International Journal of Language and Literary Studies
Volume 8, Issue 1, 2026
Homepage : http://ijlls.org/index.php/ijlls

Torn Apart and Coexisting: The Contradictory Logic of Racial Predicament in "The Displaced Person"

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DOI: http://doi.org/ 10.36892/ijlls.v8i1.2489
APA Citation: Liu, S.(2026). Torn Apart and Coexisting: The Contradictory Logic of Racial Predicament in "The Displaced Person". *International Journal of Language and Literary Studies. 8*(1).303-315. http://doi.org/10.36892/ijlls.v8i1.2489

Received:
29/11/2025

Accepted:
10/01/2026

Keywords:
The Displaced Person"; contradiction analysis; O'Connor; race; structural violence

Abstract
Taking Flannery O'Connor's short story "The Displaced Person" as its object of study, this paper employs Marxist contradictory analysis to conduct an in-depth examination of the structural tensions that intensified in the American South after World War II. These tensions emerge most clearly in the conflicted relationship between foreign immigrants and the local white community. By analyzing the transformation of principal and secondary contradictions, the law of the unity of opposites, and the inevitability of violence under the universality of contradiction, this study demonstrates how Mrs. McIntyre's position shifts from economic rationality to the defense of racial order. It further reveals how characters such as the Shortleys construct the legitimacy of their own identities through the exclusion of "the Other," and how violence ultimately becomes the most extreme expression of irreconcilable social contradictions.

1. INTRODUCTION

Flannery O'Connor is one of the most important representatives of Southern American literature and is also regarded as one of the most influential contemporary American short-story writers. Deeply shaped by her Catholic faith and the cultural atmosphere of the American South, O'Connor's works often combine religious allegory with regional characteristics. Her style is austere yet full of tension, and she frequently employs absurd situations to explore themes such as human nature and belief. "The Displaced Person" was first published in *The Sewanee Review* in 1954. O'Connor revised the story in 1955 and included the revised version in her short-story collection *A Good Man Is Hard to Find*. The narrative depicts Mrs. McIntyre, a farm owner in the American South, who hires a Polish refugee family, the Guizacs, in the hope that cheap foreign labor will improve her farm. Instead, their arrival provokes jealousy and exclusion from the existing farmhands. As conflicts escalate, interpersonal relations on the farm become increasingly distorted, selfishness is exposed, and the situation ultimately ends in tragedy. By presenting the fate of a Polish refugee family on a Southern farm, O'Connor portrays the collision between the post–World War II immigrant influx and local social structures. The story not only reveals the exclusion triggered by the newcomers but also hints at the formation of an "Invisible Empire" in the postwar South, an environment that prides

itself on being closed and conservative while being continuously shaken by new populations and new ideas.

Many scholars have examined the influence of O'Connor's Catholic background on this story, exploring how religion and Southern identity operate within the work[1]. As O'Connor herself observes, although the South is hardly Christ centered, it is most certainly Christ haunted (O'Connor, 1988, p. 818). Some scholars, while investigating the religious metaphors in O'Connor's fiction, also approach the text from a materialist perspective, focusing on how social, economic, and historical factors shape the characters and the plot[2]. However, few scholars have taken Marxist contradiction analysis as a central framework to systematically examine the dynamics of internal contradictions within the text and the logic of character action.

Marxist contradiction analysis regards objective phenomena as organic wholes that exist in the form of contradictions. It analyzes the interconnections and mutual constraints among the various contradictions within things, the opposing aspects of each contradiction, and their processes of movement, thereby enabling an understanding of their essential nature. Therefore, this paper adopts a Marxist method of contradiction analysis, drawing on the discussions of contradiction by Marx and Engels and on the dialectical concept of primary and secondary contradiction transformation in Mao Zedong's *On Contradiction*. Through this approach, the study analyzes the structural forces that generate racial violence in "The Displaced Person." It

[1] For example, Ralph C. Wood, in Flannery O'Connor and the Christ-Haunted South, offers a detailed examination of the Christian imagery and theological implications in O'Connor's fiction, frequently drawing upon key episodes from "The Displaced Person" to explore the relationship between grace and sin. Similarly, in Flannery O'Connor's Sacramental Art, Susan Srigley interprets O'Connor's works within the framework of Catholic sacramental theology, analyzing the connection between characters' actions and theological symbolism. In her study, the farm setting in "The Displaced Person" is also understood as a site of sacramental conflict and the intervention of grace.

