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FLANNERY O'CONNOR'S "DISPLACED PERSON": AMERICANS' AMBIVALENCE
TOWARDS REFUGEES POST-WWII

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FLANNERY O'CONNOR'S "DISPLACED PERSON": AMERICANS' AMBIVALENCE
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A THESIS APPROVED FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

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Abstract

This thesis examines how Flannery O'Connor's novella, "The Displaced Person," is a response to the problem of statelessness in the aftermath of World War II. During the postwar period, statelessness became a major issue. The United Nations (U.N.) sought to preserve the rights of the millions of displaced persons (D.P.s) by creating the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. However, in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Hannah Arendt critiques the legislation's central flaw; because of the refusal to impose upon the sovereignty of individual nations, the rights the U.N. proclaims all mankind deserves have no power of implementation.

The problem of statelessness Arendt highlighted at the national level was also present in the U.S. during the postwar period. American sentiments towards the displaced were ambivalent—even xenophobic at times. This was due to a number of factors, including fears about potential Communist invaders, anti-immigrant sentiments, anxiety regarding outsiders, and American legislation. Though some government and popular publications sought to portray America as having open-arms for the stateless, the reality of Americans' dispositions towards newcomers was often complicated. Legislation concerning displaced persons continued to be debated and continued to be impacted by the restrictive tendencies of the previous 1924 Quota Acts.

In this divisive arena of sentiments, Flannery O'Connor's novella, "The Displaced Person" (1955) offers the dilemma of "the D.P. problem." O'Connor breaks with her typical crafting of unpleasant, ugly-hearted characters, creating refugee Guizac as an outstanding worker of integrity, resourcefulness, and mechanical prowess. Despite his character, the farm's other inhabitants will his destruction by the story's conclusion, watching him as he is helplessly crushed by a rogue tractor and refusing to save him. Fellow worker Mrs. Shortley fears Guizac

will make her and her family placeless, exhibiting a fear of the economic and social impacts of a new worker. However, Guizac is ultimately “murdered” because of the U.S.’s pre-existent racist marital codes, which Guizac trespasses in an effort to save his cousin from the D.P. camps. Arendt comments that these marital laws should be the first target of the Civil Rights Movement, arguing that marriage is a fundamental right of all individuals regardless of race. O’Connor’s depiction of the lack of rights for both the stateless and African Americans thus pairs with Arendt’s separate critiques and answers the narrative’s implicit question. Guizac is essentially martyred at the story’s end in the sense that his death points to the problems of postwar Americans not upholding equal rights for all individuals, and the U.N. refusing to impinge upon national sovereignty.

Flannery O'Connor's "Displaced Person": Americans' Ambivalence Towards Refugees Post-WWII

At the conclusion of World War II, the number of individuals displaced from their homes was high: seven to nine million refugees were living outside of their respective countries ("Holocaust"). Though many of these displaced persons (D.P.s) returned to their homelands, others could not. Their nation-states had either dissolved, or the individuals faced political persecution under new leadership in the region. This created "the D. P. problem" of the postwar period. Political philosopher Hannah Arendt's chapter, "The Decline of the Nation-State and the End of the Rights of Man" from *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, argues that the issues facing these post-WWII refugees were not due solely to their status as stateless individuals but also because of their lack of connection to a polity. On the one hand, lacking connection to an organized society held the benefit of refugees' humanity being recognized to a greater extent by the general world populace. The United Nations' founding in 1945 (and the work of previous and subsequent international organizations) both reflected and spurred this process of focusing on individuals' humanity.¹ The Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaimed, "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights" (4). The U.N. sought to guarantee that with an emphasis on common humanity, the atrocities of World War II would never occur again. The U.N.'s striving for improved, humane societies became particularly poignant in relation to the postwar refugee crisis. The essential human condition had become incontestable to the world in these displaced persons, thus magnifying their plight.

¹ Thomas G. Weiss states that the United Nations (U.N.) focused on keeping several emphases of the previous League of Nations, including assisting refugees, conducting economic research, and maintaining international civil service (1225). The U.N. and other international groups were pressing for increasingly better conditions for all people through multiple avenues.

However, Arendt also argues that though refugees' humanity was highlighted by their lack of connection to a polity, their disconnection from a nation-state meant that refugees were seen as *merely human*. It is this mere humanity that allowed them to be targeted by governments, for "they were and appeared to be nothing but human beings whose very innocence—from every point of view, and especially that of the persecuting government—was their greatest misfortune" (Arendt 292). They were no longer connected to their respective nation-states, and without these connections, they lost their rights as citizens and people. Arendt summarizes her argument in the chapter's end:

The paradox involved in the loss of human rights is that such loss [of human rights] coincides with the instant when a person becomes a human being in general—without a profession, without a citizenship, without an opinion, without a deed by which to identify and specify himself—and different in general, representing nothing but his own absolutely unique individuality which, deprived of expression within and action upon a common world, loses all significance. (297-298)

By being viewed as merely human, a stateless individual's human rights were officially *acknowledged*, but not actually *granted* by U.N. policy. Ironically, just as an individual was viewed as an integral part of humanity, he or she could not access their promised human rights because to gain access to those rights, individuals had to be part of a polity. Though the U.N. promised to protect human rights, these rights were only accessible through citizenship, and since the U.N. was organized not to interfere with national sovereignty, these so-called rights were closer to suggestions than promises. The Declaration of Human Rights reads, "human rights *should be protected* by the rule of law," and "[human beings] *should act* towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood" without establishing how the declaration would be enforced

(emphasis added 1, 4). Though the stateless were viewed as human, they could not access the human rights they were assured, as those rights were dependent upon the goodwill of others.

Arendt's broad claim about the stateless applies more specifically to official U.S. displaced persons during the postwar period. According to the Displaced Persons Act of 1948, displaced persons were those who traveled into Germany, Austria, or Italy by September 1, 1949, and who resided in either "Italy or the American sector, the British sector, or the French sector of either Berlin or Vienna or the American zone, the British zone, or the French zone of either Germany or Austria," or were residents of Austria or Germany and were directly affected by Nazi persecution (1009). Refugees are denoted by the act as residents entering and exiting countries—that is, as individuals rather than members of polities. To become an official D.P., then, meant being labeled as part of a collection of individuals fleeing political oppression and essentially being stripped of connection to any former polities. In order to gain the rights of an official D. P., one had to be viewed as a subject of political persecution, whose only defining quality is that they are displaced.

The international problem of statelessness resulted in incoming displaced persons experiencing ambivalence from Americans. Postwar U.S. citizens did not welcome refugees with open arms. Instead, public opinion towards the stateless was much more complicated, with ongoing disputes, mixed messages, and various attempts at D.P. legislation. Refugees often faced tensions from Americans both during and after the war, most noticeably upon their entry, and these tensions were often a result of American nationalism and patriotism. Typically after their arrival in the U.S., refugees faded into the background of American culture as a neglected minority. They were often viewed by Americans as numbers to be debated and interpreted in connection to national policy rather than individuals seeking new lives. A Gallup Poll conducted

during the Postwar period showed that despite World War II's end, Americans' responses towards the stateless remained divided:

The least opposition [to allowing displaced persons to immigrate] was in response to a June 1946 question asking Americans if they approved or disapproved of "a plan to require each nation to take in a given number of Jewish and other European refugees, based upon the size and population of each nation." This question did not focus on the U.S. directly, but rather asked about approval of a "plan." The responses were 40% in favor, 49% opposed. This question was asked again in August 1946 and received similar responses. (Newport)

When it came to admitting the stateless, Americans were divided because they feared the possible consequences of refugees' residing in the country. These conflicting opinions directly affected both decisions to admit displaced persons and Americans' attitudes towards them once they arrived. Though the war had ended, reluctance in accepting newcomers was still common. This hesitancy was partly due to ongoing political friction with the Soviet Union, but there were other factors of influence as well, including American immigration legislation, anti-immigrant sentiments, and sometimes outright xenophobia.² Americans were willing to recognize that refugees needed a home but were less willing for that home to be in the U.S.

