Fighting the World's Overflow: Labor, Community, and Precarity in "The Displaced Person"

By

Huntley Hughes

Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of the

Graduate School of Vanderbilt University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

In

English

December 14, 2019

Nashville, Tennessee

Approved:

Cecilia Tichi, Ph.D.

Vera Kutzinski, Ph.D.

Table of Contents

Page

Section I……………………………………………………………………………….…………6

Section II………………………………………………………………………………………….9

Section III…………………………………………..……………………………………21

Section VI…………………………………………..……………………………………31

Works Cited……………………………………………………………………………………..35

*“Before the wide eyes of the mob is ever the Shape of Fear. Back of the writhing, yelling, cruel-eyed demons who break, destroy, maim and lynch and burn at the stake, is a knot, large or small, of normal human beings, and these human beings are desperately afraid of something. Of what? Of many things, but usually of losing their jobs, being declassed, degraded, or actually disgraced; of losing their hopes, their savings, their plans for their children; of the actual pangs of hunger, of dirt, of crime. And of all this, most ubiquitous in modern industrial society is that fear of unemployment” (*Du Bois 678*).*

“At last I’m saved!” exclaims a jubilant Mrs. McIntyre, the owner of a struggling small farm in Flannery O’Connor’s “The Displaced Person.” “One fellow’s misery is the other fellow’s gain. That man there… He *has* to work!” (203). These words have an intuitive finger on the pulse of the underlying assumption of all anti-capitalist socio-economic theory: employers exploit the fact that workers have no choice but to take the wages they are offered in order to survive, thus allowing the owner of the means of production to unfairly reap the profits of others’ labor. While this text can operate as a case study in technological alienation of labor and the construction of surplus populations vulnerable to exploitation, it is far more compelling than a simple retelling of labor grievances and class struggle on a rural Southern farm. “The Displaced Person” is the story of the arrival of a Polish refugee family as workers on a small dairy operation in the Deep South, and articulates the anxieties of a regional population in the midst of rapid cultural and economic change. Mr. Guizac and his family are imported to the farm from Poland in order to provide cheap labor for Mrs. McIntyre. To her initial delight, and to the alarm of the Shortleys—the current family of tenant farmers on the premises—Mr. Guizac proves to be

an expert worker able to utilize agricultural technology so efficiently as to pose a threat to the viability of the Shortleys' labor. Furthermore, the Pole interacts on an even footing with the farm's black laborers Sulk and Astor, thereby upsetting the strictly delineated social hierarchy of the operation. As will be demonstrated below the Guizacs (inadvertently) force the population of the farm to (unconsciously) call into question the economic sustainability of their lifeways, the identarian sustainability of their racial distinctions, and even the ideological sustainability of the Western telos of technological progress. Rather than face these uncomfortable realities head on, however, Mrs. McIntyre and her workers allow the Pole to be killed in a preventable accident in a futile attempt to reestablish the social and economic equilibrium. To the minds of the farm's other residents, the Guizacs come to represent the globalization and technological advances that are poised in the 1940s and 1950s to fundamentally alter the economic and social landscape of the region and threaten to render its agricultural laborers and techniques obsolete relics of a preindustrial past. The fearful and xenophobic response of the farm's residents is to unify across racial and class boundaries in order to violently eliminate the perceived threat of the Other, with the predictable result that the new community ethics constructed to do away with the Poles does not halt socio-economic changes but rather serves to hasten the economic unviability of the farm and the destruction of the community itself.

Although the utilization of Marxist economic thought will provide the theoretical foundation for this reading of "The Displaced Person," an economic approach alone is ultimately insufficient to understand the actions and anxieties of the story's characters and the socio-political conditions from which they stem. While the text must be understood in economic terms in order to grasp its political relevance, a purely materialist reading would be incapable of interrogating the self-destructive actions of the farm's residents, which cannot be productively

explained in terms of either avarice or class struggle. For this reason, a combination of historiography, critical race theory, and especially biopolitical theory will be helpful both to extend and to destabilize a Marxist approach to the text.

The story is, ultimately, about the shifting allocation of instability—economic, social, and ideological—inherent under capitalism. The titular Displaced Person illuminates the precariousness of the other workers' economic and social wellbeing, and prompts the native laborers to construct a temporary community formed in an attempt to concretize the familiar hierarchical divisions of class and race. This reformulation of community, however, fails to insulate the characters from the dynamism of globalization and industrial development, despite killing the Pole and thus removing the perceived threat. The characters' mistake is to misrecognize the illumination of inherent insecurity with the creation of new insecurity, both economic and social. The presence of Mr. Guizac does not in fact produce economic competition or cultural corruption or racial contamination or any of the laborers' other fears, but rather simply makes visible the insecurity that capitalism requires to function, of which his relocation to the United States is a byproduct. Their murder of the displaced person, therefore, must be explored from both Marxist and biopolitical positions, simultaneously utilizing and problematizing elements of each, in order to shed light on the role of precarity at the individual (identity), local (community), and social (economic) levels.

When approached from a political perspective, "The Displaced Person" becomes a revealing probe into the sometimes-pernicious nature of community formation, and the marginalization and exclusion that comes with it, and articulates the labor insecurity that accompanies an increasingly global economy. In such a reading, the McIntyre farm becomes a psychologically and politically revealing site of identity disruption, class insecurity, ideological

contagion, fungibility of labor, and the ever-looming threat that reserve labor poses to the working poor rendered economically disposable. Furthermore, O'Connor's 1955 story, when read in the historical context of a region struggling to come to terms with immigration, globalization, and labor dispossession, presents the reader with a narrative devastatingly relevant to contemporary American politics. Although the titular "Displaced Person" refers to a Polish immigrant and his family imported to the farm for cheap but highly skilled labor, the story is an expression of the fear of displacement—social, economic, and racial—prevalent within any population occupying a fragile socio-economic position, and reveals the tenuousness of class and racial distinctions and the precariousness of hierarchical organization entailed in capitalist organization at any stage. As Isabell Lorey notes of our contemporary society in *State of Insecurity: Government of the Precarious*, "Precarization is not an exception, it is rather the rule. It is spreading even in those areas that were long considered secure. It has become an instrument of governing and, at the same time, a basis for capitalist accumulation that serves regulation and control" (2). "The Displaced Person" illustrates the ways in which insecurity can be weaponized as a mode of domination all the more powerful for its relative subtlety compared to more coercive measures. More importantly it demonstrates the ways in which an internalization of the fear of replaceability can give rise to ruthless intra-class competition that drives down wages and undermines the possibilities of collective action and political solidarity, leading to the formation of self-destructive communities that operate not on the basis of mutual uplift but rather on the protection of more privileged workers from the perceived threat of those laborers who, in their desperation, are forced to toil at a cut rate. Putting Marxist theory into conversation with biopolitical understandings of the nature of power, such as those proffered by Lorey, allows for a

more nuanced understanding of the intersections of the political and the personal, and the economic and the social, present in O'Connor's work.

