Evaluating the use of generative AI in academic writing

SoSe 2025, Academic Writing I

You have been given a copy of an academic paper on "Everything that Rises Must Converge", by Flannery O'Connor. Please read the paper critically and provide feedback on the following eight aspects (the questions are mere suggestions to help you focus your analysis)[1]:

1. AIM – Is the aim of the paper clear? Does the paper have a thesis statement? Has the author "pitied the reader"? Is the paper easy to understand?

2. REFERENCES – Is there enough secondary literature? Are the sources cited in the running text? Is the author's voice clearly perceived as separate from the cited sources? Does the author have a critical stance?

3. STRUCTURE – Are all the paragraphs approximately the same size? Is there a proper introduction and a conclusion? Do the paragraphs all contain a clear topic sentence? Do they focus on individual aspects of the topic?

4. COHERENCE – Is there a logical "red thread" throughout the paper? Are the paragraphs arranged in a linear order, reflecting the author's train of thought and guiding the reader?

[1] This questionnaire is supposed to be anonymous; there is no need to sign it.

5. COHESION – Are the sentences syntactically correct and cohesive? Can you find enough linking devices, summary words, synonyms, pronouns and other elements that contribute to sentence flow?

6. STYLE – Is the overall style concise, native-like, and clear? Is it redundant, formulaic or robotic?

7. VOCABULARY – Is the register correct? Is it formal but still understandable?

8. PUNCTUATION – *briefly* evaluate the use of commas, apostrophes, quotation marks, colons, etc. Does the punctuation strike you as odd or incorrect?

Finally, please answer the following questions: How likely is it that you'll use some type of AI-powered software to assist you in writing your final paper for this subject? At which stage of the writing process would you use it?

Evaluating the use of generative AI in academic writing

SoSe 2025, Academic Writing I

You have been given a copy of an academic paper on "Everything that Rises Must Converge", by Flannery O'Connor. Please read the paper critically and provide feedback on the following eight aspects (the questions are mere suggestions to help you focus your analysis)[1]:

1. AIM – Is the aim of the paper clear? Does the paper have a thesis statement? Has the author "pitied the reader"? Is the paper easy to understand?
   → it is clear what the overall topic of the pape will be but it is hard to extract the aim of the paper or a thesis statement
   → the author does not pity the reader: there are no descriptions of what the author is planning to do in the next paragraph or what he is doing at the moment
   → even though the sentences sound nice, there is no pleasure in reading because the paper doesn't seem to make a point
2. REFERENCES – Is there enough secondary literature? Are the sources cited in the running text? Is the author's voice clearly perceived as separate from the cited sources? Does the author have a critical stance?
   - there are enough secondary sources
   - there are no different voices at all → it sounds like one source
   - there is no voice of the author perceivable
   - no direct quoks → the voice of the cited sources does not become clear
3. STRUCTURE – Are all the paragraphs approximately the same size? Is there a proper introduction and a conclusion? Do the paragraphs all contain a clear topic sentence? Do they focus on individual aspects of the topic?
   - at the beginning they are, but then in the middle there is one big paragraph
   - the introduction and conclusion seem proper although it does not become clear what the aim was and what is the concrete result of the analys
   - the paragraphs all have proper topic sentences and in the chapter concerning Julians mother they focus on individual aspects *
4. COHERENCE – Is there a logical "red thread" throughout the paper? Are the paragraphs arranged in a linear order, reflecting the author's train of thought and guiding the reader?
   - the visible structure of the paragraphs guides the reader but it is hard to follow the author's train of thoughts since there are no cohesive elements and not enough reference to the original story which makes it hard to extract the point the author is trying to make

[1] This questionnaire is supposed to be anonymous; there is no need to sign it.

* in the chapter of Julian however there is only one big paragraph that touches different topics

5. COHESION – Are the sentences syntactically correct and cohesive? Can you find enough linking devices, summary words, synonyms, pronouns and other elements that contribute to sentence flow?

- there are some summary words and synonyms but the paragraphs are not actively linked to eachother

6. STYLE – Is the overall style concise, native-like, and clear? Is it redundant, formulaic or robotic?

- the formulations seem a bit unatural and overloaded with metaphorical language

7. VOCABULARY – Is the register correct? Is it formal but still understandable?

- the vocabulary seems formal and is mostly understandable, however there are some words inserted, that do not contribute to the content and understanding but rather seem like a fancy add-one

8. PUNCTUATION – *briefly* evaluate the use of commas, apostrophes, quotation marks, colons, etc. Does the punctuation strike you as odd or incorrect?

- it does not appear odd to me

Finally, please answer the following questions: How likely is it that you'll use some type of AI-powered software to assist you in writing your final paper for this subject? At which stage of the writing process would you use it?

- I've not yet used AI to actualy produce paragraphs for me, but in the past I've found it useful as inspiration when I was stuck with a certain formulation. I decided to not use AI for my papers this time since I feel like it blocks my creativity and learning process. When I've used AI in the past I always had the feeling that it wasn't really necessary to use it in the first place.

Evaluating the use of generative AI in academic writing

SoSe 2025, Academic Writing I

You have been given a copy of an academic paper on "Everything that Rises Must Converge", by Flannery O'Connor. Please read the paper critically and provide feedback on the following eight aspects (the questions are mere suggestions to help you focus your analysis)[1]:

1. AIM – Is the aim of the paper clear? Does the paper have a thesis statement? Has the author "pitied the reader"? Is the paper easy to understand?

In my opinion the aim is quite, but I feel that there is no clear thesis statement. I think the author did not pity the readers as there are many words that I couldn't understand, which made it difficult to understand the text as a whole.

2. REFERENCES – Is there enough secondary literature? Are the sources cited in the running text? Is the author's voice clearly perceived as separate from the cited sources? Does the author have a critical stance?

There is not much secondary literature, ~~a~~ half of the text uses only one source. ~~In the text~~ Sources were not cited in the running text, you do not knew if the text was directly copied from the book. One paragraph was a cited ~~stance~~ statement that was not explained further. In general the literature is always ~~not~~ mentioned at the end of the text.

3. STRUCTURE – Are all the paragraphs approximately the same size? Is there a proper introduction and a conclusion? Do the paragraphs all contain a clear topic sentence? Do they focus on individual aspects of the topic?

The paragraphs have different sizes. Both introduction and conclusion do not mention the short story, and solely focus on the topic of ignorance. Only some paragraphs have topic sentences. Many ~~pa~~ paragraphs focus on the same ~~topic~~ aspects and seem continue where the last paragraph ended.

4. COHERENCE – Is there a logical "red thread" throughout the paper? Are the paragraphs arranged in a linear order, reflecting the author's train of thought and guiding the reader?

The story and the topic are not brought together. There are red threads throughout the paragraphs (the ones who focus on the same aspects) but there are not made connections between the ~~th~~ different aspects, which destroys the red thread. Mention of the story seems out of place.

[1] This questionnaire is supposed to be anonymous; there is no need to sign it.

Somethings processes or events ~~w~~ where brought in without further explaining ~~them~~ them ~~th~~ e.g. 'Plato's riddle',

5. COHESION – Are the sentences syntactically correct and cohesive? Can you find enough linking devices, summary words, synonyms, pronouns and other elements that contribute to sentence flow?

The sentences are pretty complex but they seem to be synatctically correct. within the text eere there are different linking devices used.

6. STYLE – Is the overall style concise, native-like, and clear? Is it redundant, formulaic or robotic?

The style is robotic and ~~but it is still~~ scientific - on a level ~~of some~~ where without the ~~necessary~~ knowledge has problems understanding it.

7. VOCABULARY – Is the register correct? Is it formal but still understandable?

There are some words that are really formal and not easy to understand.

8. PUNCTUATION – *briefly* evaluate the use of commas, apostrophes, quotation marks, colons, etc. Does the punctuation strike you as odd or incorrect?

In some sentences commas seem to be missing while in others they could be left out. Highly complex sentences could have been splitted with a punctiuation to make them less complex.

Finally, please answer the following questions: How likely is it that you'll use some type of AI-powered software to assist you in writing your final paper for this subject? At which stage of the writing process would you use it?

I don't think I will us AI to write my final paper. If I were to use it, it would be at the very beginning.

Evaluating the use of generative AI in academic writing

SoSe 2025, Academic Writing I

You have been given a copy of an academic paper on "Everything that Rises Must Converge", by Flannery O'Connor. Please read the paper critically and provide feedback on the following eight aspects (the questions are mere suggestions to help you focus your analysis)[1]:

1. AIM – Is the aim of the paper clear? Does the paper have a thesis statement? Has the author "pitied the reader"? Is the paper easy to understand?

