs. Turpin and the other ladies are talking about being grateful for their lives and suddenly the ugly girl jumps up and begins to strangle Mrs. Turpin. The girl is eventually pulled off and is taken away by an ambulance. The girl is obviously mentally disturbed.

The story ends with Mrs. Turpin and Claud returning home to the farm.

"Parker's Back" is about a married man who is obsessed with tattoos and remorse over his marriage. Parker hates his wife. There is no way to please the woman and pregnancy made the relationship even more difficult. Parker had never intended to marry anyone, particularly a woman as plain and disapproving as his wife.

The couple first met when Parker's truck broke down on the highway. The woman approached him as he burned his hand under the hood of the truck. Parker was cursing and the woman immediately disapproved of Parker. For some reason, Parker was drawn to the woman and began to court her. The courting was all right with the woman's excessively religious family because Parker always brought gifts of food to the house. Parker is finally accepted despite the large number of tattoos on his body.

After the pair marries, Parker discovers that his wife likes nothing. Parker suspects that it is an act and often antagonizes her. Parker works for an old woman but convinces his wife that his boss is a "hefty young blonde" in an attempt to make her jealous.

Parker tries everything to please his wife and nothing works. Eventually, Parker gets the bright idea to get a tattoo of God on his back. After all, Parker really wanted a new tattoo and getting a tattoo of God on his back would surely please his wife. After all, how could one look at the face of God and be repelled?

Parker has an accident at work in which the tractor overturns and catches fire. Parker is not seriously hurt. Parker takes off and goes into the city, where he gets the new tattoo over a period of two days.



When Parker finally arrives home, the wife has locked him out. The employer came by and explained about the accident and the wife was furious. She was even more furious to find out that Parker had been drinking. Parker insists on showing his wife the new tattoo and his reasoning behind it. Instead of coming around, the wife screams about idolatry and throws Parker out of the house.

"Judgment Day" begins with a father and daughter in a New York apartment. The older man, Tanner, talks about taking a trip for which he has to conserve his energy. Tanner begins to feel desperate to return to the south, as he does not have much time left. The decision was prompted even more so by the arguments between his daughter and her Yankee husband, who Tanner dislikes.

Tanner had lived in the south at one time. Throughout the course of the story, Tanner recalls his relationship with Coleman, an old black man. After their meeting, the two seemed to be inseparable.

Tanner had squatted on the land of a wealthy Negro doctor, who insisted that if Tanner wanted to stay he had to operate the doctor's still.

Tanner had attempted to make friends with a Negro who moved into his daughter's apartment building. The man was incensed when Tanner tried to insist that he was a preacher from Alabama. The man was an actor from New York City.

Tanner began to have delusions about being on a train with Coleman. Somehow he managed to get tangled up in a banister and when his daughter arrived home, she found him tangled in the banister, dead. The daughter had Tanner buried, but then had his body sent home.

Everything That Rises Must Converge Analysis

Julian's mother has made a lot of sacrifices for her son, working hard to provide him with food, clothing, and a first rate education. Because the mother dotes on Julian, Julian takes her for granted and does not appreciate her. Julian is openly critical of everything about the mother, from her heritage to her hat to her ingrained behaviors regarding Negroes. Julian does everything in his power to overshadow his mother and to embarrass her in front of others. Even after the mother is hit, Julian must tell her how the whole incident was her fault. Only when it is obvious that the mother is ill does Julian act like a proper son.

Mrs. May is a classic O'Connor character. The woman is a snob, self-righteous and rude. The sons are relatively useless as their mother has spoiled them and has never required much from either. Mr. Greenleaf, the man most complained about, seems to be the most normal character and one who has a handle on everything. The reader will wonder if Mrs. May was killed because she was so incredibly mean or if it was instant karma.



Mr. Fortune adores Mary, mostly because she is his spitting image. The girl is smart and sassy, even for a nine year old. Because Mr. Fortune dotes on Mary, the girl has never received any discipline from him. When Mary begins to rail against her grandfather for the land deal, the grandfather reacts in the only way he knows how - by attempting to whip the girl. Mr. Fortune is possessed by the need to survive when he kills Mary and then dies.