Although it is undeniable that O'Connor intended the work to function on a specifically religious level—as will be demonstrated below through her personal correspondences regarding the penning of the story—this project, on the other hand, will explicitly avoid doing so. The shift in emphasis from theological to political themes in this reading results in a different allocation of attention to various narrative moments and motifs throughout the text. By shifting the centers of gravity away from the religious themes O'Connor emphasized, this reading will not only contribute to problematizing the theoretical apparatuses in play but also to the study of O'Connor's work in literary terms. Rather than reading the theory *through* the text or vice versa, this project reads a constellation of texts—literary as well as theoretical—examined as mutually contingent upon each other in the service of formulating a political, historical, and literary approach to considering the interrelatedness of social and economic modes of power.

"The Displaced Person" explores the ways in which, when faced with our own insecurity in the presence of the Other, "our fears can give rise to the impulse to resolve it quickly, to banish it in the name of an action invested with the power to restore the loss or return the world to a former order," or more accurately, "to reinvigorate a fantasy that the world formerly was orderly" (Butler 30). This project situates this trend in historical specificity with regard to O'Connor's work in order to understand that such fear is not an anomaly of hatefulness and desperation, but that it is rather a fundamental mode of social organization in a world made increasingly precarious as "[t]hese kinds of threat scenarios" are routinely mobilized in order to "(re)immunize relations of domination … the disintegration of which is depicted as catastrophic" and are deployed as a violent means of ultimately "steering and regulating the governed" in such

a way as to buttress exploitative social and economic systems of organization (Lorey 44). O'Connor's text becomes the platform through which Marxist and biopolitical understandings of social control can be put into conversation with one another dialectically, with the hope that an analysis of the microcosmic environment of the McIntyre farm will provide insights that have relevance—historical, theoretical, socio-economic, and political—to the dynamic nature of power under capitalism more broadly.

I

Political scholarship on Flannery O'Connor is sorely lacking, and the body of work on the author stands to benefit greatly from materialist interventions, particularly those from a radically leftist perspective. As Jon Lance Bacon notes in his excellent historical study *Flannery O'Connor and Cold War Culture*, "[M]ost of her interpreters since the 1960s have agreed with the idea, articulated by Miles Orvell, that it is a mistake 'to read Flannery O'Connor on a chiefly political or social level,'" and "[a]lthough some critics have discussed her work in different terms—feminist, Lacanian, Bakhtinian—theological issues continue to dominate O'Connor studies" (5). While it is true that "[t]he theological approach has deepened our understanding of O'Connor," the singularity of this methodology "has also excluded her from most analyses of American fiction that turn on social and political issues," so that "even as they have praised her imaginative power, her admirers have marginalized O'Connor" (5). While there are numerous examples of productive materialist approaches to O'Connor's work—the writings of Bacon, Flannagan, and Taylor, all of whom will be utilized in this project, come immediately to mind—what is missing are explicitly political arguments. This article will seek, then, to expand upon the

existing body of historical/material scholarship on the author in order to buttress an unabashadly socio-political and economic approach to the author's work.

Although the religious themes of the story are undeniable and could present a unique political study in and of themselves, this project—considering the volume of ink already spilled on theologically inclined approaches to the author—will focus specifically on the economic and (secular) ideological conditions of the McIntyre farm. O'Connor herself, as evidenced by a letter penned to "A."[1] in November of 1955, did indeed conceptualize the story in theological terms, elaborating on the text in terms of "suffering," "purgatory," and "redemption," and explaining her use of the peacock motif as a reference to "medieval symbology for the church" (*CW* 971). She even goes so far as to lament, in regard to the purgatorial themes of the story, that "I missed making such things clear but how are you going to make such things clear to people who don't believe in God, much less Purgatory?" (971). Despite O'Connor's intention for the story, however, its socio-political and economic undertones provide fecund ground for material analysis. It is indeed meaningful, and speaks powerfully to the omnipresence of the political, that even a narrative formulated specifically to tackle religious themes cannot avoid, at second glance, wrestling with social and economic issues.

Even if O'Connor herself was more interested in the spiritual than the material themes of her story, the day-to-day agricultural labor relations upon which the narrative turns would not have been at all unfamiliar to her. After falling ill with lupus, the author spent the last 13 years of her life living on Andalusia Farm in Milledgeville, Georgia, where her mother operated a small dairy and where O'Connor occupied herself raising birds, most famously peafowl. Of all her stories, "The Displaced Person" can be seen as the most directly rooted in O'Connor's specific

---

[1]O'Connor's anonymous correspondent - Elizabeth "Betty" Hester

environment. Her mother did in fact employ the help of a displaced Polish family in order to keep the dairy running, and the presence of the Guizacs is certainly related to O'Connor's own experience with foreign labor after the passage of the 1948 Displaced Persons Act.[2] While the situation on Andalusia seems to have been far less antagonistic than that of the McIntyre farm, the inspiration for the story is clearly drawn directly from experience, indicating the socio-political underpinnings of an author too often pigeonholed as exclusively a writer of universal religious themes with a purely spiritual appeal.

As Bacon observes, "O'Connor was no friend of the radical Left" and "[h]er commitment to political dissent stopped short of tolerance for Americans who openly supported Communist causes," (Bacon 4). Her stories, however, harbor far too much political potential not to examined with their ideological and material elements in conversation with theories of power, including Marxist critique. The author's own political inclinations by no means renders her work irrelevant to exploration relying on Marxist theory, nor does the specificity of her regional and temporal context preclude texts like "The Displaced Person" from speaking volumes about the

[2] The Brainard and Frances Cheney Papers, in Vanderbilt University's special collections, contain a number of revealing correspondences between O'Connor and her friends "Lon and Fanny" in regards to Andalusia's hired help. She notes in February of 1957 that "the displaced person has just quit and we are in the market for some good country people" and by March details that "Our D.P. has gone and we are fixed up with some PWT [poor white trash] and it is a big relief. English is flowing freely for the first time in three years." Her satisfaction with the situation, however, is short lived. By June of the same year she laments that "Since my mama's D.P.s left, we have been enduring the trials of poor white trash… We got rid of the last tribe a few weeks back after finding out that the man was selling milk out of the cans between here and Eatonton and taking the gas out of the truck and selling it and suchlike antics." She is furthermore dissatisfied with the black workers, who she characterizes and over-partial to strong drink and domestic rows but, at least, "have to mind her [her mother] and she has to mind them so they get along peaceably." All this is to say that O'Connor writes from personal experience in regards to the various labor factions on the dairy, and that she seems to be, if her letters are any indication, not overly sentimental in regards to laborers who have come and gone on the farm.

economic, social, and political conditions that shaped her fiction and that continue to inform the American political landscape both in the South and at large.