- aim is clear: to analyze racism in O'Connor's story through the lens of historical context and character dynamics

2. REFERENCES – Is there enough secondary literature? Are the sources cited in the running text? Is the author's voice clearly perceived as separate from the cited sources? Does the author have a critical stance?

- some sources are repetitive
- adequate, literature is cited
  secondary

3. STRUCTURE – Are all the paragraphs approximately the same size? Is there a proper introduction and a conclusion? Do the paragraphs all contain a clear topic sentence? Do they focus on individual aspects of the topic?

- paragraphs are uneven in length
- clear topic sentences

4. COHERENCE – Is there a logical "red thread" throughout the paper? Are the paragraphs arranged in a linear order, reflecting the author's train of thought and guiding the reader?

- flow is sometimes disrupted by abrupt shifts

[1] This questionnaire is supposed to be anonymous; there is no need to sign it.

5. COHESION – Are the sentences syntactically correct and cohesive? Can you find enough linking devices, summary words, synonyms, pronouns and other elements that contribute to sentence flow?

- sentences are grammatically correct but sometimes a bit clunky
- linking words are used but synonyms and pronouns are over-relied on (e.g. "grotesque appears frequently without variation")

6. STYLE – Is the overall style concise, native-like, and clear? Is it redundant, formulaic or robotic?

- style is formal but leans robotic in places (e.g. "The story serves as a microcosm of the South's tumultuous transformation")

7. VOCABULARY – Is the register correct? Is it formal but still understandable?

- register is academic, though some phrases are overly complex (e.g. "behavioral decadence", "intersubjective")

8. PUNCTUATION – *briefly* evaluate the use of commas, apostrophes, quotation marks, colons, etc. Does the punctuation strike you as odd or incorrect?

- generally correct with some exceptions like inconsistent quotation marks

Finally, please answer the following questions: How likely is it that you'll use some type of AI-powered software to assist you in writing your final paper for this subject? At which stage of the writing process would you use it?

I might use AI for brainstorming or editing but not for content generation.
- planning: AI could help to organize ideas
- editing: correcting grammar

Evaluating the use of generative AI in academic writing

SoSe 2025, Academic Writing I

You have been given a copy of an academic paper on "Everything that Rises Must Converge", by Flannery O'Connor. Please read the paper critically and provide feedback on the following eight aspects (the questions are mere suggestions to help you focus your analysis)[1]:

1. AIM – Is the aim of the paper clear? Does the paper have a thesis statement? Has the author "pitied the reader"? Is the paper easy to understand?

the aim is clearly stated, but there are certain words that are to complex for the paper. It has a thesis statement, but I think it is too vague It is not difficult to understand it, but there were some words combinations that were hard to understand => So the author did not pity the reader

2. REFERENCES – Is there enough secondary literature? Are the sources cited in the running text? Is the author's voice clearly perceived as separate from the cited sources? Does the author have a critical stance?

I think there was not enough for the second chapter of the paper. I think the authors opinion/voice is not clearly seperated from the cited I could not tell, which was cited or his own opinion

3. STRUCTURE – Are all the paragraphs approximately the same size? Is there a proper introduction and a conclusion? Do the paragraphs all contain a clear topic sentence? Do they focus on individual aspects of the topic?

I think there was not always a clear topic sentence in. but each paragraphs focuses on one aspect that is different.

4. COHERENCE – Is there a logical "red thread" throughout the paper? Are the paragraphs arranged in a linear order, reflecting the author's train of thought and guiding the reader?

the red thread was hard to follow, the order of the paper was not linear, there were big cuts in the paper and it felt like several papers not one whole paper about a topic.

---

[1] This questionnaire is supposed to be anonymous; there is no need to sign it.

5. COHESION – Are the sentences syntactically correct and cohesive? Can you find enough linking devices, summary words, synonyms, pronouns and other elements that contribute to sentence flow?

they are grammatically correct, but some words were overused without variation
there are linking devices and they were used correctly

6. STYLE – Is the overall style concise, native-like, and clear? Is it redundant, formulaic or robotic?

7. VOCABULARY – Is the register correct? Is it formal but still understandable?

It is formal but not always comprehensible, some vocabulary should have been explained, it seems not human enough

8. PUNCTUATION – *briefly* evaluate the use of commas, apostrophes, quotation marks, colons, etc. Does the punctuation strike you as odd or incorrect?

Finally, please answer the following questions: How likely is it that you'll use some type of AI-powered software to assist you in writing your final paper for this subject? At which stage of the writing process would you use it?

Evaluating the use of generative AI in academic writing

SoSe 2025, Academic Writing I

You have been given a copy of an academic paper on "Everything that Rises Must Converge", by Flannery O'Connor. Please read the paper critically and provide feedback on the following eight aspects (the questions are mere suggestions to help you focus your analysis)[1]:

1. AIM – Is the aim of the paper clear? Does the paper have a thesis statement? Has the author "pitied the reader"? Is the paper easy to understand?

- Thesis: leads to nothing, no link of short story and idea of ignorance.
- Pity: no, no/rarely a definition of complex terms
- understanding: very based, not enjoyable; very theoretical without definitions, explanations or examples

2. REFERENCES – Is there enough secondary literature? Are the sources cited in the running text? Is the author's voice clearly perceived as separate from the cited sources? Does the author have a critical stance?

- references only at the end of paragraphs
- sometimes many pages (e.g. Hall 2007: 216-222)
- missing at parts e.g. at definitions
- only 5 sources
- no critical stance, just a summary about ignorance, no real link to ETRHC

3. STRUCTURE – Are all the paragraphs approximately the same size? Is there a proper introduction and a conclusion? Do the paragraphs all contain a clear topic sentence? Do they focus on individual aspects of the topic?

In the beginning they seem to have approximately the same size but more towards the end the lenght of each paragraph varies more
long, split into 2½ paragraphs; no link with short story; no definition of ignorance
introduction
First paragraph should be put together + shortened
conclusion summary of theoretical part about ignorance
TS – only focus on ignorance

4. COHERENCE – Is there a logical "red thread" throughout the paper? Are the paragraphs arranged in a linear order, reflecting the author's train of thought and guiding the reader?

introduction: split into two parts
paragraphs 2-3 last chronological, then philosophy/theoretical part of ignorance
conclusion: summary + short part opinion of ignorance
∇ in main part of paper rarely mentions of ETRHC, not a single paragraphs about ETRHC, or one that links ignorance and ETRHC

[1] This questionnaire is supposed to be anonymous; there is no need to sign it.

5. COHESION – Are the sentences syntactically correct and cohesive? Can you find enough linking devices, summary words, synonyms, pronouns and other elements that contribute to sentence flow?

- not many linking devices, mostly, sentence after sentence

6. STYLE – Is the overall style concise, native-like, and clear? Is it redundant, formulaic or robotic?

- sounds native-like but very formal, I
  ⇒ not very realistic

7. VOCABULARY – Is the register correct? Is it formal but still understandable?

- very formal and theoretical so I found it quite hard to follow the text and understand the part about the theory behind ignorance.

8. PUNCTUATION – *briefly* evaluate the use of commas, apostrophes, quotation marks, colons, etc. Does the punctuation strike you as odd or incorrect?

- ~~Lots~~ of commas
- sometimes missing
- long quotation

Finally, please answer the following questions: How likely is it that you'll use some type of AI-powered software to assist you in writing your final paper for this subject? At which stage of the writing process would you use it?

Maybe to recommend places where I can find sources | secondary literature.

other than that I would not like to use AI because it sounds so unnaturally formal, limits one's own creativity and it is also very harmful to the environment.

Exploring Racism

Evaluating the use of generative AI in academic writing

SoSe 2025, Academic Writing I

You have been given a copy of an academic paper on "Everything that Rises Must Converge", by Flannery O'Connor. Please read the paper critically and provide feedback on the following eight aspects (the questions are mere suggestions to help you focus your analysis)[1]:

1. AIM – Is the aim of the paper clear? Does the paper have a thesis statement? Has the author "pitied the reader"? Is the paper easy to understand?

I think the text has pitied the reader sometimes (introduction) but not most of the time.
~~I~~ When it comes to the historical content there could have ~~be~~ more explanations.

