CIVILITY AND THE OTHER:

Three American Women Writers Address Oppression

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ABSTRACT

The ubiquitous, polite side of civility connotes good manners, respect, and consideration. The violent side of civility, however, defines itself in terms of codes , or rules, used by the civilized to control uncivilized Others they intend to exploit or replace. In this thesis, I analyze three short stories by American women authors who reveal the oppressive side of civility and who makes the rules that unjustly govern particular societies. The selected stories are : "The Lullaby" by Leslie Marmon Silko, "A Girl's Story" by Toni Cade Bambara, and "The Displaced Person" by Flannery O'Connor. The ethnicities the authors create are a multicultural platform to review unjust codes of civility dividing citizens within their communities and in the nation.

These narratives—local in setting yet universal in their messages—convincingly portray how the *meaning of* and *practice of* civility can contradict one another in devastating ways. Likewise, the synthesis of this multicultural analysis comprehends an instructive binary opposition between *civility* and *codes of civility*. Studying how codes addressed in these stories negate civility reveals the corrupting side of civility, the side that must be exposed to understand the societal cancer it causes. Such study can result in self-examination, which can then lead to individuals' changes in societal behaviors and reduce Othering and marginalization of people and communities.

All the stories take place in the twentieth century, yet the particular forms of Othering the characters face developed over centuries. These women authors present perspectives that integrate alternative experiences of the evolved codes of civility that in part enabled America to achieve its predominance in the world.

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Incivilities in Today's Fiction Rooted in Past Oppressions

Three short stories written between 1955 and 1981comment on social and cultural changes in America dating from colonization by Britain to modern America in the twentieth century. "Lullaby," published in 1981 by mixed-indigenous author Leslie Marmon Silko, represents the vast and often violent usurpation of lands Native Americans had lived on for generations and the effects of those takeovers on their progeny. The long-term economic and cultural effects of slavery on the Black population in America is depicted in "A Girl's Story," which Black American author Toni Cade Bambara published in 1977. A family lives in public housing projects designed to segregate Black and white families sometime during the second half of the twentieth century. In the third story, a Jim Crow segregation law forbidding miscegenation "permits" the murder of an innocent immigrant worker in Georgia in the mid-twentieth century. White American author Flannery O'Connor published this story in 1955. I analyze the three stories to discern the incivilities, racism, and Othering leveled at the characters each author draws. Othering is when those in power inflict perceived differences on marginalized people in order to demean them or make them feel inferior. Isolation, scapegoating, and victimization are also used against those marginalized. This

in turn makes perpetrators of Othering feel a false sense of power. For example, Hitler's way of Othering the Jews was by repeatedly stereotyping them as subhuman and filthy. It is a tactic frequently used to control groups of people by making them feel inferior.

This study simultaneously examines psychological, economic, and physical abuses inflicted on individuals and families in the stories and how being confronted by these prejudicial actions might affect our own practices of civility. Included is a historical review of American society, culture, and laws that foreground the plots in the three short stories. This brief history illustrates codes and laws devised to subjugate and control people in this country. The historical review reminds us of the laws and codes that evolved due to prejudice, economics, and expansion.

In subtle ways, the stories evoke unspoken rules that defined, and still influence, narratives about civility in our culture. I also show how perpetrators justified their superior attitudes and oppressive actions in order to increase their profits, acquire land, and improve their social status. Even in the earliest days of British colonial America, patriarchal leaders prescribed rules, known as unspoken codes of civility, to control and marginalize weaker members of society and to insure white men's continued power. To depict the codes, these women authors wrote about an elderly Native American woman, a young Black girl, and a Polish immigrant. The stories the authors tell bear witness to the types of incivilities, racism, and Othering some minorities would have experienced in different time periods of the twentieth century. Their fact-based fiction underscores historical records about injustices committed by patriarchs throughout American history. Much of the development of America occurred by removing existing residents here, buying and selling human chattel, and exploiting immigrant labor.

The action and themes in each story create a textbook for those maybe unaware of effective methods imposed to control and exploit people during the making of the America we know today. My thesis examines the authors' depictions and studies the long-term outcomes of British colonization and American independence. Then it encourages us to compare our own actions with those of characters in the narratives. These are opportunities to reinforce or change our behaviors toward those in our families and communities. Patriarchal codes of civility and Othering tactics subordinated marginalized people, and it is important to know about these measures in order to understand our nation and its history better. The same is true for analyzing how perpetrators justified their oppressive actions. White rule makers, and later white Americans in general, considered themselves superior to Native and Black Americans, in addition to incoming immigrants. These white supremacists determined what constituted civil actions in the codes, and civility always meant the Others showing deference to the white ruling class. Taking these reflective steps unveils what people are capable of doing because of avarice and the fear of losing power and position. Focusing on these Othering behaviors can bring understanding about harmful and often covert codes of civility that embedded in American culture to this day.