II

The Displaced Persons—Mr. Guizac and his family, known derogatorily as the Gobblehooks by the farm's other residents—arrive to encounter an already firmly established class and racial hierarchy on the farm which, as we will see, only appears to be stable. The owner of the land, Mrs. McIntyre, is at the top of this economic pecking order, followed by rotating and replaceable white tenant farmers and their families. Although McIntyre yearns for mythical "good country people" to work her dairy, her elitism and class antagonism cause her to perpetually disdain her tenant workers as "white trash" far beneath her both socially and economically. Occupying the bottom rung of the farm's hierarchy are the black laborers who remain on the farm throughout the comings and goings of the tenants, but who, despite being admittedly indispensable for the continued solvency of the operation, are routinely dehumanized and denigrated by both McIntyre and the transient white workforce. Despite the friction between these castes and the general unprofitability of the farm, the situation does not challenge the preconceived notions of propriety which the characters all seem to accept, and instead provides a structure for the labor relations they find familiar and comprehensible. On the farm, as in society at large, physical and economic security is doled out to individuals on the basis of their economic and racial position. Although the level of socio-economic security allotted to each group is hugely divergent, there seems to be—despite obvious class and racial antagonisms—a certain sense of stability taken from the familiarity of this arrangement, the fragility of which is made apparent by the introduction of the Displaced Person, who does not fit cleanly into any of these

preconstructed tiers and who threatens to disrupt not only the economic but also the social structure of the arrangement.

The arrival of Mr. Guizac—an extremely self-motivated and competent worker who in his desperation for a livelihood is willing to accept bare subsistence wages—is seen almost immediately as a threat to the employment of the other laborers and only later as a potential challenge to their positions in the race/class hierarchy. Initially, Mrs. Shortley, the wife of the white tenant farmer currently employed on the premises, sees her tenuous class status, racial privilege, and American birth as a buffer against replacement, and projects any fear of displacement onto the hyper-exploited and undervalued black workers. As the Pole operates the heavy equipment that his mechanical expertise allows him to utilize with an efficacy startling to the farm's other laborers, Mrs. Shortley ruminates on the obsolescence of former agricultural methods and the workers who utilized them: "She thought about how the tractor had made mules worthless. Nowadays you couldn't give away a mule. The next thing to go, she reminded herself, will be niggers … . Before it was a tractor … it could be a mule. And before it was a Displaced Person, it could be a nigger" (206). Mr. Guizac's expert knowledge of modern agricultural equipment and the almost frenetic efficiency of his work creates anxiety over the employment security of the farm's workers, and the looming threat of their potential displacement illuminates their own economic insecurity. The fact that Mrs. Shortley's whiteness ultimately does little to protect her economically upon the arrival of a cheaper and more productive workforce further illustrates the fragility of status positions within the rapidly destabilizing race/class hierarchy, and indicates the intertwining of economic and racial modes of exploitation.

We see then, despite the author's intentions for the story and her own political inclinations, that "The Displaced Person" lends itself unexpectedly neatly to a Marxist analysis.

On the economic level, the story represents the process of labor alienation in the creation of a reserve labor force within the microcosm of the farm. As Marx observes in "Wage Labor and Capital," "One capitalist can drive another from the field and capture his capital only by selling more cheaply. In order to be able to sell more cheaply without ruining himself, he must produce more and more cheaply, that is, raise the productive power as much as possible," and that "the productive power of labour is raised, above all, by a greater division of labour, by a more universal introduction and continual improvement of machinery" (212). He explains that this process continues indefinitely so that "the greater division of labour is necessarily followed by greater division of labor, the application of machinery by still greater application of machinery," which ultimately renders workers increasingly fungible and therefore subject to the precarity of underemployment and underpayment. My Guizac's willingness to work cheap illustrates this process clearly enough insofar as McIntyre could, if she wished, hypothetically replace her entire native workforce with other displaced people, or any other population desperate enough to labor at breakneck pace for subsistence wages. It is the Pole's technical proficiency, however, that truly embodies the process of alienation from labor. Not only does he work cheap, he is capable of absorbing the positions of numerous other workers through his deft handling of the tractor and other farm machinery. In Marx's words:

> The greater division of labour enables one worker to do the work of five, ten or twenty; it therefore multiplies competition among workers fivefold, tenfold and twentyfold. The workers do not only compete by one selling himself cheaper than another; they compete by one doing the work of five, ten, twenty; and the division of labour, introduced by capital and continually increased, compels workers to compete among themselves in this way … . Hence competitors crowd upon him

> on all sides, and … the lower do wages sink, for like every other commodity, they are determined by the cost of production. (214)

To conclude Marx's explanation, "[t]he more productive capital grows, the more the division of labour and the application of machinery expands. The more the division of labour and the applications of machinery expands, the more competition among the workers expands and the more their wages contract;" therefore, "if capital grows rapidly, competition among the workers grows incomparably more rapidly, that is, the means of employment, the means of subsistence, of the working class decrease proportionally so much the more" (217). The arrival of Mr. Guizac on the farm is a textbook example of the function of both the reserve labor force and technological innovation in the service of capital and the subsequent immiseration of workers.

Predictably, then, Mrs. Shortley's husband is soon laid off, and she discovers her pretensions to class mobility and security in racial privilege hold little water against the profit that could be gained by her now superfluous family's dismissal. She soon finds herself jobless, homeless, and "displaced in the world from all that belonged to her" (214). This articulates in narrative form the economic fears that catalyze the xenophobic and nativist arguments informing the discourse on immigration and labor as pervasively in 2019 as in 1955. The terror of replaceability and the fear of evaporating job availability—which the American working classes so often project on desperately oppressed racial others and on foreign laborers forced to accept low pay and thus driving down wages—are clearly verbalized in this text. Also like in the text, the native population's frustration is all too often projected onto the demonized figure of the apparent outsider rather than on the systemic brutality of the economic structure itself or on the common exploiters of both the foreign and native workforce.

The arguments presented by Marx in "Wage Labor and Capital" provide an excellent point of departure to consider the text from an economic perspective, but they are ultimately insufficient to approach the complexity of "The Displaced Person," even in purely materialist terms. In the microcosm of the McIntyre farm Marx's theories explain labor relations flawlessly. A more productive reading, however, must place the narrative in its historical context in order to understand the macroeconomic trends that, with the introduction of foreign labor, now so visibly impact the farm and its residents. Turning to the Endnotes Collective's[3] "Misery and Debt: On the Logic and History of Surplus Populations and Surplus Capital" will help to complicate and nuance Marx's understandings of the mechanisms of capitalist exploitation, as well as this reading of O'Connor, by turning a critical eye to the process of proletarianization discussed by Marx and considering the ways in which this process entails the deindustrializing and precarization of workforces elsewhere.