2. REFERENCES – Is there enough secondary literature? Are the sources cited in the running text? Is the author's voice clearly perceived as separate from the cited sources? Does the author have a critical stance?

No critical stance but I think the secondary ~~te~~ texts are enough. But the author could've ~~&~~ seperated his voice with the secondary texts more.

3. STRUCTURE – Are all the paragraphs approximately the same size? Is there a proper introduction and a conclusion? Do the paragraphs all contain a clear topic sentence? Do they focus on individual aspects of the topic?

Some paragraphs are bigger than others but I would say that they are roughly the same category. The author works with connecton words in the beginning of each paragraph and topic sentences were used.

4. COHERENCE – Is there a logical "red thread" throughout the paper? Are the paragraphs arranged in a linear order, reflecting the author's train of thought and guiding the reader?

No idea ~~actuall~~ acmally! I don't understand this point myself!

[1] This questionnaire is supposed to be anonymous; there is no need to sign it.

5. COHESION – Are the sentences syntactically correct and cohesive? Can you find enough linking devices, summary words, synonyms, pronouns and other elements that contribute to sentence flow?

linking words are used in the begining of the paragraph.

6. STYLE – Is the overall style concise, native-like, and clear? Is it redundant, formulaic or robotic?

I don't hate the style but I also have no other formal text to compare it to. I don't know if I would have found out that it was writen with AI.

7. VOCABULARY – Is the register correct? Is it formal but still understandable?

Same as 6.

8. PUNCTUATION – *briefly* evaluate the use of commas, apostrophes, quotation marks, colons, etc. Does the punctuation strike you as odd or incorrect?

Some things are a bit weird. I, personaly, never know ~~no~~ when to use commas and even worse apostrophes. So I find it hard to say that people know that in this case there has to be a apostrophe.

Finally, please answer the following questions: How likely is it that you'll use some type of AI-powered software to assist you in writing your final paper for this subject? At which stage of the writing process would you use it?

I think it could help me with finding a structure for my paper/topic. To find out what sub-topics I need to talk about more or less. I wouldn't let it write me a paper though.

Evaluating the use of generative AI in academic writing

SoSe 2025, Academic Writing I

You have been given a copy of an academic paper on "Everything that Rises Must Converge", by Flannery O'Connor. Please read the paper critically and provide feedback on the following eight aspects (the questions are mere suggestions to help you focus your analysis)[1]:

1. AIM – Is the aim of the paper clear? Does the paper have a thesis statement? Has the author "pitied the reader"? Is the paper easy to understand?

- The aim was somewhat established at the start with a overly complicated thesis statement.
- The paper is difficult to understand, because of an unending wave of scientific terms, that aren't properly explained.

2. REFERENCES – Is there enough secondary literature? Are the sources cited in the running text? Is the author's voice clearly perceived as separate from the cited sources? Does the author have a critical stance?

- There is a lot of secondary literature that is cited in the text, yet a lot of it isn't properly seperated
- There seems to be no clear stance and if there was one it is completely inseperable from the cited sources

3. STRUCTURE – Are all the paragraphs approximately the same size? Is there a proper introduction and a conclusion? Do the paragraphs all contain a clear topic sentence? Do they focus on individual aspects of the topic?

- A proper introduction exists but the conclusion is very abrupt and seemed more like an after thought
- There are clear topic sentences at the start, before the latter half muddies together too much
- The paragraphs aren't the same size

4. COHERENCE – Is there a logical "red thread" throughout the paper? Are the paragraphs arranged in a linear order, reflecting the author's train of thought and guiding the reader?

- The paper sidetracks to ignorance definitions for way too long and loses it's thread to ETRMC almost completely, only focused on the topic of ignorance types.

[1] This questionnaire is supposed to be anonymous; there is no need to sign it.

5. COHESION – Are the sentences syntactically correct and cohesive? Can you find enough linking devices, summary words, synonyms, pronouns and other elements that contribute to sentence flow?

The beginning and ETRMC summary feel cohesive, but the text only keeps unorganically jumping from topic to topic with lazy "furthermore's," "Later's," etc

6. STYLE – Is the overall style concise, native-like, and clear? Is it redundant, formulaic or robotic? ~~The end doesn't even have a proper signature, just a placeholder~~

- The style is very robotic and definition focused par if it is just plagiarizing Wikipedia texts,
- It has an very inhuman feeling about it, that I can't properly put to ink.

7. VOCABULARY – Is the register correct? Is it formal but still understandable?

- The vocabulary is way too overly formal making it pretty much impossible to properly understand without googling a lot of terms yourself.

8. PUNCTUATION – *briefly* evaluate the use of commas, apostrophes, quotation marks, colons, etc. Does the punctuation strike you as odd or incorrect?

- Punctuation here is very segmenty in how it is used in the paper.

Finally, please answer the following questions: How likely is it that you'll use some type of AI-powered software to assist you in writing your final paper for this subject? At which stage of the writing process would you use it?

I will likely use AI for general questions, on certain information, but not as a singular source of my paper. At the developmental stage

Evaluating the use of generative AI in academic writing

SoSe 2025, Academic Writing I

You have been given a copy of an academic paper on "Everything that Rises Must Converge", by Flannery O'Connor. Please read the paper critically and provide feedback on the following eight aspects (the questions are mere suggestions to help you focus your analysis)[1]:

1. AIM – Is the aim of the paper clear? Does the paper have a thesis statement? Has the author "pitied the reader"? Is the paper easy to understand?

The aim of the paper is quite clear and there is a thesis statement. However, the paper isn't very easy to understand.

2. REFERENCES – Is there enough secondary literature? Are the sources cited in the running text? Is the author's voice clearly perceived as separate from the cited sources? Does the author have a critical stance?

The sources are cited, yet it seems that the text was just taken directly taken from the author.

3. STRUCTURE – Are all the paragraphs approximately the same size? Is there a proper introduction and a conclusion? Do the paragraphs all contain a clear topic sentence? Do they focus on individual aspects of the topic?

Most paragraphs are differently-sized and even though there is an introduction and conclusion, both include too much information. However, the paper goes into great detail for each individual aspect of the topic.

4. COHERENCE – Is there a logical "red thread" throughout the paper? Are the paragraphs arranged in a linear order, reflecting the author's train of thought and guiding the reader?

The arrangement of the paragraphs are completely jumbled up, as the conclusion already appears in the middle of the paper.

---

[1] This questionnaire is supposed to be anonymous; there is no need to sign it.

5. COHESION – Are the sentences syntactically correct and cohesive? Can you find enough linking devices, summary words, synonyms, pronouns and other elements that contribute to sentence flow?

The sentences are syntactically correct, yet not so cohesive. The flow does not really exist, however the grammar and vocabulary is accurate and at an academic level.

6. STYLE – Is the overall style concise, native-like, and clear? Is it redundant, formulaic or robotic?

The overall style of the paper is very static, to the point where you could tell that it was AI-generated. The information was also quite redundant, repeating the same points.

7. VOCABULARY – Is the register correct? Is it formal but still understandable?

The vocab is very formal, maybe even too formal for someone who's second language is English.

8. PUNCTUATION – *briefly* evaluate the use of commas, apostrophes, quotation marks, colons, etc. Does the punctuation strike you as odd or incorrect?

The punctuation is mostly on point and I was not able to spot any odd punctuation

Finally, please answer the following questions: How likely is it that you'll use some type of AI-powered software to assist you in writing your final paper for this subject? At which stage of the writing process would you use it?

As someone who's native language is English, I would not even think of writing any paper with AI-Assistance, with the exception of whenever I check if my grammar for accuracy.

Evaluating the use of generative AI in academic writing

SoSe 2025, Academic Writing I

You have been given a copy of an academic paper on "Everything that Rises Must Converge", by Flannery O'Connor. Please read the paper critically and provide feedback on the following eight aspects (the questions are mere suggestions to help you focus your analysis)[1]:

1. AIM – Is the aim of the paper clear? Does the paper have a thesis statement? Has the author "pitied the reader"? Is the paper easy to understand?

   No, not one bit. Many "big" words without any use one explanation. Foot notes don't explain anything rather than just being sources.

2. REFERENCES – Is there enough secondary literature? Are the sources cited in the running text? Is the author's voice clearly perceived as separate from the cited sources? Does the author have a critical stance?

   I guess so, all ~~many~~ footnotes are sources and there is quite a sum of them. I'd say the author has a critical stance, but i do not really know towards what. No clear seperation because there is just a little number for all i know the previous words could be copied from the source.