In this context of ambivalence towards the stateless, Flannery O'Connor's work, "The Displaced Person," proves particularly rich for study. Just as Hannah Arendt criticizes the United Nations and individual nations' lack of solutions to "the D.P. problem," O'Connor's "The Displaced Person" also points to a dilemma, this time specifically associated with the United

² For instance, Texas Congressman Ed Gossett stated, "[w]hile a few good people remain in these [Displaced Person] camps, they are by and large the refuse of Europe"—"bums, criminal, black-marketeers, subversives, revolutionaries, and crackpots of all color and hue" (qtd. in Carroll 107).

States. At the time O'Connor's original short story version of "The Displaced Person" was published in *The Sewanee Review* in October of 1954, "the D.P. problem" was still ongoing.³ O'Connor's writing shows an acute awareness of Americans' clashing opinions and hostility regarding displaced persons. She crafts a Polish-Catholic, morally good refugee, one whom Americans should see as a man of integrity despite their feelings on incoming immigrants. Yet despite this characterization, the D.P. is "accidentally" murdered by American characters in the story's conclusion.

The final 1955 version of "The Displaced Person" was included in O'Connor's first short story collection, *A Good Man is Hard to Find*. *A Good Man* proved important for O'Connor's reputation as it clearly displayed "a talent of unusual depth and power, one displaying an ear for language which was unerringly right and an eye for human frailties which was remarkably sensitive" (Browning 4). "The Displaced Person" proves surprising of O'Connor given her typical crafting of unlikeable characters. Ultimately, her writing displays the dilemmas of postwar contemporary society. Hardworking, loyal, and moral Guizac cannot be accommodated into the McIntyre farm due to conflicting attitudes among Americans regarding newcomers, the lack of implementation of the U.N.'s promised human rights, and unresolved racial inequality in America. By crafting a blameless man who dies tragically at the story's conclusion as a result of characters' collusive, inexcusable inaction, O'Connor shows postwar Americans their own reluctance, and even outright refusal to assist D.P.s. Through characters' negative attitudes towards Guizac, O'Connor points to problems of ethnocentrism, racism, and exclusionary legislation—both at the national and international levels—as contributing to the continued problem of America's attitude towards the stateless during the postwar period.

³ The original short story version of "The Displaced Person" ends at the conclusion of part one of the three part, final novella version.

Postwar Context: Government Documents, Popular Publications, and National Legislation

Government publications during the postwar era sought to portray an idealized version of America as a positive, generous, and hospitable force in helping the stateless. U.S. army propaganda newsreel produced by the Army-Navy Screen Magazine and entitled “Searchlight: Displaced Persons” from 1945 was released shortly after the war’s conclusion. It features newsreel from the events overseas. The piece opens with minor key violin music, creating a sentimental tone for what follows: footage of refugees walking by the side of the road and an omniscient narrator proclaiming, “This is what Europe’s like now that the war is over and the Germans are beaten. These are a few of the millions of people who were once labor slaves of the Nazis, and who are now trying desperately to get home” (WWIIPublicDomain). Reference to Nazi Germany’s defeat recurs throughout the film. It inculcates American triumphalism in army personnel and American citizens. The deplorable state of the stateless is emphasized to further lambast the now-defeated enemy, and America’s subsequent efforts to assist D.P.s are praised.

Throughout the film, the narrator’s emphasis remains on the U.S.’s provisions through the displaced person camps and the country’s ultimate goal of returning refugees to their own countries. For instance, when the footage shifts to the D.P. camp’s food lines, the narrator plays at addressing the refugees: “Come and get it! Food! Warm and nourishing food for stomachs gnawed with hunger by a diet of grassroots mixed with leaves and bread mixed with sawdust.... These people can [now] get the proper amount of vitamins and calories every day.” The emphasis on Americans acting as providing saviors is obvious; yet, there is no mention of D.P.s coming to live in America. Instead, the narrator implies that the army’s efforts at dishing soup and providing healthcare will be enough until the refugees can return to their respective, proper places. Though the narrator declares that Americans realize they “cannot remain well if the other

half [of the world] is sick,” the emphasis is on rehabilitation of refugees, not admitting them. This early film’s pervading attitude towards the stateless is one of assisting, but not necessarily admitting. It argues that refugees can and should be cared for, but limits the expectation to “over there,” and not in the U.S. As the film was made prior to the D.P. Act, it seems filmmakers did not address the issue that became urgent in 1948; the ramifications of statelessness had not fully settled in.

This propaganda piece seeks to portray Americans as helpful to the stateless. However, there are indications that some Americans disagreed with providing assistance to D.P.s. “Why do we and our allies help these people?” the narrator asks viewers; “Is it charity? Is it human kindness? Or is America a sucker to bother with these Europeans now that we’ve beaten Hitler?” (Ibid). The narrator quickly answers his rhetorical questions with more American triumphalism and an emphasis on global community, effectively denying that America has an issue with helping, let alone accepting displaced persons.⁴ Yet the implication that America might be viewed as a “sucker” and the narrator’s subsequent answer hint at an ugly truth of the postwar era: America’s complicated relationship with the postwar refugee crisis.

The denial of a problem regarding Americans’ attitudes towards refugees was not limited to army films. Even in American publications favoring the admittance of refugees, citizens’ conflicting attitudes prove problematic. For instance, a 1955 article by the *Los Angeles Times* commemorates the arrival of eighty-four displaced persons from Austria and Germany to New York City. The piece is designed to warm Americans’ hearts and depict the nation as hospitable. This theme is best illustrated by the first of the two photographs included in the article. The black and white picture shows U.S. resident Mrs. Teresa Shaeffer weeping as she lovingly embraces

⁴ The use of patriotism as an appeal for Americans to let in D.P.s is also evident in Lorene Presetridge’s 1951 work, “The Economic and Social Influences of European Immigration to the United States since 1882.”

her sister, Annie Bittner, whom she has not seen for four years. The photograph's caption informs readers that the incoming refugees have been displaced from their homes for a decade's time ("84 Arrive"). Through heartwarming articles such as this, Americans could rejoice in the idealized version of the U.S. as graciously welcoming towards those in obvious need. Just as in the army film, America could be viewed as the "savior of the stateless," only this time, by actively admitting displaced persons to the country.⁵

The article also highlights one of the religious organizations providing aid to refugees during this period—the National Catholic Welfare Conference (NCWC)—giving credit to their efforts to bring in D.P.s. References to groups like the NCWC provided the impression that the issue of the stateless was being adequately handled by specific, well-equipped groups who were bringing about reunions that had been previously impossible. These brief snapshots of newcomers arriving offers romantic links to America's heritage as a nation of immigrants and to the idealized American Dream. Yet in spite of the article's pathos, it is evident that a problem remains. The tender reunion between Shaeffer and Bittner took four years to bring about, and the eighty-four arrivals have been dealing with statelessness for *ten years*. Considering the millions of refugees who were displaced, the arrival of a mere eighty-four D.P.s is hardly a solution to the larger problem of Europe's stateless. Like the army film, the article's attempt to portray Americans as having hospitable and generous attitudes towards refugees inadvertently reveals larger problems of hesitancy and even outright exclusivity towards newcomers.⁶

⁵ The use of patriotism as an appeal for Americans to let in D.P.s is evident in Lorene Prestridge's 1951 work, "The Economic and Social Influences of European Immigration to the United States since 1882." Unlike the army film, Prestridge urges Americans to take in newcomers by appealing to American nationalism. This coincides with the *Los Angeles Times*' goal of improving public sentiment towards the stateless.

⁶ A third example of emphasis on seeming American hospitality from a newsprint reads, "A milestone in America's hospitality to refugees of war-torn lands...as the One Millionth displaced person to be resettled by the International Refugee organization...arrives in Dallas with his family" ("No Title First Story"). The wording here is deceptive: the organization had resettled one million displaced persons, but those D.P.s have not all been settled in the U.S.

Publications like this newspaper article avoided the reality of the situation: Americans' conflicting attitudes towards D.P.s reigned in the postwar era. Because of anti-immigration fervor, as well as the perceived dangers of potentially Communist outsiders,⁷ newcomers to the U.S. were often viewed with suspicion by their American neighbors. According to historian Carl Bon Tempo's book, *Americans at the Gate: The United States and Refugees During the Cold War*, "between a third to half of Americans supported reductions in the entry of immigrants" during the postwar period, and even more Americans repeatedly shot down legislative actions geared toward easing newcomers' entries (2). Bon Tempo explains that these actions directly affected refugees—even if they were not the intended recipients—and adds that "many Americans felt *threatened* [by refugees]" (emphasis added). Just like O'Connor's Mrs. Shortley, who believes that "with foreigners on the place,...you had to be on the lookout every minute," Americans expressed fears that the newcomers might take their jobs ("Displaced Person" 211). They held some of the same negative attitudes towards refugees as they held towards other immigrants.