The article looks to Marx's theory of primitive accumulation, as proffered in the final chapters of *Capital Volume 1,* in order to understand the ongoing process of proletarianization in the Global South alongside the subsequent deindustrialization and exclusion of workers in the (so-called) developed countries. The Collective argues that as global populations are

---

[3] In the group's own words "Endnotes is primarily oriented towards conceptualizing the conditions of possibility of a communist overcoming of the capitalist mode of production—and of the multiple structures of domination which pattern societies characterized by that mode of production—starting from present conditions" and thus "was founded on a commitment to ruthlessly honest, open-ended internal debate, in which no topics would be off-limits, and in which the conversation itself was to be given priority over concerns about publishing, political position-taking or other matters in which the Ego—collective or individual—would necessarily take centre-stage. As such, the journal is conceived specifically as a by-product of this debate, rather than a simple forum for the publication of articles on its chosen theme. And for this reason, wherever possible, Endnotes publishes articles under the group name, rather than those of individual participants" ("About Endnotes").

proletarianized, competition for wages on the international market grows, with the result that jobs are always in danger of being outsourced to more desperate groups of individuals. This destabilizes any gains made through collective bargaining by any one population by providing a reserve of cheap labor in new markets. In other words, the shuffling of precarity ensures that no group of workers can retain stable recompense for their work due to the ever-changing but ever-present pressure of reserve labor forces isolated from one another. The Collective notes that "Marx shows how, though the structural maintenance of a certain level of unemployment, wages are kept in line with the needs of accumulation" and, furthermore, that "[i]f the unemployed tend to be reabsorbed into the circuits of capitalism as an industrial reserve army—still unemployed, but essential to the regulation of the labour market—they then equally tend to outgrow this function, reasserting themselves as *absolutely redundant*" (8). Finally, the Collective postulates:

> If expanded reproduction indicates that workers and capital pushed out of contracting industries will try to find places in new or expanding lines, the general law of capital accumulation suggests that, over time, more and more workers and capital will find that they are unable to reinsert themselves into the reproduction process. In this way the proletariat tendentially becomes an externality to the process of its own reproduction, a class of workers who are "free" not only of means of production, but also of work itself. (10)

The proletarianization of labor in one area of the world, then, is directly correlated with deindustrialization and dispossession of workers in another. By creating a class of "enemy" workers geographically, linguistically, and cultural separated from a national workforce capital not only constructs convenient scapegoat populations to absorb worker resentment and frustration, but also takes advantage of labor isolation to undermine the possibility of effective

solidarity. When competition for wages can be cultivated by pitting one group of relatively privileged workers against a loathed Other, capital tightens its vice on the global proletariat by pitting populations against each another. All of this is to say that there is an economy of scale in O'Connor's work that must place the microcosmic farm in the context of larger historical economic trends on an international scale. Mr. Guizac's displacing of the Shortleys on the McIntyre farm is directly correlated with his own displacement from the land in Poland. His economic vulnerability immediately contributes to the precariousness faced by agricultural workers in the United States. In a global economy it becomes impossible to consider local economic developments out of their macroeconomic context. The very regionalism and closedness of the artificial community formed by the farm's residents, in that case, renders them incapable of addressing the underlying socio-economic trends by which they are threatened. Their mistake, one might argue, is to conflate the personal (the arrival of Mr. Guizac) with the political (the economic conditions that brought him to the farm in the first place). Immiseration on the farm is impossible to understand without considering the interrelatedness of local and global economies.

Although the Guizacs are presumably displaced more so by war rather than by capitalist expansion (although, of course, the two are always deeply intertwined), the result is the same for this analysis of O'Connor's work. We see a foreign laborer thrust into a position of desperation and thereby made vulnerable to escalated exploitation, resulting in the displacement of workers in the United States and the increased precarity of the working-class collectively; Polish and American, Black and White. The vicious logic of the process is only made more tangible by the fact that the new labor pool is brought to the farm to cohabitate alongside the increasingly obsolete former workers, rather than the more usual outsourcing of labor and importation of

commodities under neoliberal paradigms. The low wages and lack of mobility made available to the Pole, coupled with the utilization of increasingly efficient agricultural technology, results in the rapid decline of wages and availability of waged positions for all involved.

We must, furthermore, consider the particular economic history of the American South in order to fully understand the gravity of these observations in regards to "The Displaced Person". The rapid industrialization and influx of immigration that occurs in the South with the post-WWII development of the American security state and the rise of military Keynesianism informs the unique position of workers on the McIntyre farm. Gary Gerstle, in *Liberty and Coercion,* observes that "[f]rom 1946 to 1991, the centers of both population and of industry—especially those necessary to support a sophisticated military—shifted from the North and Midwest to the South and West," resulting in a tremendous influx of residents, federal money, and jobs to the region. This development of course entailed higher wages, industrialization, and the central government's increased presence in the region. Along with these effects came "dramatic improvements in the country's infrastructure, most evident in dams, electric generation, and roads" in order to facilitate this myriad of new federal investments in the South (265). Finally, research funding for many of the region's universities, as well as the mass taxation on a national scale required to fund all the various projects of militarization detailed above, helped to close the gap economically and culturally between the South and the rest of the country, heterogenized the region's population with new arrivals, and subjected the states to increased federal oversight. On the other hand, the South—due to its intense poverty, relative lack of previous industrialization, racial antagonism (and therefore lack of worker solidarity), and near total absence of unionization or collective bargaining—continued to function as what has been referred to as the nation's own "internal global South" and provided a huge pool of cheap and easily exploitable

labor. As Sven Beckert notes beginning in the late 19th century "Lax labor laws, low taxes, low wages, and the absence of trade unions made the South alluring" for capital (394). He goes on to point out that "The secret of success was plentiful and cheap labor. The destruction of slavery and attendant transformation of the countryside created a large and malleable pool of low-wage workers… at first mostly white rural workers, who had once been tenant farmers, and later African American workers, most of them former sharecroppers" (394). In a word, "As a result of the peculiar settlement between the expropriated slave owners and industrial capitalism after the Civil War, the United States had a global South within its own territory" (393). Edward Baptist observes, in *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism*, that in the reconstruction period:

> the South sank into subordinate, colonial status within the national economy. Although many southerners wanted to develop a more diverse modern economy that went beyond cotton, for nearly a century after emancipation they failed to do so. Despite constant attempts to industrialize, the South could only offer natural resources and poverty-stricken laborers. It did not have enough local capital, whether of the financial or the well-educated human kind, and it could not develop it… The continued small size and poverty of the nonindustrial working class also limited urban and middle-class development. Thus, in the 1930s, a lifetime after the Civil War, the majority of both black and white southerners were poor and worked on farms—often farms they did not own (410).