3. STRUCTURE – Are all the paragraphs approximately the same size? Is there a proper introduction and a conclusion? Do the paragraphs all contain a clear topic sentence? Do they focus on individual aspects of the topic?

   ~~No~~ Not at all, sometimes no paragraphs at all. No conclusion, at ~~least~~ but an instruction, at least was it named that way, it is so complet written i can not even tell if its good or bad. Forgetting ~~Forgets~~ what they do, but one loses himself in these texts, soon the text is even about.

4. COHERENCE – Is there a logical "red thread" throughout the paper? Are the paragraphs arranged in a linear order, reflecting the author's train of thought and guiding the reader?

   Not one bit, how could it its written by AI. Paper To be really honest i do not understand what this ~~text~~, even large parts of it, is about

---

[1] This questionnaire is supposed to be anonymous; there is no need to sign it.

5. syntactically yes, but i dont find too many linking words, often because the sentence is ended and a new one started although they are about the same topic. In my opinion there is no sentence flow

6. Style is very chaotic, not in any way clear. Opposite of concise

7. It is too formal

8.

patriciasneesby 1

ACADEMIC WRITING 1 EVALUATING AI GENERATED PAPERS

PLEASE BRIEFLY OUTLINE YOUR OPINION ABOUT THE PAPER SUBMITTED FOR ANALYSIS

I did not think it was too bad actually. If I wouldn't have known it was AI generated I don't think I would've found out. I read the one about racism and there were a few things here and there that was very clearly AI written but I didn't mind most of it. But tbh I don't have too much knowledge about this or other real papers to compare.

0

I didn't enjoy reading the paper about ignorance at all because it deals with ignorance in a very theoretical way. It rarely mentions the short story and does not really link the theoretical part with the short story. It also does not pity the reader since it does not define the more technical terms.

0

The paper started of fairly normal but starts to decline very early on as it starts linking unusual or rarerly used words with each other. It continued with uneeded paragraphs. I couldn't even decide if an AI wrote it or not due to how many quotations the text used at one point even having a whole paragraph from another source written into the text making the text feel very lacking in original content and felt like a bloated mess of quotes and indirect citations of different texts.

0

In think the paper I received was written with the help of generative AI. Some sentences sound very robotic. Many advanced words are used (e.g. "microcosm", "tumultuous"). The flow is sometimes disrupted by abrupt shifts. Some of the paragraphs aren't really connected.

0

Paper about racism

I think the Paper was alright. There were some word constellations that I would not have used and there was an overuse of certain

words. But in opinion the paper was kind of chopped in a way that it just did not flow. But I think I would not have detected the AI

0

The paper read very odd and detached from regular human writing, more so feeling like a multitude of online definitions and articles melted into each other.
The aim was somewhat established at the start, but the paper loses almost complete sight of it and any sort of red thread in an attempt to define every possible subcategory of a term that at one point had an actual connection to the primary source.
ETRMC is only briefly mentioned and recapped, before being completely sidetracked by overly complicated scientific terms, that aren't properly explained or ellaborated on.
Secondary sources are used and cited, but they aren't used properly and were often inseperable from the author's own stance.
Lastly, the ending is very abrupt and fails to properly connect back to the literature.

0

PERMISSION FORM

My final paper submitted for Academic Writing 1 can be used by my instructor, Dr Patricia Sneesby, for research purposes, in the following way: an anonymised version of the manuscript will be used for in-class activities to elicit feedback on style, objectivity, bias and accuracy. The analysis of the feedback will only be shared in academic contexts and will in no way feature my name, address, matriculation number or any personal information. Dr Sneesby may include brief anonymous excerpts in PowerPoint presentations.

Name	Signature
Daniel Kogan	Kogan
Raphael Droemer	R. Droemer
Philipp Wounod	Wounod
Luca Truong	L. Truong
Max Henning	M. Henning
Michelle Behr	M. B
Katnn Schumann	K. S
Emma Herrmann	Herr
Lisa Meinhardt	L. Meinhardt
Nada Eladawy	N. Eladawy
Margret Hanke	M. Hanke
Lilly Illig	L-I

Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena

Institut für Anglistik/Amerikanistik

Seminar: Academic Writing I

Instructor: P. Sneesby

WS 2024

Exploring Ignorance

in Flannery O'Connor's *Everything That Rises Must Converge*

In the pursuit of knowledge, one might assume that an increase in information and understanding inherently leads to a reduction in ignorance. However, a closer examination reveals a paradoxical relationship between knowledge and ignorance. This paper delves into the intricate dynamics of this paradox, asserting that possessing knowledge does not necessarily eradicate ignorance but, in some instances, may even foster it. As we unravel the complexities of this phenomenon, we navigate the thin line between enlightenment and the persistent shadows of unknowingness. Through critical analysis we aim to elucidate how the acquisition of knowledge, despite its enlightening potential, can coexist with, and at times perpetuate, various forms of ignorance. In doing so, this research endeavours to challenge conventional notions about the linear progression from ignorance to enlightenment and invites a nuanced exploration of the intricate interplay between knowledge and the ever-persistent realms of the unknown.

Before beginning, I would like to present a summary for anyone who does not know *Everything That Rises Must Converge* – and a refreshment of memory for those who last read it a long while ago.

Julian, a recent college graduate, has returned to his Southern home to live with his mother as he pursues a career as a writer. Accompanying his mother to her weekly exercise class at the doctor's recommendation, Julian reluctantly agrees due to her fear of riding the bus alone at night since the integration of buses. As they embark on a bus trip, Julian's mother decides to wear an expensive purple hat she recently bought. During their walk to the bus stop, they discuss the social changes in the South and their family's aristocratic history, in stark contrast to Julian's upbringing in a tough neighbourhood by a single mother. On the bus, Julian's mother engages in conversation with fellow white passengers, expressing dissatisfaction with integration and mourning the loss of Southern traditions. Julian becomes increasingly angry at his mother's racist views and decides to teach her a lesson. When a well-dressed black man enters the bus, Julian leaves his mother to sit with him, hoping to challenge her perceptions. However, the black man is annoyed, and Julian's mother becomes visibly angry. At the next stop, a black boy, Carver, and his mother board the bus, sitting next to Julian's Mother and Julian. Julian notices that Carver's Mother is wearing a hat identical to his mother's. Despite Carver's playful interaction, tensions rise, and as they prepare to disembark, Julian fears his mother's gesture of giving coins to children she thinks cute might be misinterpreted. After exiting the bus, Julian's Mother gives Carver a penny, leading to a confrontation with Carver's Mother, who strikes her with her purse. Julian berates his mother

for not understanding racial equality, and she appears to suffer a stroke. Overwhelmed with guilt, Julian calls for help as he witnesses his mother's distressing condition.

In his wish to do better than his mother, Julian behaves quite racist himself. He has no knowledge about the current situation for people of colour and is acting, whether knowingly or unknowingly, ignorant to the man's mounting annoyance. But how was the situation for black people back in the 1960s? Let us take a look at the development that led to that point in history.

In the 1930s, African Americans faced neglect in congressional and electoral politics during the Great Depression. To address this, civil rights leaders forged alliances, setting aside grievances with labour unions. They strategically aligned with the Democratic Party, seeking to transform it into a platform for racial liberalism. By 1948, the Democratic Party underwent significant changes, with civil rights becoming a uniting cause for a liberal-labour alliance. The Civil Rights groups, particularly the NAACP and the CIO, played a crucial role in mobilizing voters, challenging discrimination, and securing a prominent place for African Americans within the Democratic Party. The strategic decisions of these groups, while not without challenges, proved instrumental in shaping the civil rights movement and cementing African Americans as a core constituency of the Democratic Party. (Baylor 2013: 30-31)

Later, during the 1950s and early 1960s, the civil rights movement strategically secured local and national victories by adopting a carefully orchestrated approach emphasizing 'respectability' and 'dignity' Leaders consciously projected a public image of peaceful, respectable, and quintessentially American activism, aligning with mainstream white sensibilities. This tactic contributed significantly to the movement's success, creating a powerful sense of moral rectitude. The March on Washington exemplified this strategy, projecting an aura of respectability and garnering broad public support. Key figures like Martin Luther King Jr. played pivotal roles, acting as bridge-builders between radical and moderate factions within the civil rights coalition. The movement's success lay in its ability to attract support from various organizations and present its goals as part of America's democratic tradition, achieving a level of respectability critical to its impact. Internal dissent regarding this strategy existed, but the movement's overall success derived from its ability to forge broad coalitions, project a dignified image, and align its demands with America's republican-democratic ideals. (Hall 2007: 216-222)