An additional reason that citizens were particularly strict on immigration during this period was because of potential communists seeking to infiltrate the U.S. This caused some groups, such as the American Legion, to view the D.P.s as dangerous. A group dedicated to maintaining tradition and upholding patriotism, the American Legion viewed aliens (legal and illegal) living in America as "in general[,] sound citizens, but also possibly containing enemies—borers from within—and they would have to be dealt with through deportations, immigration

⁷ As Peter Gatrell explains in "Trajectories of Population Displacement in the Aftermaths of Two World Wars," "Against the backdrop of immediate post-war politics, individual D.P.s who wished to be resettled rather than repatriated had to demonstrate their anti-communist credentials, to show that they would be good citizens, and to accept that their biography might be used for propaganda purposes" (18).

laws[,] and a program to assimilate and Americanize the desirable ones” (Baker 31-32).⁸ Even if one were not a member of the American Legion, a certain amount of skepticism towards newcomers was common, both during WWII⁹ and the tensions that followed between the Soviet Union and America. Thus, displaced survivors were viewed by some Americans as a potential menace to their society.

Perhaps the root cause of many problems facing D.P.s, though, was American legislation. The Displaced Persons Act of 1948 was intended to alleviate issues with previous legislation, namely, the Emergency Quota Act of 1921 and the Immigration Act of 1924 (hereafter referred to as The Quota Acts). America had previously experienced difficulties with immigrants, and the legislation implemented had acted as policymakers intended, reinforcing white privileges in the country. Though The Displaced Persons Act of 1948 liberalized acceptance of newcomers in comparison to The Quota Acts—in part due to the actions of the Polish American Congress¹⁰—representatives of the American Joint Distribution Committee and the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society voiced hope that the act would be amended to admit more Jewish displaced persons. They noted that thousands had vacated eastern Europe after December 22, 1945, the cutoff date chosen by Congress (“Most Jewish D.P.s”).

President Harry Truman provided stout criticism of Americans’ legislative prejudice towards newcomers during a speech at Buffalo, N.Y. in 1952. After stating “The American

⁸ Bacon remarks that the American Legion believed Communism to be making its way into the country through farm communities in 1955 (9). The Legion emphasized that anyone could and should be viewed with suspicion. O’Connor’s “The Displaced Person” was published in *A Good Man is Hard to Find* during that year. O’Connor was utilizing the public’s general attitude of distrust to demonstrate that fear of anyone deemed different was nothing new and was causing harm in relation to the ongoing problem of the stateless.

⁹ As Attorney General Robert H. Jackson stated during a national radio broadcast circa 1941, “what has happened abroad teaches us to scrutinize with care ‘tourists’ and recent arrivals of uncertain antecedents” (qtd. in “Check-Up of Aliens”1).

¹⁰ Theresa Kurk McGinley’s work, “Embattled Polonia, Polish-Americans and World War II” provides more details on the actions of Polish-Americans to aid their fellows in immigrating to the U. S.

principle is that all men shall have equal rights before the law and that all men have equal rights in our economic life,” Truman argued that very principle was “always under attack. Some people are always trying to cut down the liberties of others—or to block the progress of racial or national groups different from their own” (770-771). This generalized self-endorsement via comparison with his political opposition became more specific and meaningful when Truman noted the conservative actions of Republican senators in Congress. First, he noted how Congress repealed his provisions to the 1948 act, an act which “deliberately discriminated against Catholics and Jews” in Truman’s estimation (772). This had prompted public outcry, causing the 1948 act to be reformed in 1950, according to Theresa McGinley (326). But the discrimination had not stopped there. Truman stated that Congress had exhibited continued prejudice against certain groups by approving the Immigration and Nationality Act in 1952—an act that reenacted the origin quota system—over his presidential veto (772-773). Truman presents himself as pro-refugee and critiques American legislation bluntly, whereas O’Connor’s story seeks to call attention to the complexity of “the D.P. problem.”

The criticism of Truman and other voices prompted the Refugee Relief Act of 1953. The act permitted 205,000 non-quota visas for escapees fleeing communist countries and other political refugees, and consequently served as a small bandage for the nation’s more restrictive attitudes (Refugee Relief 41). Yet the Immigration and Nationality Act so vehemently opposed by Truman remained intact. O’Connor’s initial 1954 version of “The Displaced Person” was situated in a period fraught with discussions about the stateless newcomers and questions of how America should respond legislatively. Though the later policy changes to the 1948 act (1950 and 1953) were written in an effort to liberalize D.P. legislation, the restrictiveness of The Quota Acts from the 1920s and the D.P. Act of 1948, as well as the continuing origin quota system of

the Immigration and Nationality act both reflected and reinforced Americans' divided attitudes towards newcomers to the U.S.

Reception of O'Connor's Collection, *A Good Man is Hard to Find*

In America's arena of divisive attitudes towards the stateless, O'Connor writes *A Good Man is Hard to Find*. During the aftermath of WWII, Flannery O'Connor's stories fascinated readers. Historically, scholarship on O'Connor's work has mainly focused on her Catholic identity and her emphasis on the American South. This is likewise reflected in contemporary postwar reactions to *A Good Man is Hard to Find*. Daniel Moran's book, *Creating Flannery O'Connor: Her Critics, Her Publishers, Her Readers* follows the early publication histories of her texts, examining reactions from the past up to modern readers' reactions on Goodreads. Regarding the initial reception of the collection *A Good Man is Hard to Find*, Moran notes that reviewers believed O'Connor's use of southern accents would repulse certain readers, yet other reviewers observed the transcendent appeal of O'Connor's writings (45). The alienation reviewers feared was a reality in some Southern readers' reactions. In editors R. Neil Scott and Irwin H. Streight's introduction to *Flannery O'Connor: The Contemporary Reviews*, they offer commentary on the reception history of *A Good Man is Hard to Find*. Scott and Streight explain that O'Connor's "grotesque and ironic portrayal of Southern manners and mores and its vapid religiosity unquestioningly rankled many of her Southern readers," offering as evidence a quote from Savannah Georgia's *Evening Press* which criticizes, as they term it, the "array of stench, brutalities, disfigurements, maladies, and morbidity assembled in Miss O'Connor's stories" (qtd. in *O'Connor: Contemporary Reviews* xx). Overall, there was ambivalence and confusion

regarding O'Connor's work initially.¹¹ Uncertainty over how to interpret O'Connor posed a large question. Once reviewers (and critics) began recognizing O'Connor's work as being steeped in Catholic theology,¹² this analytical lens became a primary focus of later literary interpretations.

Despite the initial conflicting feelings regarding the collection's reception, many contemporary reviewers found the collection's final story—"The Displaced Person"—to be quite successful. Moran explains that some reviewers even proclaimed "The Displaced Person" to be "the collection's strongest work" and that the positive feedback received was "the closest thing to a critical consensus of O'Connor's artistic performance to be found in her early career" (46). Over time, these opinions have shifted, with other works by O'Connor taking precedence in literary critics' rankings. Nevertheless, this early reception history of both *A Good Man is Hard to Find* and "The Displaced Person" proves surprising in relation to the problems O'Connor is highlighting of American restrictivist tendencies, divided opinions regarding refugees, and poor treatment of African Americans. Though some readers objected to O'Connor's work as a collection, the critiques were primarily in connection to its grotesque elements, while O'Connor's social and political commentary seems to have been ignored by early readers. O'Connor commented on her reviewers' oversight: "I am mighty tired of reading reviews that call *A Good Man* brutal and sarcastic.... I believe that there are many rough beasts now slouching towards Bethlehem to be born and that I have reported the progress of a few of them,

¹¹ Scott and Streight note this in their introduction (xx). Here they agree with earlier scholar Margaret Early Whitt, who notes "[c]ontemporary reviewers were intrigued by what they read, but still uncertain as to how to write about it, how to respond to it" (39).