[2] In addition, Jon Lance Bacon's Flannery O'Connor and Cold War Culture situates O'Connor's writing within the social and political culture of Cold War America. Alan C. Taylor's article, "Redrawing the Color Line in Flannery O'Connor's 'The Displaced Person,'" analyzes the complexity of racial boundaries and the instability of white identity in the postwar American South under the Jim Crow system.

reveals how Mrs. McIntyre's logic of capital collapses when Guizac disrupts racial boundaries, how the xenophobic discourse of the Shortleys depends on the symbiosis of contradictory oppositions, and how collective violence becomes the inevitable outcome of irreconcilable universal contradictions.

2. FROM ECONOMIC RATIONALITY TO IDENTITY HIERARCHY: THE RUPTURE OF MRS. MCINTYRE

Mrs. McIntyre's management of the farm vividly reflects the dynamic process of the transformation of primary and secondary contradictions emphasized in Marxist contradiction analysis. As a representative of Southern agricultural capital, she is caught in a persistent contradiction between prioritizing economic gains and defending racial superiority. Although she accepts immigrants as part of the "white" labor force, Guizac's challenge to racial boundaries intensifies the struggle between economic crisis and racial hierarchy on the farm. In the end, the racial contradiction, originally secondary, emerges as the primary one, prompting Mrs. McIntyre to reassert racial order through violence in order to protect her vested interests.

In "The Displaced Person", Mrs. McIntyre begins with a clear economic objective: to improve farm productivity by hiring cheap labor. She longs to find "good country people" to help her run the dairy farm, yet her ingrained sense of social superiority and class position leads her to treat her tenant workers with contempt, even referring to them directly as "trash." The opening of the story presents the existing labor structure on the farm. On one side are the Black workers, such as Astor and Sulk, who have long worked for Mrs. McIntyre. Although they are essential to keeping the farm functioning, they are treated as the taken-for-granted lowest tier of labor. On the other side are the white tenant workers, the Shortleys, whom Mrs. McIntyre frequently equates with "white trash." She has no real respect for either group. She complains that the Black workers are inefficient and unambitious, while she considers the white tenants filthy and lazy. Yet because the farm yields only minimal profits, she knows that as long as she pays the lowest possible wages, they will stay. It is precisely this farm logic of cutting labor costs while scorning the lower classes that sustains a rigid and fragile equilibrium, even though friction constantly arises within this caste-like system.

During the Second World War, the wartime economy brought about drastic changes to Southern society and its demographic structure, forcing the predominantly agricultural Southern economy to confront new challenges. Labor shortages caused by the war and the influx of immigrants further strengthened Mrs. McIntyre's economic rationality. As a large number of agricultural workers were drafted into the military or absorbed into war-related

industrial labor, agricultural productivity declined sharply. In the first two years of the conflict alone, the Bureau of Agricultural Economics recorded a loss of nearly three million farm workers (Foley, 1999, p. 205). To fill this gap, Congress passed legislation in 1943 and 1948 to relax strict immigration quotas and launch guest-worker programs. These policies allowed large numbers of immigrants from displaced regions, especially from Eastern European countries such as Poland and Italy, to work on vacant land in the South. They supplied American agriculture with the cheap labor it urgently needed, particularly in the postwar period, when the domestic labor market was suffering from severe shortages.