Despite all these achievements there still are problems with ignorance concerning race in law to the day in the United States. As George A. Martínez so quaintly put it:

"In this article, I have sought to reveal—through a series of important examples—how the dominant group has constructed an epistemology of ignorance in the area of race and the law. This epistemology of

ignorance requires the dominant group—in order to maintain their socially dominant position—to "engage in a significant degree of misunderstanding, misinterpretation and misrepresentation on matters related to race." In particular, I have argued that the dominant group has constructed an epistemology of ignorance (1) in the area of law with respect to Native Americans; (2) in the area of law with respect to Mexican-Americans; (3) in the area of employment discrimination law; (4) in the area of immigration law and policy in the Trump era; (5) in the area of federalism in recent United States Supreme Court cases; and (6) in the areas of legal scholarship and in the outlawing of ethnic studies in Arizona. I also have argued that this production of ignorance has helped enable whites to maintain their socially dominant position in American society." (Martínez 2020: 552)

As mentioned before, Julian is being ignorant as one can be, and the average person might assume that being ignorant just means not acknowledging something – but ignorance entails much more than just that.

The concept of ignorance is intricately tied to the ability to mentally represent something as unknown. Individuals with the capacity to become aware of their ignorance do so by holding thoughts about things they believe to be unknown to them. The discussion delves into the paradox of mentally representing something as unknown and explores the philosophical implications, drawing a connection to Plato's riddle concerning inquiry in the Meno. A suggested solution to the riddle is critiqued and it is proposed that awareness of ignorance requires partial knowledge of the object of inquiry. It is argued that this view, while initially intuitive, fails to address the core issue. Instead, it is contended that the necessary knowledge for representing an unknown is semantic in nature and termed "conceptual knowledge." This involves distinguishing between the content of a mental representation and its object, asserting that representing something conceptually does not always require direct experience with the object. Essentially, the complexity of awareness of ignorance gets explored, all the while delving into philosophical questions about how one can mentally represent something as unknown and the nature of the knowledge involved in this process. (Ilhan 2020: 142-144)

Furthermore, it is said that there are two types of ignorance: Non-propositional and propositional ignorance. In the discussion of the concept of awareness of ignorance, it is emphasized that it is not limited to propositions and can exist without propositional content. A provided example of non-propositional ignorance is, e.g. not knowing who the shortest spy is or how a mobile phone works. It is argued that awareness of ignorance is possible when individuals can grasp the content of a definite description but have little or no knowledge of its referent. The idea that all mental states have propositional content contrasts the aforementioned perspective. The passage engages with the Millian view that all cases of awareness of ignorance have propositional content, using examples involving know-how and singular propositions. It

explores the limitations of this view, especially in cases where the content of ignorance is not about the truth or falsify of a proposition but relates to skills or practical knowledge.

To illustrate the complexities of propositional ignorance, scenarios involving criminal cases and the Unabomber investigation are able to showcase the complexities of propositional ignorance. Ignorance is a gradable notion, context-sensitive, and interest-relative, challenging the assumption that propositional knowledge is not gradable. That being said, propositional ignorance is not always about truth, and an agent may know a proposition is true while remaining ignorant about other aspects of it. (ibd. 157-161)

The content of propositional ignorance however "[…] contains a full proposition which has three sub-types: that-ignorance, which may be factive, and if so, can only be ascribed to others – which is useful for a theory of mind, but not for one to become aware of their own ignorance; whether-ignorance, which can be ascribed to others as well as to oneself, whose content can be captured by a definite description in the form "the truth value of p," which makes the object of ignorance the actual truth value of the proposition; and fact-ignorance, in which the content of ignorance is again a proposition, but the object of ignorance is not a truth value, but rather the fact that makes the proposition true." (ibd. 171)

Furthermore, the normative conception of ignorance is able to address certain features of ignorance that are not adequately explained by conventional views. Traditional views, which focus solely on the absence of an epistemic standing, would lead to an overly broad application of ignorance, including non-epistemic entities. The normative conception, in contrast to traditional views, explains why ignorance is not attributed to non-epistemic entities. It introduces a normative dimension, asserting that ignorance is not just the absence of an epistemic standing but also involves an intellectual failing. This normative dimension helps distinguish cases where ignorance is inappropriate, such as truths that are in principle or practically unknowable. Extreme cases, like distant unrecorded facts about the past, are examples where conventional views might label someone as ignorant for lacking knowledge. The normative conception argues against such labelling, suggesting that if a fact is unknowable, it cannot be a fact one ought to know. This normative perspective accounts for why certain truths, even if unknown, do not necessarily imply ignorance. To emphasize, the normative conception of ignorance is particularly relevant when dealing with truths that are practically or inherently unknowable. This posits that ignorance involves more than a lack of knowledge; it requires a normative evaluation of whether the unknown fact is something one ought to have known. (Pritchard 2021: 3-4)

However, the lack of knowledge may not necessarily result in ignorance, depending on the epistemic availability of truths for the individual. There are cases of person-relative epistemic inaccessibility, where a subject may lack any way of knowing a specific truth in their circumstances. For example, small children aren't considered ignorant for not knowing complex facts like the President of France, as they aren't in a position to know. The person-relative epistemic accessibility can change over time, influencing what one is considered ignorant of. This extends to individuals with varying educational backgrounds or from different civilizations, emphasizing that what one ought to know is context-dependent, and lack of knowledge doesn't always imply ignorance. The normative dimension of ignorance is highlighted, where the intellectual failing is considered in relation to what a person realistically ought to know. (ibd. 5-7)

This normative account of ignorance, focusing on awareness as a key component, provides a principled way to reconcile the standard and new views of ignorance. By emphasizing the normative dimension, it deepens the understanding of cases where individuals lack a particular epistemic standing but do not qualify as ignorant due to the absence of a normative obligation to be aware of the relevant fact. That sheds light on diverse scenarios, such as Gettier-style cases, where different types of veritic epistemic luck lead to distinct diagnoses of ignorance. The recognition of this normative dimension is crucial for a comprehensive understanding of ignorance beyond mere absence of knowledge. (ibd. 18-17)

In conclusion, the multifaceted nature of ignorance transcends the conventional notion of a simple lack of knowledge, stretching into the realms of intellectual failure and the imperative for self-awareness. It demands a comprehensive recognition that goes beyond identifying what one doesn't know, emphasizing an intricate understanding of the boundaries and deficiencies within one's intellectual capacities. The essence of true wisdom lies not merely in the accumulation of knowledge but in the ongoing process of contemplation and self-awareness. By cultivating a mind-set that places value on introspection, individuals can effectively navigate their intellectual limitations. This approach promotes a commitment to perpetual learning and personal growth. Rather than being relegated to a static state of unknowing, ignorance transforms into a dynamic catalyst for individual development. In essence, acknowledging and understanding ignorance becomes a pivotal force, propelling individuals toward a journey of continuous learning and self-improvement.

Sources

Primary Source:

O'Connor, Flannery. „Everything That Rises Must Converge" in *The Complete Stories* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux) New York, pp. 405-420.

Secondary Sources:

Baylor, Christopher A.. „First to the Party: The Group Origins of the Partisan Transformation on Civil Rights, 1940–1960" in *Studies in American Political Development*, 27 (October 2013), 30– 31.

Hall, Simon. "Marching on Washington: The Civil Rights and Anti-War Movements of the 1960s" in Matthias Reiss (ed.*), The Street as Stage: Protest Marches and Public Rallies since the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 216–222.

Inan, Ilhan. "Awareness of ignorance" SATS, vol. 20, no. 2, 2020, pp. 141-173.

Martínez, George A.. "Law, Race, and the Epistemology of Ignorance" *17 Hastings Race & Poverty L.J.* 507 (2020). pp 552.

Pritchard, Duncan. "Ignorance and Normativity." *Philosophical Topics* 49, no. 2, 2021, pp. 225–44.

Declaration of Academic Integrity

Hiermit erkläre ich, dass ich die vorliegende Arbeit selbst angefertigt und alle von mir benutzten Hilfsmittel und Quellen angegeben habe; alle wörtlichen Zitate und Entlehnungen aus fremden Arbeiten sind als solche gekennzeichnet.