¹² According to Moran, the first recorded instance in which O'Connor was identified as Catholic by a reader occurs in a short letter by Dale Francis. Responding to a piece by James Greene, Francis wrote, "I couldn't be more in agreement with James Greene in his praise of the talents of Flannery O'Connor....But I would like to suggest that it is the Catholicism of Miss O'Connor that gives her the viewpoint from which she writes....she is not just a writer who is Catholic, but a Catholic writer" (50).

and when I see these stories described as horror stories, I am always amused because *the reviewer always has hold of the wrong horror*” (*Habit of Being* 90; emphasis added).

This lack of focus on O’Connor’s political and social commentary in initial reviews (and by many later critics) results largely from the dominance of the New Criticism on readings of O’Connor. With its tenets of intentional fallacy, impersonality in writing, and a heightened focus on the text as a transcendent, self-contained, and autonomous work of art, historical context and social critique were viewed as peripheral. Mark McGurl’s recent article “Understanding Iowa: Flannery O’Connor, B.A., M.F.A.”, convincingly argues that as a result of her M.F.A. Iowa program training, O’Connor is both a product of the Program Era and a figure whose work is representative of the disciplined aesthetic work emblematic of New Criticism (535). This education is why many of O’Connor’s stories contain similar elements. For instance, McGurl notes that O’Connor never strays away from using third person limited narration, unlike other writers (Hemingway, for example) whose narration changed over the course of their writing careers (531). O’Connor insists in her publications on writing (and in the posthumously published collection of O’Connor’s unpublished writings, *Mystery and Manners*) that discipline in composing is a necessity, that the author’s work is “writing...that is valuable in itself and works in itself” (60), and that the fiction of Christian authors should be analyzed in relation to authorial intent and transcendent¹³ interpretations. Because of O’Connor’s outspoken insistence on the “right” way to read her works, her writing’s clear connections to the M.F.A. programs dominated by New Criticism, as well as the overt artfulness and religious symbolism contained

¹³ For O’Connor, this transcendence correlated directly with her Catholic beliefs. Repeatedly in *Mystery and Manners*, she emphasizes the importance of mystery in both the world and fiction, explaining that the writing which she embraces (and believes fiction writers ought to have) is anagogical and therefore “able to see different levels of reality in one image or one situation” (*Mystery and Manners* 72).

in her stories, political and social implications have often been focused on less frequently in critical receptions of her writing.¹⁴

Given both the timeliness of O'Connor's publication and her strong critiques of Americans' conflicting attitudes towards outsiders, "The Displaced Person" demands more study from a historical lens. To this end, more recent theses and articles written on "The Displaced Person" are including a greater focus on historical and political commentary.¹⁵ It is to these works that I wish to add, focusing specifically on Americans' divided attitudes regarding refugees, the failure of the U.N.'s Universal Declaration of Human Rights to adequately respond to the postwar refugee crisis, and the ways in which the U. S.'s unresolved racial rights issues contributed to fears about all individuals deemed different.

Heading Out to the Farm: O'Connor's Displaced Person

O'Connor's "The Displaced Person" is a fictional postwar narrative of officially sanctioned displaced persons who come to reside on Mrs. McIntyre's farm in the American South. The Guizacs are a refugee family who have immigrated from Poland, with Mr. Guizac acting as the *pater familias*. As quickly becomes clear, Guizac is an exceptionally gifted, diligent worker, increasing the farm's productivity exponentially. In fact, Guizac's stellar work ethic is all that employer Mrs. McIntyre talks about regarding Guizac early in the story. The noncharacter narrator informs readers of Guizac's extensive skills from Mrs. McIntyre's point of view: "Mr Guizac could drive a tractor, use the rotary hay-baler, the silage cutter, the combine,

¹⁴ Though Bacon does not explicitly tie this focus to the effects of New Criticism, he does note that critics since the 1960s onwards have mainly focused on theological themes, and that "Even as they have praised her imaginative power, her admirers have marginalized O'Connor" through these narrowed analyses (4-5).

¹⁵ For example, Jessica Christensen's 2012 thesis, *The Fragile "Bonds of Whiteness": Relationships between Native White Southerners and Foreigners in Porter, McCullers, and O'Connor* and Rachel Carroll's 2000 article, "Foreign Bodies: History and Trauma in Flannery O'Connor's 'The Displaced Person.'" An earlier article that focuses on O'Connor's social sensibilities in a variety of stories (including "The Displaced Person") is Jan Gretland's "The Side of the Road: Flannery O'Connor's Social Sensibility," published in 1987.

the letz mill, or any other machine she had on the place. He was an expert mechanic, a carpenter, and a mason. He was thrifty and energetic...He could work milking machines and he was scrupulously clean. He did not smoke” (207). This list reads as if Mrs. McIntyre were writing a product description. The narrator conveys Mrs. McIntyre’s categorical appraisal of Guizac, even including his nonsmoking as a point in his favor (over his smoking coworker, Mr. Shortley).

In Mrs. McIntyre’s eyes, Guizac is a model worker, functioning as a jack-of-all-trades. Sometimes he even performs tasks of two workers because others are either working at a slower pace or arrive late. For instance, he attaches the wagon to the cutter because Sulk is working at a slower pace (207). Later in the narrative, while harvesting a field of corn, “he had to get off the tractor and climb in the wagon to spread the silage because [Sulk] had not arrived” (233). O’Connor informs readers that “Nothing was done quick enough to suit [Guizac]. The Negroes made him nervous” (207). Because of his temporary standing as a D.P., as well as his likely experiences in the D.P. camps, it seems no wonder that Guizac keeps a rapid work pace. Yet while he works, Guizac treats all members of the farm with equality. He shakes the hands of the African American workers, an action which the farm’s other white inhabitants refuse to do. Leonard Olschner points out that in contrast to Guizac’s respect for the African American coworkers, Mr. Shortley will only touch Sulk with the handle of his shovel (72). Guizac’s treatment of others is not just polite, but also includes a focus on justice. He holds his coworker, Sulk, accountable for stealing a turkey from Mrs. McIntyre (“Displaced Person” 208).¹⁶ He is quick, efficient, well-maintained, and most importantly to Mrs. McIntyre, a profitable employee who does not require much oversight. He is unlikely to quarrel with other workers; his primary

¹⁶ Rather than being met with thanks, Mrs. McIntyre tells Guizac that “all Negroes would steal,” as though these individuals were not worth holding accountable—as though they were operating on mere instinct (208). Through these bigoted actions towards the racial other, it becomes clear that farm members’ anxiety towards Guizac as an outsider is indicative of a larger societal anxiety towards *anyone* deemed other.

concern is accomplishing as much as possible to provide for his family and continue living in the U.S.

This characterization of Guizac as a stellar farmhand lines up with how D.P. workers were assessed by U.S. rural employers. According to biographer Brad Gooch, a 1951 U.S. government survey characterizes refugees in the South as follows: “They need much less supervision than native Negro workers; they take better care of machine and farm implements—in fact, one employer complained jokingly, ‘They are such darn perfectionists’” (241). Clearly some American farmers viewed the new employees as hardworking individuals with scrupulous integrity. This survey’s assessment of U.S. farmers’ attitudes towards D.P.s reads as though it were written about Mrs. McIntyre’s initial appraisal of Guizac. O’Connor had her own personal experiences with at least one displaced family. Her mother, Regina, hired a refugee family of four—the Matysiaks—to work on the O’Connor farm at Andalusia in Georgia. Gooch explains that Mr. Matysiak, like Mr. Guizac, possessed impressive mechanical skills which he put to good use, such as when he fixed a broken-down John Deere tractor (Ibid). Thus, there were both contemporary regional and personal influences O’Connor may have been drawing upon in making Guizac a hard-working, mechanically-adept, and trustworthy refugee.¹⁷

Despite these potential influences, crafting Guizac as a moral figure is an unusual choice considering O’Connor’s typical literary output. The decision to make Guizac a good-hearted man of integrity contrasts him sharply with O’Connor’s catalog of unlikable characters in more frequently anthologized stories from *A Good Man is Hard to Find*. In the collection’s titular story, “The Misfit” is most assuredly not a “good” character; he is an escaped convict. Though