While the region did begin to reap the benefits of large government after World War II, the transition was startling for much of its population, who found the obsolescence of their former economy a threat to their own viability as workers, especially in the face of rapidly increasing

immigration of skilled labor from other parts of the country and world. While this economic and social shift brought more wealth and development to the region, it simultaneously increased the marginalization of much of its poor population. Agricultural laborers in the South such as the characters in O'Connor's story found themselves dispossessed of their means of livelihood. A historical lack of labor organization renders these workers unable to bargain for better conditions and subject to easy replaceability in unskilled or semi-skilled positions. The changing economic landscape of the South thus produces a population redundant to the growth of capitalism in the region, who in turn must take work as they can find it, further increasing the reserve labor force and the precarity of labor in a vicious cycle of immiseration.

Christine Flannagan's excellent study of the role of technology and the environment in O'Connor's work "Social Distortion: Displaced Landscapes and the Machines of Progress in Flannery O'Connor's 'The Displaced Person' and 'A View of the Woods'" draws the reader's attention to the fact that due to agricultural mechanization between the 1950s and 1970s "the use of farm machinery increased by 20 percent" but "agricultural employment nationwide dropped by 55 percent… 'In the South… where mechanization had its greatest impact, total employment fell by 65 percent'" (21).[4] Therefore, "In the two decades after the war, some 11 million sharecroppers, tenants, and small farm owners left the land, a demographic shift that had enormous implications (21). As is the case whenever drastic changes to the economic base occur, ramifications to the ideological superstructure entail cultural shifts: "seemingly disparate elements—civil rights, advancing technology, altered rural and urban landscapes— become 'interlocking revolutionary components that swept through the South'" with the combined result

[4] John Coogan, former Assistant Secretary of Labor for Policy, Education, and Research, as quoted by Flannagan

that "Technology's greatest achievement is, in some arenas, its greatest threat: social progress and the disruption of social hierarchy" (22). O'Connor's story exemplifies the rapid economic and social changes sweeping through the South, and emphasizes the disruption and dispossession which can occur alongside technological progress and economic development.

The region in this way becomes an archetypical example of the ways in which worker precarity anywhere can be translated into worker precarity everywhere, and how capitalism constantly makes and remakes vulnerable populations subject to exploitation. This is not a historical anomaly of the South by any means. The particulars of the region—its delayed industrialization, its poverty, its lack of a tradition of collective bargaining and unionization, its class and race antagonisms—simply serve to illuminate the workings of capitalism in an especially tangible way, all the more powerful in that it exists within the borders of one of the most industrially advanced countries in the world.

None of these purely economic observations—if one considers the above-mentioned Marxist theories of technological alienation from labor, the reserve labor army, and redundant populations—are particularly surprising, and an analysis of these trends in O'Connor's short story would contribute to little more than a demonstration of political realities widely accepted by Marxist-inclined thinkers. Understanding these macroeconomic trends is vital to a political approach to the story, but is not sufficient to explain the ultimate murder of Mr. Guizac. What is more difficult to explain about the narrative is the way in which the community—both the exploiters and exploited—is willing to band together spontaneously to eliminate a perceived threat to the traditional social structure that keeps most of its members somewhere between thralldom and peonage. We can see why tenant farmers and sharecroppers might react violently to losing the fragile semblance of economic security left in their lives, even if that meant the

preservation of a viciously exploitative system. Why, though, would Mrs. McIntyre work against her own economic interests in order to help eliminate the Pole? From a purely materialist viewpoint, wouldn't it be logical simply to replace the native workforce with a small number of highly skilled but low wage immigrant workers, and to thrust the now displaced native workforce on the whims of the market? The answer to these questions is social rather than economic, and biopolitical rather than Marxist theory will provide an apparatus through which to approach them.

Mrs. McIntyre is, as has already been noted, originally thrilled by the increased profit made available to her by the employment of a new skilled worker whom she can keep virtually indentured through low wages. She takes advantage of the potential influx of cheap labor provided by the 1948 Displaced Persons Act, pointing out that "the world [is] … swelling up. It's getting so full of people that only the smart thrifty energetic ones are going to survive … . I've made up my mind that I've had enough trashy people on this place to last me a lifetime," and is pleased she will no longer have to do business with transient "white trash" labor now that she had realized that "the world is full of people who *have* to work" (216). She even goes so far as to collapse the population of "poor white trash" with the Black working class, lamenting that "I've spent half my life fooling with worthless people … . Black and white" thus verbalizing a shocking sentiment given the racial sensibilities of the time period, and indicating a shift in the allocation of security based on race in light of new conditions stemming from immigration and globalization in a previously economically underdeveloped but culturally insulated region (214). Economic and social crises, especially in the forms of racialization, are as inseparable in the text as in historical and contemporary political realities. The primary motivation for what becomes a sordid solidarity based on exclusion of the Other and that ultimately results in murderous

violence is, in the case of this text, the preservation of racialized class structures and socio-economic hierarchy, which cannot be understood in purely economic terms, but which must also entail a biopolitical conceptualization of power.

III

The delineation of social groups by varying degrees of economic precariousness, paradoxically enough, will become the foundation for the violent mobilization of a community formed not in solidarity of class interests but rather as a viciously reactionary attempt to buttress a rapidly destabilizing caste system. This precarity is distributed both on economic and racial grounds, and demonstrates an intertwining of the two that both theorists of biopolitics and orthodox Marxist approaches too often ignore. The crisis of the text is both economic and social, and the anxieties it breeds cannot be reduced to purely material or identarian understandings of the pressures that inform the events of the novella. In other words, economic crisis is always accompanied by social crisis in which the lines of community inclusion are called into question in order to protect the interests of a portion of the at-risk population at the expense of a targeted group. As Lorey notes, precariousness is "shared by all" yet "can also be understood as a separating factor: on the one hand it is what we all have in common, but on the other it is what distinguishes and separates us from others" (19). Precarity, whether within O'Connor's narrative or in the real world, is always allocated through multiple intersecting matrixes of domination, and cannot simply be reduced to race, class, gender, or any other mode of power in isolation. The theorist explains that "domination means the attempt to safeguard some people from existential precariousness, while at the same time this privilege of protection is based on a differential distribution of the precarity of all those who are perceived as other and considered less worthy of

protection" (22). "The Displaced Person" provides the reader not only with a case study for production of vulnerable surplus populations in the Marxist sense, but also demonstrates how economic crisis informs and in turn is informed by biopolitical modes of community formation.