(signature)

Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena
Institut für Anglistik/Amerikanistik
Seminar: Academic Writing I
Instructor: Patricia Sneesby
WS 2023/24

Exploring White Identity in Flannery O'Connor's 'Everything That Rises Must Converge'

Table of Contents

1. Introduction 1

2. The complexities of White Identity in the 1960s Southern U.S. 1

3. O'Connor's portrayal of white identity in 'Everything That Rises Must Converge' 3
   3.1 Julian Chestny - a study in contradictions 3
   3.2 Mrs Chestny - a manifestation of Southern social order 4

4. Unraveling the Tapestry of White Identity 5

5. Bibliography 7

1. Introduction

In the canon of American literature, Flannery O'Connor's work stands out for its piercing disquisition of morality, redemption, and the frequently grotesque underpinnings of the mortal experience. Her short story "Everything That Rises Must Converge" published in a collection of the same name in 1965, is a pictorial tableau of the ethnical pressures and generational division that agonized the American South during the Civil Rights period.

This term paper aims to dive deep into the thematic complications of white identity portrayed in O'Connor's narrative, examining the ways in which the characters' tone comprehensions are both a product of and a response to the societal paroxysms of their time. Set against the background of a changing social geography, "Everything That Rises Must Converge" presents an exemplification of a society scuffling with the dissolution of long standing ethical scales. Through the relationship between Julian, a council- educated man who fancies himself a liberal, and his mother, who embodies the old Southern stations of ethnical superiority and nostalgia for pre war history, O'Connor crafts a potent commentary on the struggles essential in the redefinition of white identity. As this paper will explore, the characters in O'Connor's story are representative of a larger artistic moment, their individualities intricately woven into a fabric of literal environment, particular prejudice, and the frequently painful process of tone- discovery. The narrative serves not only as a reflection of the times in which O'Connor wrote but also as a visionary discussion of the ongoing complications of race and identity in America. Through a careful analysis of history, character development, and the story's epiphany, we will unravel the ways in which O'Connor addresses the confluence of individualities within the jug of social change.

2. The complexities of White Identity in the 1960s Southern U.S.

White identity in the Southern United States during the 1960s can be understood as a multifaceted social construct deeply intertwined with the region's political, cultural, and religious landscapes. The era was marked by significant racial tensions and transformation, as the Civil Rights Movement sought to dismantle the longstanding Jim Crow laws and challenge the institutionalized segregation that underpinned white

supremacy. The Southern white identity during this period was often framed in opposition to the growing demands for racial equality by African Americans. This identity was not merely a passive state of being but served as a utility-based trait, influencing political behavior and voting patterns. White Southerner's loyalty to the Democratic Party since the Civil War underwent a dramatic shift as they gravitated towards pro-segregationist Dixiecrats and then to the Republican Party, reflecting a recalibration of their political allegiance in response to the U.S. Civil Rights Movement. Political scientists have posited that racial identity among whites can be conceptualized as a utility-based behavior, which suggests that the expression of white identity can be viewed as a rational choice to protect perceived group interests. This perspective challenges the notion that voters who support Republican Party candidates, despite material interests that might align them with the Democratic Party, are acting against their interests. Instead, it frames their behavior as a rational response to perceived threats to their racial group's status.[1] Moreover, the period saw the conflation of racial and religious identities, where Christianity was often invoked to justify racial hierarchies. The concept of Christian nationalism, which connected American cultural membership with being Christian, was a significant predictor of political intolerance among Whites towards various stigmatized groups.[2] This intertwining of religious and racial identities provided a justification for preserving the socio-political status quo that favored Whites. The racial views of whites during this time were shaped by a belief system that saw the American Way of Life as threatened, prompting them to gravitate towards political figures who promised to protect their status. [3]

In conclusion, the white identity in the Southern United States in the 1960s was a complex combination of historical, cultural, and political elements. It was a strategic and rationalized identity that was both a response to and a driver of the era's political realignments and social transformations. The period's racial politics were characterized by a resistance to the changing racial dynamics and a deep-seated

---

[1] Cf. Weller, N.; Junn J.: Radical identity & voting: Conceptualizing white identity in special terms, in: Perspective on Politics, 2018, p. 3-4

[2] Cf. Davis, J.T.; Perry, S.L.: White Christian nationalism and relative political tolerance for racists, in: SocArXiv, 2019, p. 5&22, https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/White-Christian-Nationalism-and-Relative-Political-Davis-Perry/5b4ac41965e11b7aa6a72094a0b469bde8648c71 [viewed 27.12.2023]

[3] Cf. Smith, Rogers M., King, D.: White Protectionism in America, in: Perspective on Politics, 2020, p. 3-5

desire to maintain the racial hierarchy that favored Whites.[4] Understanding this historical context is crucial in grasping the enduring influence of white identity on contemporary American politics and racial relations.

3. O'Connor's portrayal of white identity in 'Everything That Rises Must Converge'

3.1. Julian Chestny - a study in contradictions

Julian Chestny is portrayed as a demonstrative figure for the changing South, who seems to be caught between social shifts and the tensions based on race. His character aligns with the themes of pride, prejudice and of course, identity and status. O'Connor uses him to explore the difficulties and twists of white identity during the time of the US Civil Rights Movement. His relationship with his mother is defined by conflict and resentment, representative for the generational divide between the traditional and conservative South and the emerging liberal attitudes present in the time. While his mother seems to be clinging onto the old Southern values and prides herself with her ancestors, Julian tries to develop a more modern stance that almost has a patronizing tone to it.[5] He is rejecting his mother's apparent racism while showing some more subtle prejudices himself. An exemplification for this would be his fantasies about social interactions between him and African Americans who are up to his standards of education and status but his attempts seem patronizing and uncomfortable. He looks at African Americans as some sort of tool in his quest to reach intellectual and moral superiority over his mother and masks his own racist views by pointing out her 'wrong' views. This is highlighted further throughout the narrative by O'Connor's use of the free indirect discourse because it gives the reader full access to Julian's thoughts and feelings and aligns them with his perspective. Throughout the story this technique also serves to point out Julian's lack of consistency between his alleged beliefs and his actions. Within 'Everything That Rises Must Converge' Flannery O'Connor employs irony in order to critique Julian's self-righteousness. He's obsessed with the idea of teaching his mother a lesson about race and equality while mastering complete ignorance towards his own role in the social structures and injustices he claims to despise.

---

[4] Cf. Weller, N.; Junn J.: Radical identity & voting: Conceptualizing white identity in special terms, in: Perspective on Politics, 2018, p. 3-4

[5] Cf. Mirenayat, S.A., Soofastaei, E.: The demonic grotesque in Flannery O'Connor's "Everything that rises must converge", 2015, p. 2-3

Julian's epiphany in the end is a moment of profound irony as his mother's stroke and vulnerability exposes the hollowness in his pretentious image. As he breaks down his own bubble of superiority bursts which leaves him to realize the depth of his connection to his mother and to the identity he fought so hard to judge and reject.[6]

O'Connor's work often tries to wrestle with the give and take of the grotesque and the holy which is evident in her distorted characters as well as the satirical representation of social dynamics of the time.

One could say that Julian's Character is a study in contradictions because he is both a product of his upbringing and a rebel against it, he embodies the conflicts and complexities of white identity in the changing South of the 60's.

In essence the character of Julian Chestny is a complex character whose inner struggle and outside behavior is representative for broader social changes that occurred in the American South during the Civil Rights Era. With him O'Connor critiques the overt racism as well as the camouflaged prejudices that underpin the attitude of those who considered themselves allies of the ongoing progress.

3.2. Mrs Chestny - an embodiment of Southern social order

In "Everything That Rises Must Converge" the character of Mrs Chestny is a very detailed representation of the old Southern aristocracy, clinging onto the past which is changing at a very fast pace. She is not only a single character but also a tool for O'Connor to critique social attitudes and values, that were evident at the time of the Civil Rights Movement. Her worldview is deeply rooted into traditions and hierarchical views of the old Southern U.S., that is increasingly in conflict with the reality of the desegregated world she is forced to navigate in.