In this changing external environment, Mrs. McIntyre relied on the influx of low-cost foreign labor created by the 1948 Displaced Persons Act to hire the Guizac family and attempt to restructure the farm's labor system. Watching "the world" constantly "expanding," she realizes that there are people everywhere who need work. She claims that "only those who are smart, thrifty, and energetic" (O'Connor, 2010, p. 242) can survive in such a rapidly changing environment, as if "the secret of success lies in ample and cheap labor" (Beckert, 2015, p. 394). Mrs. McIntyre believes that what the farm needs is this new kind of labor, workers capable of using new technology to increase productivity, rather than "good-for-nothing white trash and Negroes" (O'Connor, 2010, p. 224). By conflating "poor white trash" with "non-American white laborers," she reveals her fixation on economic efficiency, especially under the new opportunities created by labor shortages. She laments that she has spent half her life working with "trash" until the arrival of the Guizac family finally "saved" her (O'Connor, 2010, p. 225).

This "salvation" refers not only to economic assistance, but also to the fact that she has finally found the type of labor that suits her needs. This shift signals a change in Mrs. McIntyre's racial perception. Unlike others, she does not draw a rigid line between immigrant whites and local whites, nor does she classify immigrants as "non-white" in the traditional racial hierarchy. Instead, she accepts foreign immigrants as part of the "white" labor force, placing them alongside native white workers and imagining both as valuable to her economic interests.

This marks a new racial cognition, one arguably produced by Jim Crow's insistence on skin color as the primary racial standard: "it institutionalized a logic that eroded differences once sharply drawn within white ethnic groups. In attempting to draw a clear chromatic boundary between the homogenized categories of white and Black, Jim Crow inadvertently opened the door to white privilege for immigrant groups—Poles, Slavs, Saracens, Celts, Italians, and Jews—whose ethnic identities had formerly excluded them. Under Jim Crow's logic, they were decisively 'whitened' " (Taylor, 2012, p. 69). But more than anything, the

driving force is economic. At this moment, the contradiction between what Mrs. McIntyre imagines to be an inadequate farm budget and the labor expenditures she deems necessary has become the dominant one.

However, the new racial perception that Mrs. McIntyre develops from economic rationality poses a threat to the lower classes who rely on racialization to define their own value. The Shortleys' reaction serves as an example. At the same time, this new perception also endangers the farm owner's own interests. Guizac lacks any sense of racial hierarchy and does not know how one is supposed to interact with Black people. He takes the initiative to shake hands with a Black worker as if he were greeting one of his compatriots, "as if he didn't know there was any difference, as if he were just as black as they were" (O'Connor, 2010, p. 230), and he even wants his sister to marry a Black man. Guizac's rejection of racial and social stratification is not merely a matter of personal choice. It may be closely related to the racial segregation policies he experienced in Poland. Under German occupation, the *Polen-Erlass* strictly limited the daily life of Poles in Germany, forbidding them from entering restaurants, theaters, and other public spaces, and even restricting their access to public transportation (Herbert, 1997, p. 73). Thus, when interacting with white and Black people in the United States, Guizac's choices reflect his refusal to acknowledge racial boundaries. He remains unaware that Mrs. McIntyre cares nothing about what Poland has suffered. In her eyes, there is no real difference between Poles and Germans, and at that time "the South was the great stronghold against interracial marriage" (Sass, 1956).

Mrs. McIntyre may display a degree of tolerance toward non-white people, yet she remains convinced that without Black labor the farm could no longer function at all. She loudly condemns Guizac as inhuman for wanting to marry off a "poor innocent child" to "a black half-wit, a nasty little thief" (O'Connor, 2010, p. 249). "That Negro cannot marry a European white woman. You cannot talk that way to a Negro. You will excite him, and it is impossible. Maybe in Poland you could do that but not here. You can't keep on like that. It is utter foolishness. That Negro doesn't know anything and you will excite him…" (O'Connor, 2010, p. 250). Mrs. McIntyre's words reveal her extreme insistence on racial order. She believes that marriage between Black and white people would destroy the social hierarchy she takes for granted. In this moment, as she looks at Guizac's face, it is as if she becomes aware for the first time of certain "impurities" in his features. She notices that although his forehead and skull look white beneath the protection of his cap, the rest of his face is red and covered with yellow fuzz. "His whole face seemed to be made up of several faces" (O'Connor, 2010, p. 250). This is not merely

a description of his appearance but an expression of her rejection of his unstable identity. He is no longer, in her eyes, entirely "white."