¹⁷ Another possible source of initial inspiration for Guizac and his family is an article titled “Displaced Person Arrives on Farm from Poland.” This article was published by a Milledgeville magazine (the *Union Recorder*) in 1949 according to Gretland (201). Refugee families coming to live and work was therefore not uncommon for Milledgeville during the postwar period.

the grandmother repeatedly calls him “good” as she begs for her life, he shoots her in the chest three times when she reaches out to him in the story’s conclusion. Likewise, in “Good Country People,” Manley Pointer is certainly not virtuous either. After playing lover-boy with the pseudo-intellectual Hulga-Joy, Pointer achieves his objective of stealing her wooden leg. He strands in the upper loft of a hay barn and leaves to con someone else. These characters and those who surround them are generally grotesque and unlikable, with ugly hearts and bizarre quirks. Yet in O’Connor’s “The Displaced Person,” the final story of the collection, Guizac thwarts readers expectations. In him, readers are likely anticipating a form of the grotesque—some dirty unspoken secret, some grand scheme to take over the farm. O’Connor’s characterizations of the collection’s previous characters *train* readers to expect more human depravity in the collection’s final narrative. Instead, all readers encounter in Guizac’s characterization are his impeccable work ethic, morality, and integrity.¹⁸ His earnest, rigorous output, and pursuit of a better life for himself and his family in the U.S. mark Guizac as the one good man of the collection.¹⁹

In spite of all Guizac’s goodness, he nevertheless becomes a victim in another of O’Connor’s jarringly-violent conclusions. The horrific climax of tensions against him occurs as he is being a faithful employee, conducting mechanical maintenance on the underside of a small tractor. Fellow worker Mr. Shortley parks the farm’s larger tractor on a slight grassy incline. The break slips, and the tractor slowly heads directly for Guizac. Mrs. McIntyre, Sulk, and Mr.

¹⁸ In relation to reception history, Moran postulates that contemporary readers’ enjoyment of the story after its initially ambiguous reception was due to the reader’s “being flattered into recognizing Guizac’s goodness,” the story’s contemporaneity and accessibility for new readers, and the fact that O’Connor never upends Guizac’s meritorious character (47). Moran’s analytical musings here prove fruitful, as Guizac’s goodness in particular provides readers with a character who is refreshing after O’Connor’s litany of flawed, unappealing-characters.

¹⁹ Driskell and Brittain argue that the collection’s stories move from an initial “Tower of Babel” theme to Guizac as the collection’s only good man, as summarized by Browning. However, Browning points out that Driskell and Brittain focus on the “vicarious atonement and promise of salvation” Guizac embodies (69), whereas I am interested in the social commentary O’Connor provides through Guizac’s characterization.

Shortley all watch as the machine unhurriedly rolls toward Guizac, who is lying on his back, helplessly unaware of the danger.²⁰ O'Connor makes it clear that all three refuse to intervene, for "[Mrs. McIntyre] had felt her eyes and Mr. Shortley's eyes and the Negro's eyes come together in one look that froze them in collusion forever," yet none of them choose to act before the tractor snaps Guizac's backbone ("Displaced Person" 250). Mrs. McIntyre "started to shout" to Guizac, but abruptly stops herself (Ibid). Thus, Guizac is "accidentally" crushed by a rogue tractor in a moment of spontaneous opportunity, with all three individuals looking on, refusing to intervene and save him.

Given Guizac's characterization as a diligent worker with integrity and the other characters' abilities to prevent his death, O'Connor's horrific climax is painful to read. It is clear that the fault does not lie with Guizac. He embodies American ideals of the postwar period by working to provide for his family in the era of nuclear family ideology.²¹ He exhibits mechanical prowess in an age of increasing farm mechanization.²² He even works with integrity when no one else is present and requires little oversight. Yet in spite of all his goodness, perseverance, and abilities, he is essentially killed by the other characters in the story's conclusion. This begs an important question about the narrative: why does O'Connor have Guizac die?

²⁰ For a visual depiction of this scene, see PBS's *The American Short Story* film adaptation of "The Displaced Person." Characters Mrs. McIntyre, Mr. Shortley, and Sulk all avoid acting to save Guizac for seventeen agonizing seconds as the large tractor slowly rolls towards Guizac (Mason).

²¹ Elaine Tyler May's book, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* discusses how nuclear family ideology emerged during in America's postwar years and heightened during the Cold War period. As May explains, married couples of this period—particularly those who had married in the early '40s, "were hopeful that family life in the postwar era would be secure and liberated from the hardships of the past" and "prized marital stability" (12).

²² According to an essay on cotton production in the South and West after W.W.II., mechanization was one reason for a decrease in the area's labor demands (Heinicke and Grove 270). This process of increasing mechanization extended not just to cotton, but various different types of farming production. Guizac's skill with machines enhances his value as a worker exponentially, as he is able to repair the machines that save Mrs. McIntyre more time and labor. Mrs. McIntyre's farm, under Guizac's maintenance, is being propelled further into the future and is producing at a more competitive rate.

With the ambivalent attitudes towards foreigners during the postwar years, as well as additional national anxiety concerning the Cold War's Red Scare, there was opportunity for crafting a character who would play the proverbial "wolf in sheep's clothing" like Manley Pointer. Yet O'Connor's piece avoids this characterization of Guizac. By making Guizac a moral, Christ-like character without blemish, and then crafting Guizac's cold reception and martyrdom, O'Connor shows readers that merits are no guarantee of success in postwar America's ambivalence-ridden—and at times, exclusive—attitudes towards the stateless. Making Guizac a good man whom characters either distrust outright or grow to hate is a timely decision by O'Connor. Unlike most of Flannery O'Connor's other works in the collection *A Good Man is Hard to Find* where social problems are dealt with more subtly, "The Displaced Person" directly addresses Americans' differing negative attitudes towards the stateless, the empty promises of human rights from both the U.N. and American legislation, and racist traditions in the U.S. Though not all the residents of Mrs. McIntyre's farm hate Guizac from the outset, they all will witness his demise by the story's end. Americans' ambivalence, distrust, and outright hatred toward the foreign other are all illuminated as part of the central problem, for none of these attitudes will enable Americans to coexist with their new neighbors.

The first character to view Guizac with suspicion is Mrs. Shortley. O'Connor's description of her watching the newcomers arrive is striking in both its stylistic qualities and content:

Her arms were folded and as she mounted the prominence, she might have been the giant wife of the countryside, come out at some sign of danger to see what the trouble was. She stood on two tremendous legs, with the grand self-confidence of a mountain, and rose, up

narrowing bulges of granite, to two icy blue points of light that pierced forward, surveying everything. (197)

Descriptions such as this clearly satisfy the New Critical emphasis on aesthetic quality within works of the time period. O'Connor is setting up a strong opening for the story's tensions. It is immediately implied that Mrs. Shortley is not a protector, though she later likes to imagine herself as one.²³ Instead, she is an excluder. Her stony characterization, piercing vision, and crossed arms are striking. She is certainly not welcoming newcomers with an upraised arm, but instead displays a prejudiced rejection of that which is new, unusual, or foreign. Her actions towards the newcomers demonstrate a myopic *short-sightedness*²⁴ indicative of negative American attitudes towards incomers and an inability to see beyond concerns of the self.

Perhaps one of the most symbolic aspects of Mrs. Shortley's early description, in addition to her stoniness, exclusionary posture, and narrowed gaze, is the way she walks as she descends the hill: "stomach foremost, head back, arms folded" (200). Mrs. Shortley's stomach-first patrol of the farm becomes synecdochally linked to her identity. She is concerned primarily with getting what she believes she and her family deserve through her cunning and her husband's long hours; this is in part why she is afraid of the Guizacs. The noncharacter narrator explains that Mrs. Shortley respects Mrs. McIntyre for being aware of employees' attempts to take advantage of her. Yet the narrator also makes it evident that the Shortleys are an exception to this

²³ When Mrs. Shortley's paranoia concerning Guizac increases later in the narrative, she tells her husband, "I aim to take up for the niggers when the time comes... I'll stand up for the niggers and that's that" (214-215). This is ironic, as one of Mrs. Shortley's initial "visions" is of her as "a giant angel with wings as wide as a house, telling the Negroes that they would have to find another place" (205). Mrs. Shortley's protective instincts only operate when there is an opportunity to elevate herself or when she finds herself in danger.