It is as much the undermining of racial caste as the potential economic impact of the "thrifty and energetic" new worker that threatens the status quo and unites the community in the murderous removal of a perceived threat. The Guizacs do not share the racism of the Americans, as demonstrated by Mrs. Shortley's scandalized observation that "When Gobblehook first come here … he shook their hands, like he didn't know the difference, like he might have been as black as them" (207). What ultimately spurs the community into a collective response, however, is catalyzed by the possibility of racial intermarriage and the destabilization of the rigid class/race divide which could accompany it. When Mrs. McIntyre learns that Mr. Guizac is in communication with Sulk—one of the farm's Black laborers—about the procurement of a wife from Poland, she is outraged and confronts the man with vehement opposition and the menace of expulsion from the farm should he pursue the arrangement further or mention it again. She states definitively, "I will not have my niggers upset. I cannot run this place without my niggers. I can run it without you but not without them and if you mention this girl to Sulk again, you won't have a job with me" (223). This emphasis on the necessity of preserving caste, even at the cost of losing such a productive worker, comes to an ultimately violent end through the mutual collusion of the laborers, both Black and White, and their employer. Furthermore, her insistence on the necessity of her small Black workforce who could, hypothetically, be replaced by other displaced people indicates that there is more at stake than purely economic considerations, and that a desire to maintain a hierarchized social order can trump materialistic considerations.

In this way "The Displaced Person" challenges orthodox Marxist narratives of purely economic understanding of power while simultaneously expanding biopolitical conceptualizations of diffused power based on identity. Marxist theory allows us to understand how the characters find themselves locked into economic, cultural, and eventually physical conflict, but biopolitical theory allows us to make sense of their self-destructive reaction to those conditions. Both contribute to our understanding of violent responses in moments of drastic economic change, but neither function without the other. In the text, power lies somewhere between economic domination and racial privilege, between upward mobility and the reification of hierarchy, between the destabilization of outmoded socio-economic paradigms and the buttressing of traditionalism in the face of change. Or, more accurately, power relations depend on the continual reconfiguring of these forces and the ways in which they combine to include or exclude certain individuals from social, economic, and ultimately physical safety.

The problem, as articulated by Mr. Shortley after his return to the farm, is one of potential assimilation. With a Black underclass, "you can tell right away what the difference is between you and them," but with the introduction of non-native White labor, "the only way you can tell is if they say something. And then you can't always tell because half of them know the English language" (233). Furthermore, according to Shortley's logic, Black workers are not responsible for their geographic relocation due to the history of slavery, while the voluntary relocation of European workers threatens the precarious balance between laborers, the availability of positions to be filled, and the clear delineation of economic classes. Polish workers can compete with native white labor in a way that is not allowed to people of color. In other words, a population whose arrival and (economic as well as social) mobility in the United States is voluntary is far more threatening than one whose importation and control are the result

of the use of repressive force, and who remain physiologically distinct from the dominant classes even after generations of cultural assimilation. With this in mind, Shortley "magnanimously" grants provisional inclusion in the community to Sulk, stating that "if you behave yourself it isn't any reason you can't stay here" (232). The community is, therefore, expanded to tentatively include Black workers—so long as they remember their place—and this provision is ultimately a step towards the reification of the working-class white laborers position as "not quite trash" (214). Lorey notes that in societies of the precarious "security is to be achieved in a twofold way in order to stabilize and heal the constantly contaminated self: It occurs through the integration of those 'others' who can be neutralized, in other words domesticated, as well as through the exclusion or rejection of the 'foreigner' who cannot be integrated" (60) until

> [t]here is no longer a centre or a middle that could be imagined as a society stable enough to take in those pushed to the margins… it is no longer sufficient to demand an equal, pluralistic society… Social, economic and legal insecurity (in terms of both labour rights and other rights) is increasingly less a threat that can be projected solely onto those who are dependent, marginalized, or alien 'invaders', in order to legitimize positioning them in society at the inner or outer peripheries, and be able to maintain an (imaginary) centre of the (national) self (67).

The reallocation of security and inclusion into the community draws the delineating boundaries between the neutralizable who can be assimilated (even if as an underclass) and the threat population which must be destroyed. While economic insecurity catalyzes the farm's fear and suspicion of the Pole, it is ultimately a crisis of identity which leads to his murder. The unsustainability of this project, as Lorey notes above, lies in the fact that while a certain fragile

security can be temporarily achieved for one group through the increased marginalization of another, precarity continues to define the entire system of relations, not only in social but in economic terms. This theorization of community precarity reflects the Endnotes Collective's macroeconomic understanding of the dynamic nature of worker insecurity through the proletarianization and deindustrialization cycle. In a society or an economy defined by precariousness, all security is fleeting and is constantly under threat from the Other, whoever that may be at any given moment.

For example, the presence of a new "thrifty and energetic" white workforce increases the social distance between the "white trash" and the ruling class. If both the economic elite and the imported labor are thrifty, energetic, and competent, while both the tenant farmers and the black laborers are slothful and obsolete, the "white trash" becomes more closely aligned with the black population and the racial hierarchy is thus further destabilized. It is the change in allocation of security and precarity which each of the farm's residents find threatening to their own relative positions, and which causes them to construct the narrative of a disruptive Other who poses a danger to their idealized and artificial newfound conceptualization of community. This is not simply an anomaly on the farm, but rather a basic socio-political condition of a society constructed around the mobilization of precarity, where "citizens come to terms with social insecurity in the most different ways and in the most diverse social positions, to handle the privatization of risks and contribute to the normalization of precarization through subjugation and conformity – borne by their fear of being replaceable" (Lorey 63). In short, it is the very artificiality of class/race status that articulates the psychosocial anxieties of the population, and it is the possibility of replacement and displacement that catalyzes their economic fears. In a state of insecurity, "[d]omination turns existential precariousness into an anxiety towards others who

cause harm, who have to be preventatively fended off, and not infrequently even destroyed, in order to protect those who are threatened. The precariousness shared with others is hierarchized and judged, and precarious lives are segmented" (Lorey 21). Once again, the economic and the social walk hand in hand in terms of replaceability. Even before the arrival of the Guizacs fungibility of labor threatens the farm's rotating workforce at all times, as evidenced by Mrs. Shortley's collapse of "Ringfields and Collins and Jarrells and Perkins and Pinkins and Herrins and God knows what all else" into the catch-all category of "Sorry people. Poor white trash and niggers" who come and go and can be easily replaced (202). This situation, however, does not reach a fever pitch until the global process of proletarianization brings foreign workers to the farm who threaten to render obsolete the native workforce. Furthermore, it is the socio-cultural shift accompanying the transplantation of Polish workers to the hitherto economically and culturally isolated South that enrages the native workforce. It is for this reason that a combination of Marx, Endnotes, and Lorey is necessary to map the dynamism of labor relations in the text, and why economic and biopolitical theory are necessary to track the trajectory of capitalistic development in general. The relationship between economic and the social, in other words, is in a constant state of change, but can never be either fully understood or disentangled.