Mrs. McIntyre's shifting visual perception signals the collapse of her color-based visual economy. She no longer evaluates Guizac through the lens of economic usefulness or labor value. Indeed, "the identity or unity of the contradictory aspects in an objective thing is not something dead and fixed, but living, conditional, mutable, temporary, and relative. All contradictions, under given conditions, transform into their opposites" (Mao, 1991, p. 330). The economic contradiction that had originally occupied the position of the principal contradiction in the development of events is now displaced. Under the specific condition of Guizac's naïve transgression, the defense of racial order becomes dominant and replaces the formerly secondary contradiction. Since "the nature of a thing is determined by the principal aspect of the contradiction that has gained dominance" (Mao, 1991, p. 323), Mrs. McIntyre, seeking to eliminate the unsettling factors produced by contradictions within a racialized economic system, resolves to resort to violence. She discards a "throwaway population" in order to redraw the familiar color line in racial order (Taylor, 2012, p. 72). She expels Guizac from the farm and ensures that the Black workers remain "in their place."

3. "PURITY" AND "CONTAMINATION": RACIAL FANTASIES OF SYMBIOSIS UNDER THE PRESSURE OF NATIVIST ANXIETY

In Marxist contradiction analysis, the law of the unity of opposites is regarded as the fundamental driving force of development. The opposing sides of a contradiction are not isolated from one another. Instead, they presuppose and depend upon each other. Their antagonism propels change, while their unity sustains existence. As Engels observed, "Positive and negative only have meaning in their relation to each other, and each taken by itself is meaningless (Engels, 2014, p. 545)." This view reveals that the existence of any entity depends on the existence of its opposite. Such contradiction not only constitutes its mechanism of development but also expresses its essential character. This dialectical relation of unity in opposition is concretized in "The Displaced Person" and is embodied in the Shortleys' exclusionary logic. The tension they construct between the "purity" of native whites and the "contamination" of immigrants appears as fierce antagonism. At the same time, it manifests mutual dependence. They affirm themselves through opposition, and they preserve their identity through dependence.

First, Mrs. Shortley's rejection of the Guizac family is not merely driven by economic concerns, but more profoundly by an anxious response to an identity crisis. Guizac possesses modern agricultural skills, works efficiently, and maintains strict discipline; his presence reminds Mrs. Shortley of the process by which machines replace traditional labor and evokes a fear akin to that of a mule being eliminated by a tractor: "These days you couldn't get rid of mules. She reminded herself that the next to go would be the Negroes" (O'Connor, 2010, p. 228). This metaphor not only reveals her hostility toward modernization but also exposes how

she anchors her sense of belonging in the stability of social structures. Once the relationship among race, labor, and identity is disrupted, her own subjectivity begins to waver. Thus, she converts this unease into a defense of the "purity" of white identity. Here, economic threat and identity anxiety are not two separate levels, but internally intertwined contradictions in a unity of opposites.

This opposition also manifests itself in a more symbolic form through the unfolding of a "fantasy of filth." Mrs. Shortley associates the Guizac family with "disease" and even with "corpses in Nazi concentration camps": "a head shoved in here, a head stuck in there, a foot, a knee, some part of the body that should have been covered sticking out, and a raised hand grasping at nothing" (O'Connor, 2010, p. 216). This depiction of a grotesquely fragmented body is filled with elements of chaos and terror. The corpses are arranged without order, body parts are tangled and dislocated, and the limbs no longer form a coherent human whole but are forcibly pieced together, deprived of their proper boundaries. Mrs. Shortley's imagined scene of violent dismemberment can be read as a powerful visual symbol of non-white "contamination." Her fantasy encodes an intense rejection of "impurity," a rejection driven not merely by fear of disease but by a determination to defend racial boundaries. In her view, outsiders are like fleas, spreading racial "infection" through contact with the "healthy blood" of the native population: "the Gobblehooks are like rats with typhoid fleas, carrying those killing ways from across the water and dumping them out here" (O'Connor, 2010, p. 216).