In "The Enduring Chill", Asbury Fox returns to die. The title refers to the fact that Asbury is always cold due to his illness. The reader gets an inside view into the relationship between mother and son and the concept of going home again.

"The Comforts of Home" details the story of Thomas, who lives with his mother, a compassionate woman with a bit too much naivete. Thomas objects to his mother's helping a girl who is less than desirable for a friend, much less a housemate. The mother will not hear of sending the girl away.

Drake is loud and obnoxious, inserting herself wherever she can, particularly between the respectable Thomas and his mother. The situation grows steadily worse as Drake tries to become overly familiar with Thomas. One thing leads to another until there is a confrontation in which the mother is shot and killed.

In "The Lame Shall Enter First", Sheppard is disgusted with the way his son is growing up. Sheppard worries what will become of the son and wishes he was more like Rufus Johnson. It is a classic case of the grass is always greener, which of course it is not. When Sheppard realizes it, Norton is already dead.

Although Mrs. Turpin has very definite ideas about who she is and how people should be categorized, she means no harm and rarely says anything insulting out loud. Mrs. Turpin is happy with her life and her realization that other people do not feel the same comes as a shock. Mrs. Turpin does not know that the ugly girl has mental problems, and even after she finds out about the girl's condition, believes there was no provocation for the attack.

Parker does not know where his life went wrong. There is no logical explanation for his attraction to his wife except that the only way to have her was to marry her. This turns out to be a bad idea. Eventually, Parker snaps and can no longer live up to the high moral standards of his wife. After the tractor accident, Parker is afraid of the consequences and also realizes that he knows what he must do to remain sane. Parker believes that the tattoo of God is a good compromise and is surprised when his wife throws him out of the house for practicing idolatry.

In "Judgment Day," Tanner begins to cloud reality with his memory of the south. Unhappy in New York, the old man projects his experiences onto other people, such as the actor from the apartment building. Clearly, Tanner's memories are not at all what they seem, yet in many ways they are preferable because it is what the man knows.



Characters

Julian appears in *Everything That Rises Must Converge*

Julian is a recent college graduate who has returned home to live with his mother until he gets a job. The mother dotes on Julian, something that Julian both takes for granted and resents.

The mother needs to lose twenty pounds and goes to the Y once a week. Because the buses have been newly integrated, the mother will not travel alone. Julian is annoyed that he has to take his mother but is reminded of all the things the mother does for him.

From the very beginning of the story, Julian is rude to his mother. Everything the mother does is wrong, from the way she speaks to the way she acts and dresses. Julian has no patience. On the bus on the way to the Y, the mother and son discuss integration. Julian wants to embrace the modern world and is disgusted by his mother's resistance to change. A well dressed Negro gets on the bus and is reading a newspaper. Julian insists on trying to talk to the man, although the man isn't interested and becomes annoyed. Julian is better than all of these people and feels the need to prove it.

Julian continues to be annoyed with the mother no matter what the woman does. A Negro child likes Julian's mother, and it seems as if the child's mother and Julian's mother switch places. At the Y, the mother offers the child a penny, against Julian's advice. The child's mother proves Julian right when she punches the mother in the face. Julian berates his mother until he notices that something is wrong. As Julian begins to realize that his mother is having a stroke, he begins to treat her with respect.

Hazel Motes appears in *Wise Blood*

Hazel Motes is a character who appears more than once in O'Connor's work. In the beginning of "Wise Blood," Motes is riding a train to his hometown of Eastrod. Motes has just been released from the army after four years and is eager to return home, even though his mother is dead. The one thing that has kept Motes going during his stint in the army is possession of the Bible given to him by his grandfather. In fact, listening to his grandfather preach and reading the Bible is the only way Motes had become even moderately literate. As a result, the only thing Motes wants is to become a preacher like his grandfather. However, Motes has a peculiar way of looking at religion and has little reverence for Jesus, something that is highly unusual for a wannabe preacher. The one thing Motes practices devoutly is the avoidance of sin.