The blurring of class and racial boundaries is a threat not only to the members of the working class, who rely on the presence of a racialized underclass in order to define their own self-worth, but also to the landed class, who must protect the distinction between employers and workers—both White and Black—in order to preserve the division of status and wealth upon which the precarious economic hierarchy is predicated. Mrs. McIntyre seems to be concerned that despite the Pole's efficiency, his treatment of the Black laborers as equals and especially his willingness to consider interracial marriage will result in those workers' themselves becoming

cognizant of their own exploitation and potentially demanding better treatment. She complains, "[H]e doesn't understand how to get on with my niggers and they don't like him," explaining that "I can't have my niggers run off" (225). From the perspective of the exploiting class the danger of displacement stems in part from the introduction of a new exploited group whose interests align with those of the already subjugated, perhaps creating a new and dangerous space for the formation of a community founded in solidarity against oppression. For this reason, McIntyre and Shortley must, from a strategic point of view, appropriate the despised black underclass into a temporary community built around the exclusion of a foreign other. Class struggle and biopolitical disallowance of life, in this case, walk hand in hand despite the economic viability of the Pole as a worker.

Alan C. Taylor's "Redrawing the Color Line in Flannery O'Connor's 'The Displaced Person'" provides a historicized and articulate explanation of racial anxieties that permeate the text. He notes that it is "unclear" how "the death of this Polish immigrant serves the small community's interests" and suggests that "we might find answers to these questions by locating O'Connor's story within the unprecedented volatility of the color line experienced in the post-war US, but most intensely in the South, as a *result* of the policies of Jim Crow—a system that radically unsettled rather than stabilized the concept and the attendant privileges of whiteness" (69). He argues of Jim Crow, following the work of scholars like Matthew Frye Jacobson and David Roediger, that

> one of the fundamental paradoxes of heightening the premium on race as color was that it systemically eroded the once salient differences between white "races"; in its attempt to draw a definitive color line separating monolithic white and black categories, Jim Crow unintentionally flung open the doors to the

> privileges of whiteness for a host of then distinctly raced immigrant groups such as Poles, Slavs, Saracens, Celts, Italians, and Jews, who were decisively "whitened" by the logic of Jim Crow (69).

As is the case of "The Displaced Person," "more troubling still was that the aspects of the immigrant's otherness were not discernable with the visual logic that sustained Jim Crow, which relied on distinct physiognomic features or skin color to perceive difference and establish hierarchy—a fact that rendered the 'whitened' immigrant essentially invisible to the Southern regime of racial discipline" (70). Without delving too deeply into Taylor's numerous skillful close readings of the text, it will suffice to say for now that "[u]nable to assimilate the DP to their social and economic hierarchy, or to contain his disruptive and paradoxical whiteness, the community adopts a kind of 'final solution' designed to rid themselves of his disturbing presence and reinscribe the familiar color line of their racial order" (72). This argument, however, insightful though it may be, does not consider the economic forces at play in the text. While these may lay outside the scope of Taylor's argument, it is my position that they are vital to formulation of a more holistic interpretation of the story's events.

Mr. Guizac represents the threat of destabilization to the rest of the farm's residents in both economic and identarian terms. They fear not only being displaced from their jobs, but also of being displaced in their understanding of themselves and each other. As a community that delineates itself based off both monetary and physiological differences, the introduction of an individual who exists outside and in between both economic and racial categories is thoroughly unsettling. This jingoist narrative of otherization is predicated upon the ebb and flow of the boundaries of inclusion in community, and this text illustrates that the liberatory narrative of

community functions as often as the justification for reactionary violence as the impetus for progressive movements or class solidarity.

The definitions of "us" and "them" are myriad, unstable, and prone to shifting. The anxiety here is not over an easily identifiable combatant, but rather over the fact that anybody, under the right social and economic conditions, can become the enemy that threatens to displace the individual or community. When the social order is destabilized by economic changes, as is the case in "The Displaced Person," economic security and social identity become conflated in the abjection and expulsion of an internalized contaminant in the form of a targeted group. In other words, the residents of the farm hope to concretize identity into discrete groupings, but under global capitalism economic and social identity is dynamic, and each person remains precarious, in constant risk of being or becoming the Other. The murder of the Pole is a misguided attempt to reestablish a static community that never in fact existed. Nostalgia for a fictionally stable past, combined with anxiety over an uncertain future, result in a reactionary mindset supported by the twin columns of economic desperation and hatred for cultural change and for those who accompany it. The sweeping social and economic changes of the mid-twentieth century ushered in by the postwar national investment in the security state, advances in agricultural technology, and by an influx of "outsiders" immigrating to the region threatens, or so the characters of the novel seem to believe, the total obliteration of a familiar lifeway, squalid though it may be. This fear of the "constantly contaminated self" results in a violent and reactionary attempt to purge the vector of change, in this case the scapegoated Polish family, from the political, social, and economic community. Once again, race and class antagonisms operate as the foundation supporting capitalistic dynamism resulting in worker dispossession,

while biopolitical and economic forms of control continue to shift precarity and ensure the sustainability of the system as a whole.

What remains to be accounted for, however, is the motivation of the Black laborers to work against their own interests and turn on Mr. Guizac despite the fact that he is willing to recognize their humanity and dignity and that an influx of individuals with his anti-racist disposition might potentially help elevate their social status and economic position. Upon his return to the farm it is stated that "The negroes were pleased to see Mr. Shortley back. The Displaced Person had expected them to work as hard as he worked himself, whereas Mr. Shortley recognized their limitations" (228). This caricature of Black laziness is, of course, far too two-dimensional to construct a believable basis for these workers' rejection of Mr. Guizac. It may be possible, however, to explain their unwillingness to prevent Guizac's ultimate murder through the ambivalence of a socio-politically dispossessed group who are likely to remain at the bottom of the economic ladder no matter how many racially progressive workers are imported into the country. As the older worker Astor explains to Sulk: "Never mind … your place too low for anybody to dispute with you for it" (206). While the white working-class is able to entertain fantasies of class-mobility, the economic realities of the black workers are unapologetically limited. White tenant farmers come and go from the farm, but the black laborers remain. As the lowest tier in the farm's caste system they retain a certain stability in their economic exploitation but, given their limited economic horizons, have a different set of concerns in regards to their situation. Lacking the same mobility—economic, social, and geographical—as the white workers, Sulk and Astor rely even more heavily on the McIntyre farm to provide employment. For this reason, perhaps, they feel the need remain allied to the white workers and owners, and so are willing to go along with the ultimately murderous reaction to the presence of the Poles. The

biopolitical racial politics of the farm, yet again, are reinforced by the economic conditions under which they occur. The black workers position is the most precarious of all of the farm's social castes, and for this reason they are least well positioned to align themselves with the Pole, even if most inclined to do so. While Sulk and Astor might have something to gain from the arrival of the Poles they have their very subsistence to lose, and so remain trapped both in economic poverty and social oppression on the dairy.