This association of immigrants with "filth" aligns perfectly with Mary Douglas's argument in *Purity and Danger* that "dirt" is a social construction. For Douglas, "dirt" does not originate in disease itself but in the rejection of anything that fails to fit a given social order or that threatens its classificatory boundaries (Douglas, 2002, p. 44). Mrs. Shortley's fear of "dislocated limbs" is in fact a projection of her anxiety over the collapse of the Southern social hierarchy. Within this contradictory formation, the presence of the "Other" is not only the fuse that ignites her identity anxiety but also the condition that allows her to affirm that she herself remains "intact." Yet when the Polish immigrants' appearance, clothing, and behavior show no visible difference from those of the local whites, her exclusionary logic enters a crisis. She turns instead to linguistic difference as a new weapon of othering. Their clothing is indistinguishable from that worn by others: "the dress that woman had on was one she could have worn, and the clothes the two children had on were like what people around here wore" (O'Connor, 2010, pp. 214–215).

When visual markers fail to secure separation, language becomes a symbolic means of reestablishing boundaries. She transforms language from a tool of communication into a racial "identity badge," fantasizing that linguistic isolation can preserve the purity of white identity. Mrs. Shortley even imagines a linguistic battle, seeing Polish "attacking" English, seeing "dirty, omniscient, unregenerated Polish words hurling mud at clean English ones until everything was equally dirty" (O'Connor, 2010, p. 233). This personification of language dramatizes her attempt to erect a linguistic barrier and assign identity value to language in order to ease the anxiety created by linguistic mixing. For her, language is not merely a means of communication but a symbol of racial boundaries that guarantees social order. Immigrants—especially those who cannot be clearly differentiated through language and culture—disrupt this order, blurring her own sense of racial identity.

As Miroslav Volf notes, "without the support of exclusionary language and cognition, most of our exclusionary practices would either not work at all or would not proceed so smoothly. Before shutting others out of our social world, we expel them from our symbolic world" (Volf, 1996, p. 75). Therefore, Mrs. Shortley longs to restore a clear and self-evident racial distinction. By tightening control over language in order to safeguard the privileges of white identity, she also reveals a deep fear of racial ambiguity produced by linguistic mixing. This fear embodies another tension within the unity of opposites. She seeks to affirm the self by drawing boundaries, yet the presence of the "Other" remains the very condition that makes such boundaries possible.

Compared with his wife, Mr. Shortley's mode of exclusion is more overtly political. He does not express racial prejudice directly. Instead, he mobilizes Cold War–era "anti-communist discourse" to construct the Guizac family as a "national threat." A veteran of the First World War, he associates Guizac's appearance with "the enemy who threw grenades" at him: "He said he remembered the face of the fellow who threw a hand grenade at him—he wore little round glasses just like Mr. Guizac" (O'Connor, 2010, p. 256). By linking his own combat experience to the legitimacy of "defending the nation," he transforms the act of excluding immigrants into the duty of "protecting the homeland." This discursive strategy appears grounded in national loyalty but in fact serves to preserve his position within the racial hierarchy of the Southern social order. Here, the exclusion of "outsiders" is masked through a nationalist narrative, allowing racism to acquire a veneer of "legitimacy" and forming a unity between ideology and racial interest.

It is important to note that such an ideology did not emerge out of thin air. It was rooted in the twin anxieties of Southern society regarding "Red infiltration" and "racial integration." In the 1940s and 1950s, the United States was in the early stages of the Cold War, and fear of a "communist invasion" permeated public discourse. As Bacon has noted, "By the 1950s, the scenario of 'Northern invasion, Southern self-defense' had already become linked to international conflicts that concerned both Northerners and Southerners. In short, the scenario began to reflect Cold War anxieties about foreign totalitarianism" (Bacon, 1993, p. 90). In the South, this fear of foreign infiltration became directly linked to the dismantling of racial segregation. Even as Southerners worried about communism invading their land, they were simultaneously anxious about the erosion of their native way of life: "in many respects, the Southern 'Red Scare' was a by-product of the region's massive resistance to racial integration" (Woods, 2004, p. 5).