Once Motes reaches the town of Eastrod, he discovers that much has changed in the time he was gone. Motes wanders aimlessly through the town and finally settles in at a



boarding house with a single, older woman. For the first time, Motes sleeps with a woman, although he still declares himself to be free from sin.

Motes's life changes when he meets Asa Hawks and his daughter Sabbath. Hawks is a blind preacher who works on the streets. After speaking with Hawks, Motes is even more determined to go forth with his evangelism and begins to tell people about his "Church Without Christ", where Jesus plays no part, there is no building, and everyone is welcome.

Asa Hawks appears in Wise Blood

Asa Hawks is a preacher and self-proclaimed prophet who travels around with his daughter trying to convert sinners. Hawks blinded himself to prove he had been redeemed.

Enoch Emery appears in Wise Blood

Enoch Emery is a boy who works in a small town zoo. Emery attempts to befriend Hazel Motes.

Sabbath Hawks appears in Wise Blood

Sabbath Hawks is Asa's daughter and assistant. Motes has a vested interest in Sabbath and ends up supporting her.

Mason Tarwater appears in The Violent Bear it Away

Mason Tarwater is a man who considers himself to be a prophet. He lives on a farm with his great nephew, Francis.

Francis Marion Tarwater appears in The Violent Bear it Away

Francis Marion Tarwater is the great nephew of Mason Tarwater.

Rayber the Schoolteacher appears in The Violent Bear it Away

Rayber, also known as "The Schoolteacher" is the nephew to Mason Tarwater. Rayber appears as a heathen who does not believe Francis' story about the death of his great uncle.



Julian's Mother appears in Everything That Rises Must Converge

Julian's mother is the target of Julian's rage in *Everything That Rises Must Converge*. Julian resents his mother from coming from a privileged home and also from having to take her to the YMCA.

Mrs. Watts appears in Wise Blood

Mrs. Watts is the landlady in *Wise Blood*. Watts is somewhat of a suspicious character who takes the opportunity to have sex with Motes.



Objects/Places

Eastrod appears in Wise Blood

Eastrod, Tennessee - Eastrod, Tennessee is the hometown to Hazel Motes. On the train, Motes says that he is going to Taulkinham, a city near Eastrod. Although Motes says he knows no one in Taulkinham, he has some things to do there. The porter informs Motes that the train does not go into the rural town of Eastrod and does not seem to know where it is located. Motes expects everyone to know where Eastrod is and often makes the reference that it is near Melsy. No one seems to care.

Before Motes goes to Taulkinham, he stops in Eastrod to see his family home. The home had been abandoned. Even though there was nothing to come home to, Motes felt obligated to invite everyone he saw to visit him in Eastrod should they ever find themselves in that part of Tennessee.

By the time Motes reached the house, it was too dark to notice that nothing was left but a shell. There were weeds growing up through the porch floor. The house was picked clean except for Motes's mother's chifforobe, which had been labeled with Motes's name and the threat of death should anyone steal it.

Motes left the house, never to return.

Tarwater Farm appears in The Violent Bear it Away

The house was large and dark. The entire downstairs was taken up by the kitchen. There was a wood stove located at one end of the kitchen, next to a board table. There were various things stacked and strewn around the kitchen, including scrap metal, feed sacks, sacks of mash, wood shavings, ladders, rope, and whatever else the Mason Tarwater felt like leaving there.

The upstairs of the house contained two bedrooms. Leading up to the bedrooms was a flight of stairs that the old man swore would take ten years off his life.

The outside was described much like any other farm. There were black roosters and various crops. Shortly before he died, Mason Tarwater had planted an acre of corn. The old man was eager for his new crop to grow and to tear down an old fence that was erected in the middle of the patch.

The closest neighbors to the Tarwaters were "colored people". There were trees in between the properties so that the neighbors would have to push through plum bushes if they wanted to visit.



Motes Home appears in Wise Blood

The Motes home is the place to which Hazel Motes returns once he arrives in Eastrod. The house is abandoned, and ramshackle holds a great deal of memories for Motes.