Her characterization is complex and reveals that she is the personification of white identity of significant social turmoil. Mrs Chestny is portrayed with the symbolic grandeur of the Southern Belle, a myth that O'Connor critically examines through her narratives, meaning an idealized figure of a woman of high social class, expected to live up to certain standards and behave in a certain, feminine way. Her attire and demeanor reflect her adherence to the past, an image that's in conflict with the integrated bus she and Julian are riding. The tension between her and these changes is underlined by the way she interacts with the black woman that wears a

[6] Cf. Hopkins, D.: The manner of mystery: free indirect discourse and epiphany in the stories of Flannery O'Connor, 2006, p. 33-65

similar hat to hers, an element symbolizing the shifting dynamics and also the challenge to Mrs Chestny's sense of superiority. The relationship with her son is strained and reveals a lot about her character. It not only tells the story of how she is depending on him, while he feels a mixture of love and resentment towards her but also serves O'Connor as a way to explore the divide of generations and changing perception of race and class. The narrative strategy of O'Connor critiques her Character and values she represents by making use of irony as well as satire. For instance, she uses Mrs Chestny's interactions with the other characters to emphasize the absurdities and grotesqueries of social attitudes of the time.[7] With this the author not only scrutinizes Mrs Chestny but also gives the reader the chance to reflect on their own perspectives and prejudices. The tragic finally, where she is struck and falls to the ground, underlines the unavoidable collapse of the old social order Mrs Chestny inability to adapt to this new world and let go of the old. This fall is not only of physical nature but also symbolizes the fall of an entire way of life and the resulting need for a new, more understanding identity and community.[8]

In sum, Mrs Chestny's Character serves the author to critique the vestiges of Southern white identity in a changing time. O'Connor dissects the myth of Southern social superiority and exposes the undetected prejudice as well as the hypocrisy, challenging the reader the social constructs of themes like class, race and privilege.

4. Unraveling the Tapestry of White Identity

In the exploration of Flannery O'Connor's "Everything That Rises Must Converge," the journey through the intricate dimensions of white identity in the 1960s American South revealed a tapestry interwoven with historical, cultural, and political threads. Through the characters of Julian Chestny and Mrs Chestny, O'Connor adeptly navigates the shifting terrains of racial tension, generational conflict, and societal metamorphosis.

The analysis of Julian Chestny revealed the intricate dance between his upbringing and rebellion against it, serving as a picture of the broader social changes in progress in the American South. Marked by irony and a profound epiphany, his

[7] Cf. Mirenayat, S.A., Soofastaei, E.: The demonic grotesque in Flannery O'Connor's "Everything that rises must converge", 2015, p. 1-3

[8] Bagno-Simon, L.: The Liberty Belle: Reversed Gender Roles, Skewed Faith, and the Breakdown of Southern Myths in Flannery O'Connor's Patriarchal World, 2014, p. 3

journey becomes a reflection of the inherent tensions and contradictions in the reshaping of white identity.

Mrs Chestny, embodying the Southern Belle myth, stands as a poignant symbol of the old social order on the brink of collapse. O'Connor's use of irony and satire underscores the absurdities and grotesqueries entrenched in social attitudes, challenging readers to introspect on their own perspectives and biases.

To conclude this exploration, it's essential to acknowledge O'Connor's narrative transcending its temporal setting. The scrutiny of white identity in "Everything That Rises Must Converge" serves as a mirror reflecting contemporary America, compelling readers to confront persistent issues of race, privilege, and societal evolution. In essence, O'Connor's narrative functions not solely as a historical window but also as a reflective mirror capturing the ongoing complexities of race and identity in America. Unraveling the tapestry of white identity in the American South, O'Connor extends an invitation to grapple with the enduring tensions, contradictions, and the potential for grace embedded in our ever-evolving societal landscape.

5. Bibliography

Bagno-Simon, L.: The Liberty Belle: Reversed Gender Roles, Skewed Faith, and the Breakdown of Southern Myths in Flannery O'Connor's Patriarchal World, 2014

Davis, J.T.; Perry, S.L.: White Christian nationalism and relative political tolerance for racists,in:SocArXiv,2019,https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/White-Christian-Nationalism-and-Relative-Political-Davis-Perry/5b4ac41965e11b7aa6a72094a0b469bde8648c71 [viewed 27.12.2023]

Hopkins, D.: The manner of mystery: free indirect discourse and epiphany in the stories of Flannery O'Connor, 2006

Mirenayat, S.A., Soofastaei, E.: The demonic grotesque in Flannery O'Connor's "Everything that rises must converge", 2015

O'Connor, F.: Everything That Rises Must Converge, 1965

Smith, Rogers M., King, D.: White Protectionism in America, in: Perspective on Politics, 2020

Weller, N.; Junn J.: Radical identity & voting: Conceptualizing white identity in special terms, in: Perspective on Politics, 2018

Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena
Institut für Anglistik/Amerikanistik
Seminar: Academic Writing I
Instructor: Patricia Sneesby
WS 2023/24

Exploring Racism in Flannery O'Connor's short-story 'Everything That Rises Must Converge'

Table of Contents

1. Introduction 1

2. Historical and Social Background 1

3. Racism in O'Connor's Characters 2
   3.1 Julian's Mother 2
   3.2 Julian's Chestny 4

4. Conclusion 5

5. Bibliography 7

1. Introduction

In the midst of American literature, Flannery O'Connor's work stands out for its piercing exploration of social issues through a Southern Gothic lens. "Everything That Rises Must Converge," a short story published posthumously in 1965, is a very detailed representation of the racial tensions simmering in the American South during the Civil Rights Movement. This term paper aims to dive into the complex theme of racism portrayed by O'Connor, unpacking how her characters and their interactions serve as a modell of the societal dynamics of the time. Through the narrative of a mother and son caught in the turmoil of societal change, O'Connor dissects the inherent prejudices and the struggle for racial equality, challenging readers to confront their own biases. The story becomes a compelling vehicle for examining the psychological and moral implications of racism, and the often uncomfortable realities of human resistance to change. As we dissect the layers of background, dialogue, and character development, we will explore how "Everything That Rises Must Converge" reflects the historical context of the 1960s and maybe even the influences and importance in today's discussion about race and equality.

2. Historical and Social Context

The 1960s were a crucial time in the American Civil Rights Movement. This was especially the case in the Southern United States, where Racism played an important role in the legal system and society. The struggle with racism was not new. In 1881 African Americans held big meetings in New Orleans in order to raise money in order to fund their lawsuits against these civil rights infringements, reflecting a persistent resistance to discrimination based on colour. Despite their fierce resistance, the white Southerners controlled the terms of the discussion as well as silencing the protest regardless of racial lines. This white dominance caused some black leaders to reconsider the need for other strategies, particularly after the implementation of Jim Crow legislation. While some black leaders have conformed to the new definition of citizenship and have retreated from the public sphere, focusing on black uplift through education, others have remained actively engaged in the civil rights movement. The landmark 1883 Civil Rights Cases and the Plessy v. Ferguson decision in 1896

initiated and marked new phases in civil rights activism, particularly as African Americans sought to defend and assert their rights through litigation, petitioning the government, and public protection, including the boycott of segregated streetcars at the turn of the twentieth century.[1]

The Civil Rights Movement was more than a domestic issue; it also had international implications. During the Cold War the global image of the United States was impaired with domestic racism, constraining their diplomatic ties in regions like Africa, Asia, as well as Latin America. The geopolitical necessity of countering Soviet influence thus compelled U.S. administrations to pay closer attention to the "Negro problem" and, consequently, to address civil rights issues more earnestly post-1965.

Nonetheless, the path of the Civil Rights Movement wasn't linear. Post-1965, there was a politicization of the movement, with a shift in focus from the moral imperatives that had initially garnered support from the nation's moderates—such as voting rights and educational equality—to issues like job and housing discrimination, which were less moral and more complex. That shift led to a decrease in sympathy and support from the white allies that had been engaged in the movements process before.[2]

In conclusion, the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s Southern U.S. was a varied struggle against deeply rooted racism, characterized by a variety of strategies and an ongoing quest for equality that was influenced by domestic circumstances as well as international considerations. The movement's history reveals the flexibility and adaptability of African American activists who, despite facing significant opposition, continued to challenge racial discrimination and fight for their constitutional rights.

3. Racism portrayed in 'Everything That Rises Must Converge'

3.1 Mrs Chestny

Flannery O'Connor's short story "Everything That Rises Must Converge" is a poignant exploration of the complex racial dynamics in the American South during the era of civil rights movements. Through her characters, particularly Mrs. Chestny, O'Connor examines

[1] Cf. Stephen, R.; Robinson: African American Citizenship, the 1883 Civil Rights Cases and the Creation of the Jim Crow South, 2017, p. 8-31

[2] Lui, B.: Factors that lead to the Politicization of the American Civil Rights Movement After 1965, 2022, p. 3

the entrenched racism and the struggle for identity amidst societal changes. In the setting of the recently desegregated South, the narrative captures the tension between the old and new order through the interactions of Julian and his mother.