Mr. Shortley's attitude toward "outsiders" directly reflects the politicized nature of his commitment to racism, especially in the Cold War context. As Taylor observes, "for the vast majority of displaced Poles living in refugee camps around the world, … their former homes now lay within Soviet territory" (Taylor, 2009, p. 101). The occupation of Poland by the Soviet Union made it even easier for Shortley to associate these "outsiders" with the threat of communism. He treats the Guizac family from Poland as "foreign agents," not only emphasizing their foreign identity but also setting that identity in opposition to his own legitimate status as an American white man. Guizac's foreign nationality transforms what was originally a local conflict into an opposition between "Americans" and "Poles" (Bacon, 1993, p. 87). Thus, by mobilizing "anti-communist" discourse, Mr. Shortley casts the Guizac family as "symbols of communist forces," nationalizing and ideologicalizing the "Other." Once again,

a contradiction emerges. The exclusion appears to be motivated by "national security," but in reality it establishes local racial privilege through the projection of an external threat.

Throughout this exclusionary logic, whether it is Mrs. Shortley constructing cultural barriers through the language of filth and fantasies of disease, or Mr. Shortley mobilizing national narratives to evoke exclusionary resonance, their actions point to a shared goal: constructing the self through the opposition of the Other. Yet each pole of a contradiction has meaning only within their relation. Without the "Other," the Shortleys' identity formation would lose its point of reference. It is for this reason that Mrs. Shortley exclaims, "Who would be whole then?" (O'Connor, 2010, p. 234).

The line not only expresses her impotence in the face of social change, but also exposes the paradoxical structure in which unity depends on opposition and opposition sustains unity. When Guizac dies, the Shortleys' own structure of self collapses as well. Their defense of a "pure society" is no longer needed, and their sense of legitimacy disintegrates. Mr. Shortley's solitary departure is the visible embodiment of the failure of this extreme logic of identity. Here, the Other is both threat and support. It is both the object of rejection and the mirror through which the self is confirmed. It is in this complex and paradoxical unity of opposites that personal identity anxiety and the racial machinery of the Southern social order are exposed. The analysis reveals how "identity," as a social construction, is continually established and continually dissolved through the movement of contradiction.

4. THE NORMALIZATION OF VIOLENCE: SURVIVAL PREDICAMENTS UNDER RACIAL CAPITALISM

"Contradictions are universal and absolute; they exist in all processes of development and run through every stage of those processes" (Mao, 1991, p. 307). This indicates that society is not a static whole composed of harmony, but one permeated at every level with tension, conflict, and relations of oppression. In this miniature, "observable" farm, contradictions are everywhere: from Mrs. McIntyre's rupture between her pursuit of economic efficiency and her obsession with preserving racial order, to the Shortleys' escalation of the "second-skin threat" and racial "contamination" discourse, all constitute contradictions within the system of Southern racial capitalism. Although these contradictions appear independent on the surface, they in fact converge upon a common target. This target is Guizac, the outsider who enters from beyond the local system, carrying with him a heterogeneous culture and a different conception of labor and value.

These contradictions cannot be resolved through peaceful mediation, and numerous details in the story show their increasing sharpness and irreconcilability. When Guizac asks to bring his sister to live with them, Mrs. McIntyre denounces it as "utter foolishness" (O'Connor, 2010, p. 250). Her refusal is not based on practical considerations but on a fear of racial transgression, rooted in the possibility that the sister might marry a Black man and thus directly challenge the ideological foundation of white supremacy in the South.

Guizac tries to reason with her but cannot find the "truth" behind her judgment. This reveals his naïve ignorance of Southern racial power. He finally shrugs and says, "'She do not care black,' he said. 'She been in a concentration camp three year'" (O'Connor, 2010, p. 251). He believes that his sister's suffering overrides racial prejudice, while for Mrs. McIntyre the

only issue is whether a potential "racial contaminant" threatens social stability. Under her continued pressure, Guizac can only answer with three powerless "yes," showing his total loss of discursive agency and the dominance of structural contradiction.