Church Without Christ appears in Wise Blood

The Church Without Christ is Hazel Motes's imaginary traveling church.

YMCA appears in Everything That Rises Must Converge

The YMCA is the place where Julian's mother goes for her reducing class.

Melsy appears in Wise Blood

Melsy is a rural town mentioned in "Wise Blood." Haze Motes passes through Melsy on his way home; Ruby Hill used to walk to Melsy to escape her family.

Town Zoo appears in Wise Blood

The town zoo is the favorite spot for Emory Enoch to hang out.

School appears in The Violent Bear it Away

The school is where Francis Tarwater finds the schoolteacher and tells his story.

Tarwater House appears in The Violent Bear it Away

The Tarwater house is located on the Tarwater farm, shared by Mason and Francis. The house is where Mason dies. Francis burns down the house to avoid having to move the body.

City Bus appears in Everything That Rises Must Converge

The city bus is an alternate form of transportation for Julian's mother when he will not take her to the YMCA.



Themes

Prejudice

At the time the stories were written, African Americans were often considered to be less than equal to Caucasians. This applies in all circumstances, regardless of religion, gender or class. Many of the characters, particularly the older ones, see this as a way of life and see nothing wrong with treating African Americans as nothing more than fixtures. There are many instances where the African Americans are servants and others where they are seen as those who are trying to rise above the past, and still others who simply accept their lot in life.

A good example of the differences in point of view regarding prejudice can be seen in "Everything That Rises Must Converge."

Julian wants to lord his education and social awareness over others, particularly his mother. The mother simply sees things as they are, particularly because she was raised in a house with slaves. The concept of integration scares her and only adds to the woman's longing for the past. The mother means no harm in her ideas, she simply knows no other way.

Julian, on the other hand, wants to embrace the modern world and is frustrated by his mother's attitudes and behaviors. Julian sees the African Americans as some kind of underdog, people to be rooted for and protected. Julian does not see that he is doing the same things as his mother. Julian is using other people to prove his superiority.

Julian continues to be humiliated by his mother while they ride the bus. The mother adores the little boy wandering the aisle and dotes on him, showing that she is not truly prejudiced. Julian craves nothing more than intelligent conversation and to prove that his mother's ideals are ridiculous. A well dressed African American gets on the bus and immediately, Julian feels the need to speak to the man, who is quietly reading a newspaper. Julian insists on trying to talk to the man although the man isn't interested and becomes annoyed.

Julian continues to be annoyed with the mother no matter what the woman does. An African American child likes Julian's mother, and it seems as if the child's mother and Julian's mother switch places. At the Y, the mother offers the child a penny, against Julian's advice. The child's mother proves Julian right when she punches the mother in the face.

Religion

Most of the characters in O'Connor's work are devoutly religious. There are some that are morally and spiritually corrupt - scammers, thieves and murderers, but they always come in contact with someone who preaches the word and redemption of the Christ.



Most of the time, the non-believers are repelled or angered by the vehemence of the preachers, and there are times when violence ensues. Inevitably, the meeting of the righteous and the corrupt leaves an impression on each, whether or not anyone has been changed by the experience to the point of changing any ideals or perceptions.

A good example the use of religion in O'Connor's works can be seen in "Wise Blood."

Motes decides to go forth with his own form of evangelism and begins to tell people about his "Church Without Christ", where Jesus plays no part, there is no building, and everyone is welcome. Motes can be seen as a traditional dyed-in-the-wool Bible thumper and finds somewhat of a kindred spirit in Asa Hawks.

Motes is a conflicted man who is obsessed with sinning to the point that he is afraid to get near any sort of temptation. The desire to be a preacher like his grandfather is great, yet Motes has fundamental issues with Jesus. Motes preaches at everyone in a combative way and tends to alienate rather than attract potential followers. Motes seems to be at odds with himself and isn't quite sure what to do or where to go, although every action seems to be filled with a sense of urgency.

