Life Of A Catholic Southern Woman In Good Country People And Everything That Rises Must Converge

Learning to Live in Peace

We live in a society wherein the years leading up to today we have created several labels. We have integrated into our minds and believe in stereotypes that whenever you look at a person we create this idea due to their clothing, their attitude their race even. And all these ideals create this negative impact on our society. This is an unhealthy mechanism at this point that causes damage to our human relationships and eventually creating our truths. Our truths come from beliefs like religion, perspectives and past experiences that build up what we called our opinions, shape how we view the world. Flannery O'Connor is a female writer known during her time for her short stories that often involved religion and her life as a Catholic Southern woman. A couple of her short stories are "A Good Man is Hard to Find", "Good Country People" and "Everything that Rises Must Converge". O'Connor characters have strong character development and a strong backstory. The characters are often seen or portrayed as ignorant, filled with an arrogance that causes them to be very unlikable and create this shift especially towards the end of the story. The shift is always seen as a big character change because of how dramatic the explosion is. The sudden realization of their beliefs change because of how they were created they have these fixed ideas about how they view their worlds and eventually caused their downfall. Her characters are filled with ignorance and arrogance and their words are ironic. I believe her in stories she conveys what she saw in throughout her life as a southern woman and often incorporates to the use of religion and observations of gender to convey the message of leaving behind prejudice way of thinking.

In her short stories, religion is seen as having these pure ideas in a person and they have no judgment towards others but are seen as a naive characteristic in several characters. The religious personas are seen with humble attitudes and honest people which is not true in the stories and not our society now. I believe these are some stereotypes that have been engraved from our past ancestors that if you are religious they will never do you wrong but that's not true because how can one truly know the person is not pretending. We can't know what is going on in their heads. In " Good Country People" there is a young man named Manley Pointer that says he is a religious man selling Bibles and while selling to Mrs. Hopewell he tells his sob story and manages to win her trust even though she was doubtful before. After thinking so well of him, she tries to set him up with her daughter named Joy/Hulga Hopewell. Hulga later agrees with Manley to meeting at a late time think she was going to seduce him due to her previous views of Manley. She ends up being deceived by him and takes her wooden leg. "Her face was almost purple. "You're a Christian!" she hissed. "You're a fine Christian! You're just like them all – say one thing and do another. You're a perfect Christian, you?re…" (GCP, p.15) Hulga was in disbelief that the young man selling bibles was betraying her and was pretending to fit in this charade. Her mother also assumes Manley is a good country person and as he walks away with her daughter's leg she has been played by him. Showing the negative repercussions of assuming o generalizing. "Why, that looks like that nice dull young man that tried to sell me a Bible yesterday," Mrs. Hopewell said, squinting. "He must have been selling them to the Negroes back in there. He was so simple," she said, "but I guess the world would be better off if we were all that simple." (GCP, p. 15) The reason behind her name is because apparently in

her opinion, she is very hopeful in people and doesn't judge because it's the right thing to do. And emits pity towards others. O'Connor must've seen this in her community. To be able to trust without a doubt in people in religion and having no bad bone or ill intentions in their head.

In "Everything that Rises Must Converge" the is a theme of doing what is right. But the character development it reaches makes it seem ironic they 'try'. When dealing with people of another color, both characters are trying to convince each other that they don't hold that judgment over others. But it just seems like a childish act, a game that feels wrong because they are dealing with people that are just like them. Why do they have to act like that? Julian an educated student argued with his mother about discriminating against people for being African Americans. He would get out of his way so much to get his mother angry to even sit by a black person just to prove his point that he was okay with it. Even then he sat with people who would he be able to talk important conversations or intellectual conversations. "It must get the afternoon sun, ' his mother said. She sat forward and looked up and down the bus. It was half-filled. Everybody was white. "I see we have the bus to ourselves," she said. Julian cringed. "For a change," said the woman across the aisle, the owner of the red and white canvas sandals. "I come on one the other day and they were thick as fleas - upfront and all through." "The world is in a mess everywhere," his mother said. "I don't know how we've let it get in this fix." (ERMC, p. 5) Proving how the mother is not really okay with letting go of judgment.

In the end, after having a confrontation with an African American woman, Julian's mother gets a heart attack and we presume she dies from the big shock. "Help, help!" he shouted, but his voice was thin, scarcely a thread of sound. The lights drifted farther away the faster he ran and his feet moved numbly as if they carried him nowhere. The tide of darkness seemed to sweep him back to her, postponing from moment to moment his entry into the world of guilt and sorrow. " (ERMC, p. 12) We assume Julian goes in self-discovery, his guilt on how he treated his mother, how hypocritical it was for him to react at his mother's actions. Hinting at the difference between generation gaps and issues that revolve around evolving to accept changes from traditional beliefs and losing that label.

In both of these stories, the women are seen are on the wrong side of the situation. They are naive in the world. As seen in "A Good Man is Hard to Find" the grandma in the story only thought of her self till the very end. When she was seeing the end of a barrel gun she connected and was self-less. During O'Connor's time, there was little to no gender equality. Men are seen as the dominant gender and women seen as less. This is still true today, having no equal balance to prejudices reinforced leading up to today. In the stories, the men develop to be strong, deceitful, and evil characters. This sends the idea that O'Connor saw this as a common reality. Criticizing where we have reached as a society, the ridiculousness of the amount of inequality in between. Seen as a label we need to get rid of. Thinking of other people other than ourselves.

"I do not know You, God, because I am in the way. Please help me to push myself aside" (Flannery O'Connor, A Prayer Journal) O'Connor is trying to get rid of her own prejudice ideas to be one with God, being free and absolute. She presents all these ideas in her shot stories of letting go of the judgment and finding the universal truth.