²⁴ Perhaps one could say her name indicates her unseeing, short-sighted vision. Mrs. Shortley's unseeing vision is focused on several times within the opening pages. Though she may notice Sulk and Astor hiding among the trees (197), she ignores the sun as it hides behind the clouds, and twice ignores the peacock's beauty, which O'Connor describes as a "map of the universe" (204). To Mrs. Shortley, such awe-inspiring elements of nature are unimportant.

generalization; they *have* pulled the wool over Mrs. McIntyre's eyes. Mr. Shortley works a moonshine still hidden on the McIntyre property to bring in extra money. Mrs. Shortley maintains smug self-satisfaction at her husband's illegal side job and at their benefiting from their unknowing employer. Thus, when the Guizacs arrive, she is driven to evaluate how she can exploit the new arrivals for the sake of her greater consumption. Mrs. Shortley views them as lifeless prey, evaluating them "the way a buzzard glides and drops in the air until it alights on its carcass" (201).

Yet soon afterward, Mrs. Shortley inverts her initial judgement, seeing herself and her family as the potential victims. She becomes paranoid that hard-working Guizac is attempting to uproot her family's position on the farm. Guizac's stellar character and output pose a threat to the Shortleys. His arrival makes it possible that Mrs. McIntyre will recognize Mr. Shortley's slow working pace and eventually realize the reason for his fatigue. This leads Mrs. Shortley to fear that Guizac will upset her family's way of life by snooping around the premises.²⁵ Though the Shortleys' precarious hold on employment makes them similar to the Guizacs in their lack of permanency, they refuse to entertain empathy for Guizac. The narrator even remarks that Mrs. Shortley "thought there ought to be a law against [the Guizacs]" (211). Mrs. Shortley's mindset is representative of the same kinds of restrictive sentiments in the Quota Acts and the D.P. Act of 1948. There *had* recently been laws against the stateless, and though those laws had been

²⁵ Rachel Carroll's work, "Foreign Bodies: History and Trauma in Flannery O'Connor's 'The Displaced Person'" argues that the reason Mrs. Shortley (and later, other characters) shifts to perpetrating violence against Guizac is caused by her refusal to identify with what Guizac represents to her. Rather than subject herself to an "overpowering fear" caused by the trauma of Holocaust imagery, Mrs. Shortley becomes "[an agent] of arbitrary violence as if to evade becoming its victim" (102). The shock of the image Mrs. Shortley associates with Guizac is indeed horrifying: dead naked bodies piled up in a jumbled mass ("Displaced Person" 200). Yet a greater reason for Mrs. Shortley's fear of Guizac is the capitalistic values of her employer. The Holocaust imagery is only included in the beginning of the narrative; afterwards, Mrs. Shortley's anxiety is dominated by labor concerns and the possibility of Guizac finding the still.

increasingly liberalized, the effects of such legislative practices continued and the origins quotas remained.

Ironically, O'Connor allows Mrs. Shortley's family to be uprooted, but not through any plotting on Guizac's end. Mrs. McIntyre notices Mr. Shortley's lackluster performance, insinuates that he must have a second job on the side, and decides to fire him to raise Guizac's salary. As Mrs. McIntyre succinctly puts it, "[Guizac's] worth raising... He saves me money" (210). The decision, then, is one that is sensible in American market-based capitalism: Guizac is worth a raise because his output is exponentially greater than the "over-exhausted," slow-working Mr. Shortley. Here one might wonder why Mr. Shortley is being fired instead of one of the Black workers since Mrs. McIntyre claims that "They lie and steal and have to be watched all the time" (220). A minor reason is her hatred of Mr. Shortley's smoking. Later, though, she gives her main cause: "I cannot run this place without my negroes" (235). Given the racism exhibited in the story, it is almost certain that Mrs. McIntyre pays Black workers substantially less than white workers. She does not wish to lay off her most economically exploited farmhands.

To stop here would paint Mrs. McIntyre's actions towards her workers in a detached—though racist—economic light. The right to work is one of the primary, if not one of the only rights Mrs. McIntyre is willing to grant Guizac. Yet even this fundamental right is undercut by Mrs. McIntyre earlier in the story, for she says, "[Guizac] *has* to work" before correcting herself by saying "He *wants* to work" (emphases added 209). The phrase "he has to work" makes Guizac out to be little more than an indentured servant on her farm. Guizac has not been treated fairly up to this point, as evidenced by Mrs. McIntyre's fear that the Guizacs will leave her for better pay in Chicago (220).²⁶ The U.N.'s Universal Declaration of Human Rights is supposed to

²⁶ Community may have been another motive for a possible move. Chicago was one of the metropolitan areas where Polish-American communities resided. For example, Theresa Kurk McGinley writes that eight thousand Polish-

guarantee Guizac's "right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favorable conditions of work...to protection against unemployment[, and] to equal pay for equal work" (48). However, the U.N.'s lack of implementation and the U.S.'s preexistent inequality issues make Guizac's initial exploitation possible. It is not a desire to uphold Guizac's rights that motivates Mrs. McIntyre to change his circumstances and to fire Mr. Shortley, but fear of Guizac leaving for better conditions.

Though Mrs. McIntyre's fear that the Guizacs will leave prompts her to eventually compensate Guizac more fairly, in reality, it would have been difficult for Guizac to even exercise his right to protest his labor conditions and pay. He has not been a resident in the U.S. for long. Because of his rough communication skills, lack of transportation, and three dependent family members, it is almost impossible for him to leave and find employment elsewhere unless something changes. In addition to all of this, the 1948 D.P. Act's stipulation that Guizac must maintain a job serves to further restrict Guizac's options since being unemployed for a prolonged period may mean being deported. All of this directly relates to the problems Arendt is highlighting; though the U.N. promises to protect Guizac's rights to fair employment, these rights are dependent upon what the nations themselves—and their employers—deem as "fair" and "just."

Mrs. McIntyre's decision to fire Mr. Shortley is never carried out because Mrs. Shortley and her family vacate the farm before Mrs. McIntyre can officially terminate his employment. At first, it seems the Shortleys will receive no punishment for the verbal abuses they have levied

American conglomerated in 1947 in New York and Chicago to protest how Poland was being treated, and that later that year, fifty thousand Polish-Americans met in a Chicago rally (336). These metropolitan areas are also sites for protecting groups like the American Committee for the Resettlement of Polish Displaced Persons and the Polish American Congress. For a brief introduction to these organizations, see Jaroszynska's article, "The American Committee for the Resettlement of Polish Displaced Persons (1948-1968) in the Manuscript Collection of the Immigration History Research Center."

against Guizac. However, Mrs. Shortley dies of a stroke mid-route. Through her death, she unwittingly fulfills her own grotesque prophecy that “The children of wicked nations will be butchered,” which she had intended for Guizac (219). This moment of death is perhaps the only point at which Mrs. Shortley’s spiritual myopia is no longer in effect, for she can finally glimpse “the tremendous frontiers of her true country” (223). Mrs. Shortley finally recognizes how similar her condition is to Guizac. She too has been displaced. This moment can be viewed as one of spiritual revelation, as many critics have already shown. It can also be seen, though, as a realization that reinforces the social similarities of the Shortleys and the Guizacs in the capitalist market system, where being hired laborers necessarily makes one’s “place” always temporary and subject to the will of the employer.

At this point in the narrative, it would seem that evil has been conquered. Mrs. Shortley, with her single-minded determination to rid the farm of Guizac, is now deceased. Guizac should be able to prosper. However, when Mr. Shortley returns to the farm after his wife’s funeral, he finds Mrs. McIntyre’s attitude towards Guizac significantly altered by Guizac’s plan of saving his cousin via interracial marriage. She is living alone in the D.P. camps in Europe. Guizac cannot afford to bring his cousin to the U.S. by himself. As Mrs. McIntyre is always insisting that “people think you’re made of money,” he knows she will not provide the necessary resources (209). Guizac therefore seeks assistance in fellow farmhand Sulk, promising that Sulk can marry his sixteen-year-old cousin if he pays half the amount to bring her to the U.S. To Guizac and his cousin, the action is one of mitigating the effects of statelessness; to Mrs. McIntyre, however, the action is one of criminal proportions, arousing her terror and hatred.