The Shortleys' hostility is more aggressive. They fear that Guizac's efficiency will expose their unmonitored freedom. Mr. Shortley runs a small bar in secret and spends his spare time tending it, leaving little time for farm work. Mrs. Shortley fears Guizac's "watchful, unreasonable" scrutiny (O'Connor, 2010, p. 227) and imagines him as a devil sent avenger. Guizac cannot understand such petty self interest. When he reports a Black worker for stealing a turkey and Mrs. McIntyre dismisses it, he "looked amazed and walked off disappointed" (O'Connor, 2010, p. 224). His "selfless" acts of justice strike at their core interests, and in a society sustained by silence, compromise, and unwritten rules, such gestures become the greatest provocation.

Violent contradictions that cannot be resolved within the existing order accumulate on the farm until they move toward destructive eruption. In *Anti-Dühring*, Engels defines violence as a specific mode of operation within historical movement. He emphasizes that violence also plays a revolutionary role in history. As Marx observes, violence is "the midwife of every old society pregnant with a new one"; it is the instrument through which social movements open their own path and shatter rigid, dying political forms (Marx & Engels, 2014, p. 193). Although Engels does not explicitly employ the term "contradiction" here, the historical logic he describes clearly reveals that when contradictions accumulate and intensify to a critical point, and when they can no longer be reconciled within the existing structure, violence becomes the necessary form of their resolution. In this sense, the more universal and acute contradictions become, the greater the possibility of struggle and transformation. It is precisely through violence that old forms are destroyed and new forms are established. This theoretical logic receives powerful symbolic embodiment in the novel's climax. On a cold Saturday morning, under the silent acquiescence of Mrs. McIntyre, the calculated orchestration of Mr. Shortley, and the cold detachment of the Black laborers, Guizac is violently "cleared away" by a tractor following a carefully arranged route. At that moment, Mrs. McIntyre "felt her eyes and Mr. Shortley's and the Negroes' eyes all coming together in one look that froze them in collusion (O'Connor, 2010, p. 265)." This killing is not merely an individual act of cruelty but the structural outcome of social contradictions pushed to their extreme.

Although the Black laborers do not physically participate in the act, their "silent jumping aside as if a spring had popped under them" (O'Connor, 2010, p. 265) constitutes an integral part of the violence itself. This non-action is not morally neutral. It is rooted in their precarious position within the Southern racial order. They are acutely aware that Guizac's presence threatens the existing racial hierarchy, and they unconsciously affirm the relative security that this structure affords them. As an older Black man remarks, "Poland is not like here…They do for things different from what we do," before muttering unintelligibly (O'Connor, 2010, p. 241). His words reveal an internalized logic of exclusion that mirrors the ideology of the white ruling class.

As Marx states, "the ruling ideas of every epoch are the ideas of its ruling class (Marx & Engels, 2018, p. 44)." Because Mrs. McIntyre controls the material conditions of production on the farm, she also commands ideological authority. The Black workers' subdued murmurs

of disapproval are in fact the ideological expression of the dominant material relations. Therefore, this collective silence is not merely "standing by" in the face of violence but a form of complicity embedded within an ideological structure.

At the same time, Mrs. McIntyre's hesitation could have become an attempt to resist the murderous violence, but it ultimately turns into passive submission. In her dispute with Mr. Shortley, she wavers between "external pressure" and "her own judgment," and finally yields to the former. Mr. Shortley repeatedly cloaks his appeals in the language of "patriotism," morally accusing her: "Sometimes a white man doesn't get the same consideration a Negro does, but that's all right because he's still white. But sometimes a man who has fought for his country, bled for it, lost his life for it, gets less consideration than the enemy" (O'Connor, 2010, p. 257).

