“Meaning is what keeps the short story from being short.”

Tuesday: “Everything that Rises Must Converge,” O’Connor (headnote 1004 & 1005 – 1016)
“Writing Short Stories” by O’Connor p 1619
“A Rhetorical Reading of O’Connor’s Everything that Rises Must Converge, p 1638

browse: “Writing About Short Stories,” pages 1768 – 1797
browse: “Literary Theory and Critical Perspectives,” pages 1798 - 1805

CONSIDERATIONS AS YOU RE-READ O’Connor’s Rises

- Understand the use of irony in this story. For example, watch the play of contrasts or opposites in the two sets of mother and son.
- O’Connor writes that Julian’s mother’s eyes, “sky-blue, were as innocent and untouched by experience as they must have been when she was ten.” Again, when she turns her eyes, now a “bruised purple,” on Julian, he gets an “uncomfortable sense of her innocence.” Can you reconcile her innocence with her racism?
- Julian seems to hate almost everything about his mother. Does she hate anything about her son? Why does he despise her? Why does she love him?
- Does the “decayed mansion” mean more to Julian or to his mother? What does it mean to him? To her?
- What point of view controls “Everything That Rises Must Converge”? At which points in the story do we have the most intimate access to Julian’s thoughts?
- Think about Julian’s relationships with people other than his mother. Consider the paragraphs beginning “He began to imagine” and “He imagined his mother.” Who would he like to be friends with and why? Does his acknowledgement of his mother’s racism imply positive things about Julian’s own character?

WRITE: choose one (full page single-spaced) or two (each ½ page)

- Analyze Point-of-View: The first few times through your reading of the story pay attention to whom you sympathize with at the beginning of “Rises,” Julian or Julian’s mother? Notice if your sympathies shift by the end of the story. Re-Read the discussion of p-o-v (“Elements of Fiction”). Write: Identify O’Connor’s p-o-v and discuss how her use of p-o-v effects the meaning. Use details from the story.
- Interpret: What can you make of the title Everything that Rises Must Converge? Who or what is rising? Wayne Booth, in his essay “A Rhetorical Reading,” writes that “no reading of it (“Rises”) can be considered adequate unless it somehow relates the curious title to the various attempts to rise and to the failings to converge” (1063). Study Booth’s essay. Make a list of what is rising and what is converging, literally and figuratively. Use points from Booth’s essay as source to develop your interpretations of the meaning of the title.
- Create: Begin by identifying the plot conflict and setting (time/place) issues in “Rises” (1/2 page). Then creatively update the conflict and setting in the story: Put O’Connor’s characters (Julian and his mother) on a Linn-Benton loop bus. Rewrite the scene on the bus. You’ll have to imagine and identify the issues of conflict between your updated characters. Focus on your updated moment of climax.