Randy Boyagoda asserts that through the brokered marriage, Guizac is deliberately taking advantage of the gender gap (65). Boyagoda’s reading implies that Guizac is seeking power

through this arrangement. Contrary to Boyagoda's assertions, however, Guizac's intentions are not malicious or power-driven. In fact, when Mrs. McIntyre accuses him on the subject, each of Guizac's responses is short, to the point, and rhetorically effective: "She sixteen year.... From Poland. Mamma die, pappa die. She wait in camp. Three camp... She mamma... She die in two camp... She no care black... She in camp three year" ("Displaced Person" 234-235). Boyagoda's reading of Guizac as a powerful male manipulator who exploits the gender gap and threatens Mrs. McIntyre ignores the realities that are driving Guizac to subvert American social tradition: he fears for the life of his family member who is alone in the D.P. Camps and has little to no human rights. Guizac's treatment of Sulk and advocacy for his cousin are representative of the universal idea of humanity which the U.N. purports to uphold. Ironically, though the U.N.'s declaration is based on America's own political ideology,²⁷ Guizac upholds these values more than native U.S. citizens.

Here one may question whether conditions for Guizac's cousin were actually poor. Unfortunately, a stateless individual could spend a lengthy amount of time in the D. P. camps. According to Joseph Berger's account of the realities his refugee parents faced, individuals often spent anywhere from three to seven years in D.P. camps, waiting for visas from countries that would grudgingly admit them (15). This long length of time is corroborated by Gooch's account of the Matysiaks, the Polish family who worked on Mrs. Regina O'Connor's farm, as "the Matysiak family had...spent six years as refugees" before arriving at Andalusia (239). The prospect of a sixteen-year-old girl who has already lived in D.P. camps for three years having to live alone for perhaps another four years is horrifying.

²⁷ Normand and Zaidi explain in *Human Rights and the U.N.* that the purpose of the U.N.'s declaration from the perspective of American politicians was "to export U.S. principles of justice across the globe at the rhetorical level, thereby providing a means of ideological intervention in the affairs of other states without risking outside scrutiny of domestic practices" (170).

Not only was the duration of one's habitation expected to be long, but individuals in the camps faced a lack of human rights. What the stateless received in the camps was dependent upon the provisions of others. Fensterheim and Birch's case study concerning life in one D.P. camp explains that items like shoes were scarce, which led individuals to fight for what they could obtain. On one occasion, knives and fists were used though there was enough clothing for everyone (713).²⁸ As a result of their poor conditions, the refugees began forming hierarchical groups; such conglomerates established themselves because of the increased chances of accomplishing goals as groups with clear leaders (715). Though Fensterheim and Birch seem to be focused most on social dynamics in their case study, their work supports Arendt's claim regarding the stateless. Displaced persons banded together to accomplish their goals in an effort to gain greater leveraging power precisely because their promised human rights afforded them little power.

Guizac knows the difficulties and lack of rights individuals in the camps face and is acting upon his strong value of family, whereas the other inhabitants of the farm are only concerned about themselves. By brokering the marriage deal with Sulk, Guizac's cousin can finally escape both war-torn Europe and life in the camps to reside in a stable, small society on the McIntyre farm. But since his proposed plan threatens "miscegenation" in the racist South, all of the previous fears about Guizac being a "contagion" from Europe are heightened into a hatred that will eventually result in Guizac's death.

In addition to bigoted racism, a secondary fear motivating Mrs. McIntyre's switch to hatred of Guizac may be that she views him as a power threat. Though Guizac's action is based

²⁸ Perhaps the most shocking incident recorded in Fensterheim and Birch's work is a 1946 seizure of a ship by the British police. D.P.s were attempting to sail the ship to Palestine. Rather than threatening the police with harm, however, the D.P.s threatened to kill themselves (713-714). Since in the world's eyes they were "merely human," wielding this humanity against others became their desperate means of accomplishing their mission.

in the desire to save his cousin, Mrs. McIntyre likely sees Guizac's pact with Sulk as a challenge to her topmost position in the farm's social hierarchy. Because of this, as well as her racist beliefs about what is acceptable, she takes actions against the foreign other by attempting multiple times to fire him. Jessica Christensen ties Mrs. McIntyre's actions to the proto-Dorian complex. Christensen argues that the proto-Dorian complex, as used by W. J. Cash, is typically used to denote "how white Southerners close rank against the native Other," such as African Americans. However, she adds that the term can "also be applied to the manner in which the fictive white Southerner—regardless of his or her socioeconomic standing—works against the foreign-born migrant to the South" (1). In other words, Mrs. McIntyre's fear of being wrested from her position in the farm's social hierarchy by a foreigner leads her to actively despise Guizac. And though she wishes to fire him, she lacks the courage to perform the act precisely because she knows that Guizac is a man of integrity whom she has been treating unfairly. This leads her to will his destruction at the story's conclusion by allowing his death to occur uninterrupted. Guizac's role as a foreigner places him outside of the stereotypical Southern social hierarchy since there is no role assigned to him. In light of Guizac's lack of restrictions, his work ethic, and most importantly, his flaunting of racial codes, Mrs. McIntyre finds herself later closing rank with the farm's inhabitants against the outsider deemed most different and threatening.

Once her opinion of him shifts from enthusiasm to horror, Mrs. McIntyre becomes increasingly aware of how Guizac and his family are prospering on the property. Mr. Shortley makes an exaggerated claim that Guizac will be able to "buy and sell you out" soon, and Mrs. McIntyre allows this thinking to seep into her subconscious (244). She has a dream in which Guizac and his family move into her house, and she is forced to live with Mr. Shortley (245).

Mrs. McIntyre's dream features her as *being displaced* from her home and having to live with someone else, as if she were losing her own rights. This correlates with Arendt's point about the stateless having little to no rights available to them. Even though in Mrs. McIntyre's imaginary scenario she is not displaced from her own country, she is displaced from her home and loses her status at the farm. Guizac's work ethic would arguably warrant his deserving the house given the profitability he has brought to an otherwise struggling farm. But as Mrs. McIntyre cannot stomach the idea of Guizac earning through the capitalist labor system what she has received through marriage, this idea is absolutely reprehensible to her. If Mrs. McIntyre's dream were to come true, she would be essentially exchanging places with Guizac. Because of his official D.P. status, he does have some provisional legal standing. However, his "rights" are ultimately dependent upon the goodwill of others. The Irish-Catholic priest (who is also deemed "foreign" because of his accent and religion) has to act as advocate for Guizac before he can be hired and arrive on the farm, and his family is only able to reside on the farm because Mrs. McIntyre offers to employ him.²⁹

Ironically, Mrs. McIntyre cannot recognize her worker's tenuous rights even when she imagines herself in Guizac's current position. In a subsequent dream, the priest tells her to keep Guizac on the farm. The priest functions as a symbolic stand-in for her own conscience, telling her, "Think of the thousands of them, think of the ovens and the boxcars and the camps and the sick children and Christ our Lord" (245). Despite the priest's reminders of the horrors some stateless faced during the war, and of Mrs. McIntyre's moral obligation towards her fellow man,

²⁹ Guizac's need for employment in order to live in the U. S. aligns with the regulations of the D.P. Act of 1948, which gives the following in subsection C of the definition of an "Eligible Displaced Person": "for whom assurances in accordance with the regulations of the Commission have been given that such person, if admitted into the [U.S.], will be suitably employed without displacing some other person from employment" (1009). The Act also stipulates that the D.P.'s family must not become "public charges" (1009-1010). Such stipulations show that Guizac's rights are dependent upon the goodwill of those around him—particularly his employer, Mrs. McIntyre.

Mrs. McIntyre continues to deny that the problem is hers to handle. Like Mrs. Shortley, she claims that Guizac himself is the issue: “He’s extra and he’s upset the balance around here...and I’m a practical woman and there are no ovens here and no camps and no Christ Our Lord and when he leaves, he’ll make more money. He’ll work at the mill and buy a car and don’t talk to me—all they want is a car.” Mrs. McIntyre abruptly switches from arguing that conditions on her farm *are* good—as there are no Nazi atrocities—to implying that even if she does fire him without ample cause,³⁰ Guizac will be better off elsewhere. She simply cannot bring herself to empathize with his plight; to do so would be to admit her self-absorption and culpability in the U.S.’s neglect of basic human rights for the stateless.