Confrontation

There are several instances of confrontation throughout O'Connor's work. In "The Violent Will Bear it Away", there are examples of blatant and subtle confrontation. Mason Tarwater engaged in confrontation with the powers that be when he took his great nephew Francis under his wing. Francis often objected to Mason's methods, as they were overly righteous and strict, not at all what Francis wanted. Also, there was a great deal of conflict between Mason and the Schoolteacher. The Schoolteacher was a righteous man, as well, but he and Mason referred to each other as heathens.

In "Wise Blood", Hazel Motes embodies the heart of O'Connor's typical character. Motes is convinced that he was saved by Jesus and is determined to tell everyone about his story, even if they are not interested. Motes's manner often leads him to be confrontational beyond that of a traditional zealot, causing many problems for him at home and abroad.

In "Everything That Rises Must Converge" there is constant conflict and confrontation between Julian and his mother. Much of it can be related to Julian's age, yet the demeanor in which Julian treats his mother is deplorable and is tolerated more than it would be by most parents.

Style

Point of View

The point of view used in "Three by Flannery O'Connor: Wise Blood; the Violent Bear It Away; Everything That Rises Must Converge" is third person omniscient. The third person point of view works well in this collection due to the diverse nature of the subjects and their characters. The experiences of the characters in these stories may vary widely, particularly in light of the severe depression going on in the country at the time as well as the class and race of the character.

As a result, O'Connor's use of third person omniscient allows the reader to be able to experience all of the story, giving a more detailed and thorough description of people, places and events that would not be accessible through the first person point of view.

This is especially important due to the clash in cultures, social standings, and locations. Good examples can be seen in "Everything That Rises Must Converge", in which the main characters are Caucasians who come into contact with African Americans and a different way of speaking, thinking and living. Another example may be the difference in age and experience. For example, in "Wise Blood", there is a great difference in perception and action between Hazel Motes and Asa Hawks. While Motes believes he is worldly and knowledgeable, his cynicism cannot match the experiences of Hawks.

Setting

The settings used throughout O'Connor's works vary but are restricted to the southeastern United States, mostly Tennessee and Georgia. This is in keeping with O'Connor's love of the south, although the writer also lived in Massachusetts during her career.

The places depicted in the stories are rural, somewhat economically depressed, and portray the condition of the country and the specific region as it was during the time period, which is generally in the 1940s and 1950s.

Some of the best descriptions of setting, from the train to the small rural towns of Tennessee to the inside of a boarding house are depicted in "Wise Blood." The first part of "Wise Blood" takes place on a train. Hazel Motes is traveling to his hometown. The train is comfortable, with small sleeping areas and a dining car. Hazel does not like the train very much and is eager to get home.

Hazel Motes is fond of looking out the window for a town he will recognize, pointing out curious components, from fields to farms to small towns, while realizing at night they all look the same from the window of a train.



O'Connor also goes into great detail about the abandoned home once lived in by Motes and his mother.

Language and Meaning

Flannery O'Connor's works are set in a time period in which the language is regional and rough, with a heavy influence of slang and mispronounced words. The language used is representative of many aspects of southern life, from upbringing, to race, class, and education. Some of the people who are well educated still use the accepted slang which sometimes seems out of place, although it would be acceptable in that time and place.

There are many references to various stereotypes and monikers that are representative of the times. The most noticeable of these are "Negro", "nigger", and "pickaninny", words that are considered highly unacceptable and taboo in modern society. However, in the context of the stories, the language is appropriate, if the reader can get past being offended by what are considered to be racial slurs.

The reader will not have great difficulty in understanding most of the language, although there are some instances when it seems misused. The language often works well when used in dialogue but may seem frivolous when used elsewhere.

There are some instances where the language does not seem out of the ordinary, even by modern standards. Overall, the use of southern vernacular, both slang and proper, works well in allowing the reader to catch a glimpse into the mind of the reader and the thoughts, feelings, and socially accepted behaviors of the time.

Structure

"Three by Flannery O'Connor: Wise Blood; the Violent Bear It Away; Everything That Rises Must Converge" by Flannery O'Connor is a work of fiction. As the title suggests, the book is separated into three parts: "Wise Blood"; "The Violent Bear It Away"; and, "Everything That Rises Must Converge." Although the three novellas are set in roughly the same time period, there are no distinct separations between the stories with by era or topic.