IV

Regardless of the multiplicities of pressures and motivations which catalyze the events, they are strong enough to solidify a temporary community that includes the entire population of the farm with the exception of the outsider Mr. Guizac and his family. This new community is thus paradoxically united together in opposition to a presence that threatens to disrupt the regulation of every individual to their own distinct and firmly separate racial and class communities. This is, ultimately, a community of conflict formed to preserve internal antagonisms and mutual distrust and to project hatred and violence on a stigmatized Other. The formerly unapologetically hateful (and still unapologetically racist) Mrs. Shortley declares, "I'd rather have niggers then them Poles. And what's furthermore, I am to take up for the niggers when the time comes … . I hate to see niggers mistreated and run out. I have a heap of pity for niggers and poor folks … . When the time comes … I'll stand up for the niggers and that's that" (207). The presence of Mr. Guizac and his family shifts her attitude from open malignance towards the farm's Black workers to one of condescending "support" against a more insidious interloper. Likewise, the former white trash-loathing Mrs. McIntyre suddenly feels that "her moral obligation was to her own people, to Mr. Shortley … and not to Mr. Guizac who had

merely arrived here to take advantage of what he could" (228) until, finally, "She began to understand she had a moral obligation to fire the Pole" (233). This weaponization of the ethics of community building is a last-ditch effort to reconstitute a crumbling social-structure based on a rigid racial and class taxonomy which is no longer sustainable. Both characters reconceptualize their understanding of community to justify the upcoming violence against the excluded other, and both drape their fear and hatred in the flimsy robes of conveniently fabricated ethical necessity. The untenability of this construction of a unified community based off a fictional state of former stability, however, is displayed in all of its catastrophic violence and social destabilization through the ultimately disastrous attempts of the native population to remove the foreign worker who, in the minds of the farms other residents, has arrived not only to take the bread from their mouths, but who has also threatened to undermine their understandings of themselves in relation to one another and their work.

The combined factions of the new community allow the man to be crushed to death beneath the very machinery he used with such dangerous efficacy in a futile attempt to reify the socio-economic hierarchy of the farm prior to the newcomer's arrival: "She 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, and she had heard the little noise the Pole made as the tractor wheel broke his backbone" (234). It is a testament to the fragility and unsustainability of the project of holding on to rapidly antiquating economic conditions in the face of changing class/race relations, however, that the very formation of this new "inclusive" community based on abjection of the Pole immediately results in the destruction of both the community itself and the farm as a financial enterprise. The very desire of the community to maintain the separation of the class/race groupings from which it was constituted ultimately leaves all of its members bereft of community and economic

security entirely. After attempting to preserve a nostalgic image of her country and culture from the globalizing economy, Mrs. McIntyre finally, as the body of the maimed and dying Mr. Guizac is being carried away, "felt she was in some foreign country where the people bent over the body were natives, and she watched like a stranger" (235). She was, ultimately, displaced not by the outsider she helped murder, but rather by her own misplaced hatred and fear of the displaced person and her inability to adapt to changing economic conditions.

This story, at least when approached politically, can be read as a dire warning of the consequences of projecting socio-economic anxieties on a scapegoated Other rather than addressing the systemic exploitation of an unavoidably changing and increasingly global world of precarity. The wages of mobilizing community solidarity to perpetuate hatefulness against individuals rather than confrontation of brutalizing political systems are, as "The Displaced Person" demonstrates, scanty indeed. In a political atmosphere saturated with the rhetoric of nostalgia for a non-existent past, fear of an uncertain future, and xenophobic hatred for the outsider, O'Connor's tale presents a terrifyingly relevant parable of the costs—economic, political, social, and ethical—of community formation based off of exclusion and stasis rather than dynamism, and illustrates the terrible efficiency with which the reallocation of precarity can be used to destroy communities and undermine labor security.

It should now be clear, considering the arguments put forward in the above pages, that xenophobia is informed both by crisis in capitalism and by crisis in identity, and that the two can never be disentangled form one another. It would be reductive to understand "The Displaced Person" in the purely economic terms, just as it would be insufficient to consider the social anxieties of the story without giving due consideration to the economic forces which drive the narrative. Precarity, in other words, is always allocated through both material and ideological

matrices. Both biopolitical and Marxist theories of power need to be deployed in order to adequately conceptualize moments of crisis, both in the text and in lived political realities. For this reason, this story remains relevant, and demonstrates the consequences of unexamined and irrational hatred of desperate populations competing for evaporating work. As worker immiseration continues to increase under late capitalism, the stigmatization of feared Others proves increasingly self-destructive. As economic precarity is increasingly mobilized as a mode of power and more and more of us are on our way to becoming displaced persons ourselves, a reconceptualization of community in both economic and social terms will be needed to prevent infighting amongst targeted groups and to establish solidarity among the exploited.

Works Cited

"About Endnotes." *Endnotes*, Endnotes, endnotes.org.uk/about. Accessed 11 June 2019.

Bacon, Jon Lance. *Flannery O'Connor and Cold War Culture*. Cambridge University Press, 1993.

Baptist, Edward E. *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism*. Basic Books, 2014

Beckert, Sven. *Empire of Cotton: A Global History*. Vintage Books, 2015

Butler, Judith. *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence.* Verso, 2006

Du Bois, W.E.B. *Black Reconstruction in America 1860-1880*. The Free Press. 1998

Endnotes and Aaron Benanav. "Misery and Debt: On the Logic and History of Surplus Populations and Surplus Capital." *Endnotes*, no. 2, April 2010, pp. 20-51.

Flanagan, Christine. "Social Distortion: Displaced Landscapes and the Machines of Progress in Flannery O'Connor's "The Displaced Person" and "A View of the Woods." Flannery O'Connor Review, vol. 15, 2017, pp. 18

Gerstle, Gary. *Liberty and Coercion: The Paradox of American Government from the Founding to the Present*. Princeton University Press, 2015.

Lorey, Isabell. *State of Insecurity: Government of the Precarious*. Verso, 2015.

Marx, Karl. *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Volume 1*. Penguin Classics Books, 1990.

---. "Wage Labour and Capital." *The Marx-Engels Reader*, edited by Robert C. Tucker, 2nd ed., W.W. Norton and Company, 1978, pp. 203-217.

O'Connor, Flannery. "A., November 25, 1955." *Collected Works*, edited by Sally Fitzgerald, The Library of America, 1988, pp. 969-973.

---. Letter to Lon and Fannie. 13 March 1957. Brainard Bartwell Cheney and Frances Neel

Cheney Papers, Vanderbilt University Special Collections, Nashville.

---. Letter to Lon. 24 June 1957. Brainard Bartwell Cheney and Frances Neel Cheney Papers, Vanderbilt University Special Collections, Nashville.

---. "The Displaced Person." *The Complete Stories*, Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1962, pp. 194-235.

Taylor, Alan C. "Redrawing the Color Line in Flannery O'Connor's 'The Displaced Person.'" *The Mississippi Quarterly*, vol. 65, no. 1, 2012, pp. 69-82.