He also spreads economic anxiety, implying that someday Guizac "will buy your place out from under you and sell it clean," framing the outsider as a threat capable of stripping locals of their wealth. Even then, she cannot make up her mind. She promises to fire Guizac at the beginning of the month, yet "the first of the month came and went and she hadn't let him go" (O'Connor, 2010, p. 260), faltering in her self-perceived kindness. Mr. Shortley then grows more extreme. Knowing he "ought not to shut his mouth and wait" (O'Connor, 2010, p. 262), he not only pressures Mrs. McIntyre but complains to everyone he encounters. He manipulates emotion and deliberately manufactures a collective voice until "everybody was criticizing what she had done."

In the end, Mrs. McIntyre convinces herself that she is "morally obligated to send the Pole away," that she can "no longer bear the increasing condemnation of her conscience" (O'Connor, 2010, p. 263). Yet her belated capitulation becomes part of the violent conspiracy. "She remembered herself screaming at the displaced person, but she had not actually screamed out loud" (O'Connor, 2010, p. 265). The description implies that although she never uttered a direct command, she authorized the act through silence, performing, in her muteness, moral surrender and consent.

Thus, the murder of Guizak is not the result of the malice of a few individuals, but rather the product of an entire system of social contradictions driven to an extreme. When pervasive conflicts cannot be regulated through institutional or moral means, they inevitably erupt in their most destructive form, violence. The essence of this violence lies in a class based social structure that envelops everyone and compels their participation, regardless of individual moral intentions. Mrs. McIntyre, the Shortleys, and the Black laborers all become participants in Guizak's murder. The root of this tragedy lies in the deeply ingrained racist prejudice within their minds. Regardless of how this prejudice manifests itself, it ultimately demonizes Guizak and marks him as an outsider.

Such racial violence, moreover, "is a contagious disease rather than a hereditary one; its pathogen is psychological rather than biological, transmitted primarily through social, economic, and cultural channels" (Gilligan, 1997, p. 105). Spreading like a plague, it contaminates people's minds and ultimately gives rise to collective atrocities. As Wood observes, "in fact, a Polish refugee was killed by the same kind of 'good country people' who operated Hitler's gas chambers" (Wood, 2004, p. 16). These Southern "good country people" might not commit acts of extreme violence when acting individually. Yet under particular

social conditions and ideological influences, they can easily carry out forms of violence disturbingly similar to those of the historically infamous Nazis.

Nazi irrational violence initially emerged in the attempt to eliminate Jews, but as the desire for control expanded, it ultimately escalated into the extremity of genocide. Such violence is not isolated. It is an emotion capable of infecting any society and, in the end, a force that destroys civilization itself (Lipovski-Helal, 2010, p. 214). Similarly, the racism depicted in the novel exhibits the same kind of contagious spread. It is capable of inciting collective violence and tearing apart the moral fabric of society. Through this work, O'Connor exposes how extremist ideas take root within a community and lead to catastrophic consequences, allowing readers to perceive beneath the surface of Southern racism a toxicity closely akin to fascist ideology.

5. CONCLUSION

Through the experiences of the Guizak family on a Southern farm, "The Displaced Person" portrays the collective anxiety of postwar Southern society in the face of immigration, technological change, and the destabilization of racial order. Mrs. McIntyre's vacillation between economic rationality and racial obsession, the Shortleys' logic of self-identification through the exclusion of the "Other," and the process by which Guizak is constructed as a "threatening Other" together drive social contradictions toward intensification and ultimate eruption in violence. The contagious nature of violence, the symbiotic opposition between the local and the foreign, and the paradox of identity formation within conflict constitute O'Connor's most incisive analysis of Southern racial consciousness. Through Guizak's death, the novel exposes the pathological core of the entire social order: when violence becomes the default means of resolving social conflict, individuals inevitably lose their voice and disintegrate in the annihilation of the Other. Mr. Shortley's silent departure and Mrs. McIntyre's mental collapse testify to the farm's gradual dissolution under the pressure of extreme exclusion. With a religious gaze and profound narrative insight, O'Connor completes a powerful representation of the cyclical relationship between the "displaced" and the "displacers," making "The Displaced Person" not merely a re-enactment of a racial history, but an allegorical critique of the exclusionary mechanisms of modern society.

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