One of Mrs. McIntyre’s most notable exclusionary lines occurs in a conversation with the priest. After impatiently listening to him speak the Gospel, Mrs. McIntyre interrupts him to talk about something “serious,” then abruptly states, “Christ was just another D.P.” (243). Various scholars have commented on the allegory of Guizac as a Christ-figure in the story. For instance, Dorothy Tuck McFarland argues that Guizac and the peacock are both symbols for Christ in “The Displaced Person.” She also states that the primary subject of the collection, *A Good Man is Hard to Find*, is “The unexpected and often grotesque and incongruous ways in which O’Connor felt Christ to be present in the world” (41). Given the way Mrs. McIntyre initially says she is “saved” once Guizac arrives as well as the fact that he is essentially killed for his goodness, O’Connor’s theological parallel is anything but subtle.³¹

³⁰ Again, this would be a breach of the very rights which the U.N. purports to protect, as protection against unemployment is part of the previously cited article 23 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (48). Yet O’Connor’s crafting of the situation displays how difficult it is to enforce such rights, as employers in the U. S. have the freedom to fire their employees for various reasons, some of which may not be legitimate by U.N. standards.

³¹ Boyagoda notes “the rather explicit connection made in the text between Guizac and Christ as displaced persons and O’Connor’s later explanation of the character’s redemptive effect on the farm through his apparent martyrdom encourage readings of Guizac as a Christ figure” (62). Boyagoda chooses to reject these readings, instead identifying Guizac with God the Father (Ibid). Nevertheless, the Christological parallel is too obvious to be ignored. Though

O'Connor's Christological allegory should be actively incorporated as integral to her critique of Americans' attitudes towards D.P.s. Jon Lance Bacon's work, *Flannery O'Connor and Cold War Culture*, explains that O'Connor was wary of how U.S. society had become dominated by a monolithic political worldview (3). Though Bacon is primarily referring to "the pervasiveness of the Cold War narrative" as a whole, particularly poignant elements of that culture include consumerism and a theologically-weak form of Protestantism. O'Connor's Catholic beliefs provide a different way of viewing the world that allowed her to critique Americans' moral complacency.³² O'Connor's use of Christian ideology as criticism shows Americans the hypocrisy of their self-satisfied Protestantism. Central pillars of Judeo-Christianity include advocating justice for the oppressed and extending grace to those in need, particularly as epitomized through Christ's life, ministry, and death.³³ O'Connor's intentional parallel of Guizac with Christ sets up the farm residents' "murder" as a modern-day martyrdom. Americans are continuing the atrocities of history by neglecting the stateless.

Characters' neglect of Guizac results in his demise. Subsequently, they place the blame for Guizac's martyrdom on Mrs. McIntyre's shoulders. Mr. Shortley, Sulk, and Mrs. McIntyre may have colluded in inaction, but Mrs. McIntyre's identity as proprietor gives her inaction more authority. After all, it is she who has been insisting, "This is my place." Yet when Guizac is dead, it seems that Mrs. McIntyre realizes the opposite: *it is not her place*. Mrs. McIntyre realizes her own lack of connection to society while in a state of shock from Guizac's death: "Her mind was not taking hold of all that was happening. She felt she was in some foreign

identifying Guizac with God as Father provides an alternative reading, Boyagoda's analysis grossly twists Guizac's characterization in order to make the allegory work.

³² Bacon agrees, arguing that "the alternatives she provides" are key to O'Connor's literary and cultural genius (7).

³³ References to these themes abound throughout the Old Testament as well. One of the most emblematic is Isaiah 1:17: "Learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause" (ESV).

country where the people bent over the body were natives, and she watched like a stranger while the dead man was carried away in the ambulance” (250). The actions of those present on the farm are rendered strange to Mrs. McIntyre. It is in this moment that she finally has some idea of how the stateless feel in other countries. Gretland argues that Mrs. McIntyre realizes she is no longer the head of her farm community once Guizac dies (204). Yet the remaining workers still indict Mrs. McIntyre as the head of the farm. They abandon her and place culpability on her shoulders. While these workers move on with no indication that their behavior will change, Mrs. McIntyre becomes unable to care for herself due to physical infirmities brought on by nervousness.

The image O’Connor provides of Mrs. McIntyre’s end is one that both fulfills Mrs. McIntyre’s fears of being displaced and one in which she must now *depend entirely on the goodwill of others*. Perhaps most ironically, those whom she must depend upon strongly bring to her mind all that has happened to Guizac, for she must depend upon an African American woman and the Irish-Catholic priest for care and company. Unable to see, speak, or move from her bed, her rights are entirely dependent on those she deems as racially, socially, and religiously other. This conclusion illustrates that Americans’ positions are not as solid as might first appear. The greatest horror, though, is not what Mrs. McIntyre must now endure—her total dependence upon others—but the horror of what she, Sulk, and Mr. Shortley can never undo: their collusive “murder” of an innocent man.

Conclusion

For all Mrs. Shortley’s machinations against Guizac, the continued discrimination by Mr. Shortley, and other workers’ ambivalence, Guizac still should have been safe. Mrs. McIntyre’s attitude change seals Guizac’s death. His impeccable perfection has one flaw: his plan to marry

his cousin to Sulk. She exclaims in outrage, “Mr. Guizac! You would bring this poor innocent child over here and try to marry her to a half-witted thieving black stinking nigger! What kind of monster are you?” (“Displaced Person” 234). Despite her workers’ complaints, Mrs. McIntyre might have tolerated Guizac but for his transgression of racist norms. His actions, however, mark her in his mind as someone no longer human—someone whom she despises just as much as, if not more than, her African American workers.

The same year the original short story version of “The Displaced Person” was published (1954), the ruling to integrate schools from *Brown vs. Board of Education* passed. Southern communities were outraged at the thought of having their children mingle in school with those whom they openly despised. Three years later, these feelings resulted in the infamous 1957 incident in Little Rock, Arkansas, in which the governor of Arkansas called in the Arkansas National Guard to prevent African American students from attending classes. The events of Little Rock became “a crisis of such magnitude for worldwide perceptions of race and American democracy that it would become the reference point for the future regarding perceptions of racial progress” in the U.S. (Dudziak 118). Americans’ exclusionary attitudes were on display for the world to see, undermining the image of the country as a land of equality. Fervor for increased Civil Rights for African Americans turned into national outrage as racism was carried out against the integrating students.

In the midst of public zeal for improved racial rights, however, Arendt argued that Civil Rights should not start with integrating children; it should start with their parents. In her highly controversial “Reflections on Little Rock” from 1959, Arendt writes that the Civil Rights movement should confront southern statutes against intermarriage first and foremost before

schools should be integrated.³⁴ Like her critique of the U.N.'s Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Arendt claims the Civil Rights bill did not extend as far as it ought:

it left untouched the most outrageous law of Southern states—the law which makes mixed marriage a criminal offense. The right to marry whoever [sic] one wishes is an elementary human right compared to which “the right to attend an integrated school, the right to sit where one pleases on a bus, the right to go into any hotel or recreation area or place of amusement, regardless of one’s skin or color or race” are minor indeed. (49)

Here the arguments of Arendt regarding rights for the stateless and rights for African Americans in the U.S. converge in O’Connor. Throughout his short-lived employment at the McIntyre farm, Guizac equalizes all the farm’s individuals regardless of race. His plan to save his cousin treats all races as equal. He thus enacts the very human rights he holds so tenuously and which all individuals ought to have regardless of race. The universalizing concept of “humanity” which the U.N. unsuccessfully sought to protect and uphold is championed by his actions. In racist-riddled America, however, this marks Guizac as unable to be integrated into postwar American society. The concept which postwar American legislation claims to champion—equality—exists in theory alone, not in practice.

³⁴ Because of the nature of her claim, the article was not published upon her first application. In fact, when it was published, *Dissent* magazine informed readers that the opinions were strictly those of Arendt and not of the magazine (“Reflections” 45).

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