Overall, the book contains 443 pages. The average length of the three sections is 117 pages.

"Wise Blood" is 120 pages long, and is comprised of fourteen chapters. The shortest chapter is four pages in length; the longest chapter is eighteen pages in length. The average length of the chapters is nine pages.

"The Violent Bear It Away" is 147 pages long, and is comprised of three parts and twelve chapters. The shortest part is twenty-one pages in length; the longest chapter is sixty-four pages in length. The average length of the parts is forty-nine pages.



In Part 1, there are three chapters. The shortest chapter is nine pages in length; the longest chapter is forty-nine pages in length. The average length of the chapters is thirty-one pages.

In Part 2, there are six chapters. The shortest chapter is nine pages in length; the longest chapter is twenty-three pages in length. The average length of the chapters is nine pages.

In Part 3, there are three chapters. The shortest chapter is nine pages in length; the longest chapter is fifteen pages in length. The average length of the chapters is seven pages.

"Everything That Rises Must Converge" is 174 pages long, and is comprised of 9 chapters. The shortest chapter is sixteen pages in length; the longest chapter is thirty-eight pages in length. The average length of the chapters is twenty-seven pages.



Quotes

"They stared at each other for almost a minute, and neither moved. Then he said in a voice that was higher than his usual voice, "What I mean to have you know is: I am no Goddam preacher." Wise Blood, p. 17

"Then he knew that whatever was expected of him was just the beginning." Wise Blood, p. 52

"Now I just want to give you folks a few reasons why you can trust this church," he said. "In the first place, friends, you can rely on it that it's nothing foreign connected with it. You don't have to believe nothing you don't understand and approve of." Wise Blood, p. 78

"The old man's thought did not always move at the same rate of speed through every point in his story." The Violent Bear it Away, p. 128

"He said if it was one thing a person needed to learn it was to pay attention to older people than him when they gave him good advice." The Violent Bear it Away, p. 158

"The next day, too late, he had the sense of opportunity missed." The Violent Bear it Away, p. 207

"If the bones were lying in the ashes he could not see them from this distance, but a vision of the old man, farther away in time, rose before him." The Violent Bear it Away, p. 232

"The liquor lay like a hot rock in the pit of the stomach, heating his whole body, and he felt himself pleasantly deprived of responsibility or of the need for any effort to justify his actions." The Violent Bear it Away, p. 260

"He threw himself to the ground and with his face against the dirt of the grave, he heard the command. Go warn the children of God of the terrible speed of mercy." The Violent Bear it Away, p. 267

"The insufferableness of life at home had overcome him and he returned to New York two days early. So far as he was concerned, he had died there, and the question now is how long he could stand to linger here." Everything That Rises Must Converge, p. 338



"The next day his mother noted something almost ethereal about his ravaged face."
Everything That Rises Must Converge, p. 342

"Thomas was not cynical and so far from being opposed to virtue, he saw it as a principle of order and the only thing that makes life bearable." Everything That Rises Must Converge, p. 353

"After one of his furloughs, he didn't go back to the Navy, but remained away without official leave, drunk, in rooming house in the city he did not know." Everything That Rises Must Converge, p. 429

Topics for Discussion

How long do you think it took before the landlady noticed Hazel was dead? How was she able to tell? What do you think she did next? Who might have claimed Motes's body?

What brought about the sudden change in Sabbath Hawks in regards to Hazel?

Do you think O'Connor's use of affected language helped or hindered the three stories? Give examples of other writers that employed the same use of affected language.

How might you have handled the situation with Julian if you were his mother? Why do you think she tolerated his nasty and disrespectful behavior?

In "The Violent Bear it Away", the Schoolteacher is passed over for inheritance in favor of Francis. What could be done about the will if the Schoolteacher objected? Could it be changed by law? Is Francis truly entitled to the farm?

If Hazel Motes is determined to avoid all sin out of fear of condemnation, why did he sleep with the landlady? How does Motes justify this action? What is the landlady's opinion of Motes?