Mrs Chestny is described as a relic of the old South, clinging to her aristocratic heritage and outdated racial roles. She is never referred to by her first name, stressing her role as Julian's mother and her old Southern values. Her persistence on wearing the green hat to the Y, and her intimidation when encountering a black woman that wears an identical hat, is symbolic for her having trouble maintaining the social distinction she is used to in this now changing world. The hat, a symbol of her perceived status, serves as a point of convergence between herself and the black woman. It challenges her conceptions of racial and social supremacy. This moment of recognition forces Mrs. Chestny to confront the reality that the world she knew is fading, and with it, her place within that world.[3]

O'Connor's use of grotesque elements serves as a critique of the racist attitudes of her characters. This typically reveals characters' moral and spiritual deficiencies, as seen in Mrs Chestny's shallowness and inability to see beyond her prejudices.[4] The character of Mrs Chetny represents the “behavioral decadence” that manifests as racism, a theme that O’Connor examines through the lens of Southern consciousness marked by historical conditions such as slavery and racial chauvinism.[5]

In a more general sense, the story takes a look at the intergenerational conflict and the resistance to social change. The mother-son relationship is tense and loaded with differences and also strained by the societal changes that criticize established hierarchies and identities. Julian’s Mother lives in a fantasy world that is stuck in the past, while Julian himself seems to be superimposed onto the society they now live in. This creates the dissonance meant to underline the story's central conflict.[6] O’Connor’s narrative ultimately builds to an epiphany, where the characters’ initial self-important perspectives crumble,

---

[3] Cf. Szokonya, I. P.: Truncated Families, Dysfunctional Relationships, Defective Communication. An Intersubjective approach to Flannery O'Connor's Fiction, 2017, p. 119-125

[4] Cf. Fahkrunnisa: Grotesque Character as a Criticism to Racism in Flannery O’Connor’s „The Geranium“, 2020, p. 2

[5] Cf. Tuğan, A.G.; Koçsoy, F.: The Southern and the Grotesque: Flannery O’Connor’s ‚Twisted' Characters, 2020, p. 4

[6] Cf. Szokonya, I. P.: Truncated Families, Dysfunctional Relationships, Defective Communication. An Intersubjective approach to Flannery O'Connor's Fiction, 2017, p. 119-125

often dramatized in terms of race.[7] The story serves as a microcosm of the South's tumultuous transformation, reflecting the fall of aristocracy and the rise of new social dynamics. Through the character of Mrs. Chestny, O'Connor not only captures the essence of a society in change but also critiques the moral shortcomings inherent in clinging to a bygone era defined by racial inequality.

3.2 Julian Chestny

in 'Everything That Rises Must Converge' the Character of Julian Chestny is a young man, grappling with his own identity and the social expectations. He serves as a way for O'Connor to explore the racial dynamics existent in the civil rights era. His relationship to his mother is strained due to the generational and ideological differences evident in their characters. He sees himself as enlightened and rejects the overt racism of his mother and his upbringing. However, his intellectual contempt for his mothers views shows a deep connection to the same prejudices outwardly rejects.[8] O'Connor employs Julian's character to critique the superficiality of progressive attitudes that fail to recognize their own complicity in systemic racism. As already stated above, the grotesque in O'Connor's work often serves as a criticism of racism, as seen in her portrayal of characters who are morally and spiritually deformed by their prejudices and Julian Chestny is no exception to that. As he oscillates between a desire to teach his mother a lesson in racial equality and an underlying resentment towards social changes that challenge his own privileged status. The use of the grotesque is a deliberate choice by O'Connor to underline the contradictions of racism.[9] O'Connor's story also reflects on the changing social order in the American South, particularly in the interactions between Julian and his mother on a newly desegregated bus.The appearance of a Black woman wearing the same hat as Mrs Chestny sparks a series of events that culminate in a tragic and ironic twist, highlighting the persistent racial tensions and the potential for violence in the struggle for equality. This encounter is a metaphor for the societal convergence which gives the story its title, in which the old and new orders must inevitably converge.

---

[7] Hopkins, D.: The Manner of Mystery: Free indirect discourse and epiphany in the stories of Flannery O'Connor, 2006, p.43

[8] Cf. Mirenayat, S. A.; Soofastaei, E.: The demonic grotesque in Flannery O'Connor's „Everything That Rises Must Converge", 2015, p. 3

[9] Cf. Fahkrunnisa: Grotesque Character as a Criticism to Racism in Flannery O'Connor's „The Geranium", 2020, p. 2-3

Julian's internal conflict reflects the collective struggle of a society confronting its own grotesque history of racism and seeking a path towards redemption and transformation. O'Connor's use of irony and satire in her portrayal of Julian and his mother serves as a critique of the superficial and often self-serving attitudes towards racial progress.[10]

In conclusion, Julian Chestny's character in "Everything That Rises Must Converge" encapsulates the disapproving attitudes toward race during a period of significant social upheaval. O'Connor's use of grotesque characterization and irony exposes the underlying hypocrisies and moral failings of a society challenged with its racist past and uncertain future. Through Julian's flawed journey, O'Connor invites readers to consider the complexities of race relations and the individual's role in challenging and overcoming the prejudices of their time.

4. Conclusion

Finally, Flannery O'Connor's "Everything That Rises Must Converge" offers a thorough analysis of racism within the complex substance of the American South during the Civil Rights Movement. O'Connor dissects established misconceptions and social fights for racial equality through the characters of Mrs. Chestny and her son Julian, leading readers to reflect on their own biases. Set in the 1960s, a crucial era in the Civil Rights Movement, the novel digs into the historical and social context, illustrating the varied character of the struggle against deeply ingrained prejudice.The paper's historical setting emphasizes the Civil Rights Movement's complex dynamics, showing the many different techniques that were used by African American activists in their fight for equality.

Mrs. Chestny and Julian serve as vessels for O'Connor's investigation of racial dynamics in the story. Mrs. Chestny, the old South's representative, struggles with shifting society rules and regulations, as symbolized by her encounter with a black woman wearing the same hat. O'Connor's use of the grotesque to characterize Mrs. Chestny exposes the moral flaws inherent in clinging to outdated racial ideals. Julian, on the other hand, represents intergenerational conflict and societal change opposition. His intellectual rejection of his mother's overt racism weighs against an underlying complicity in identical beliefs. Irony and

[10] Cf. Mirenayat, S. A.; Soofastaei, E.: The demonic grotesque in Flannery O'Connor's „Everything That Rises Must Converge", 2015, p. 2-3

sarcasm are used by O'Connor to highlight the shallowness of progressive attitudes that fail to recognise their own role in systemic racism. The story progresses to an epiphany in which characters' initial perceptions disintegrate, dramatizing the challenges associated with social evolution and the fall of old aristocracy. Julian's internal battle reflects the communal struggle of a nation seeking forgiveness and transformation after confronting its own horrible past of prejudice.

In essence, "Everything That Rises Must Converge" is a microcosm of the South's turbulent evolution, illustrating the complicated nature of race relations and individuals' roles in fighting and overcoming historical stigmas. O'Connor's story wants readers to reflect on the complexities of racial relations, as well as the moral duties that come with addressing a society's racist history and uncertain future. The story is a moving and timeless contemplation on the widespread nature of racism in American society.

5. Bibliography

Fahkrunnisa: Grotesque Character as a Criticism to Racism in Flannery O'Connor's „The Geranium", 2020

Hopkins, D.: The Manner of Mystery: Free indirect discourse and epiphany in the stories of Flannery O'Connor, 2006

Lui, B.: Factors that lead to the Politicization of the American Civil Rights Movement After 1965, 2022

Mirenayat, S. A.; Soofastaei, E.: The demonic grotesque in Flannery O'Connor's „Everything That Rises Must Converge", 2015

O'Connor, F.: Everything That Rises Must Converge, 1965

Stephen, R.; Robinson: African American Citizenship, the 1883 Civil Rights Cases and the Creation of the Jim Crow South, 2017

Szokonya, I. P.: Truncated Families, Dysfunctional Relationships, Defective Communication. An Intersubjective approach to Flannery O'Connor's Fiction, 2017

Tuğan, A.G.; Koçsoy, F.: The Southern and the Grotesque: Flannery O'Connor's ‚Twisted' Characters, 2020