Reviewing seminal points in American history later in this paper gives a fuller picture of codes of civility and how they were developed in the first place. Knowing the reasons white patriarchs wanted these codes reveals how prejudiced people can be and how little they regard those they consider inferior. The stories illustrate this Othering of marginalized people, and they show how far people can move away from civil behavior and from being concerned about the welfare of people in their communities.

Given the heterogenous makeup of those who populated America—Native Americans, Euro-Americans, kidnapped African Americans, and other immigrants—it follows that America was and is a country of cultural and social contradictions. Its overthrow of British monarchial rule advanced the unprecedented independence of this fledgling country. The successful revolt also forced the nation two steps back: enterprising Euro-Americans subjugated Native Americans and imported African slaves simultaneously. Colonizers quickly appropriated land, resources, and labor to establish and maintain their wealth. Consequently one group's new-won freedom cost the loss of self-rule for two other groups.

Components of this historic experiment appear in the three short stories that reveal dominating sides of human nature. The stories illuminate the practice of often unspoken codes of civility established by male founders of this country, codes they and later leaders devised to insure their wealth, power, and positions in society. These codes, or rules, also show the human proclivity for classifying people in order to control them. Codes of civility defy the definition of civility because, instead of protecting the welfare of all members of society, as civility affirms, the codes oppress and exploit members of society classified as uncivilized savages, barbarians, or Other by those in power.[1]

Elden Wiebe defines Othering as oppressing those who are marginalized or set apart by the ruling class in a society. This is done through a process of objectifying and stigmatizing the target person or group. The Othering process "underscores the privilege

[1] In addition, Corey L. M. Keyes says the definition of civility goes beyond politeness and good manners. He terms civility as social civility, which he defines as "the manners with which individuals think about and behave toward their community and society. . . . It is the degree to which people have a sense of duty or obligation to society, the extent of their concern for the welfare of others as well as themselves, and whether they help others through volunteer activities." See Keyes 393.

of the dominant group." It occurs most often in populations that have been systematically discriminated against or targeted for enslavement, indenture, assimilation, or exclusion (Wiebe et al. 635-37). Oppressing these targeted members insures not only their subjugation, but also their economic, cultural, and educational deficiencies. The three stories focus on such codifying to reveal the pernicious side of civility that others groups of people through alienation, cultural mores, or land appropriation in order to hegemonize them (Smith-Rosenberg 227). Influential leaders increase their self-styled superiority, or supremacy, by suppressing weaker members of society and profiting off of their labor.

This study juxtaposes historical and cultural background with analyses of the short stories. Recounting what was happening in America at the times the authors wrote about imbues historical context into the action in the stories. It also helps to understand why bad (or good) actors did what they did in the stories. For example, in "Lullaby," Ayah sings a lullaby to her dying husband. The scene can be appreciated even more knowing the cultural significance of nature in Native American society. The same applies to the significance of the oral tradition of storytelling, especially to this elderly woman who has refused to learn the English language of her white oppressors.

The historic struggle for Black equality in America, for example, plays out in understated ways in "A Girl's Story." The public housing project the family lives in represents decades of segregation and discrimination in this country. It also represents fomenting violence related to long-standing education and job inequities. Racial hatred of those who refused to recognize Black citizens as equal caused this unjustness regarding opportunities. The background history and cultural features make the stories more

accessible for readers who want to know more about why characters behave as they do and what in their pasts influence them.

These narratives—local in setting yet universal in their messages—also convincingly portray how the *meaning of* and *practice of* civility can contradict one another. Likewise, the synthesis of this multicultural analysis shows an instructive binary opposition between *civility* and *codes of civility*. Studying when codes negate civility reveals the corrupting side of civility, how it can be used to counter good will rather than foster it. Self-serving uses of civility must be exposed to understand the societal cancer it can inflict. Readers might see themselves in these stories, either as oppressors or those subjugated. Such intensive study can increase awareness and occasion self-examination. Acknowledging historical wrongs can influence changes in current individuals' societal behaviors and reduce even unintended Othering and oppression of people and communities. Literature has a part in prompting actions that increase codes of caring and enhances the general welfare—true hallmarks of civility.

Codes of Civility Oppose Civility

To understand different aspects of civility, I apply an interdisciplinary approach using the social sciences. I also approach codes of civility and Othering techniques in this manner. In addition, I delve into the history of how American social structures of civility developed and ultimately affect characters in the three stories. Corey L. M. Keyes says civility encompasses the "social rules of decorum, avoidance of conflict, and adherence to a code of caring about the welfare of others" (393). Dennis L. Peck adds that civility

"is an attitude and action . . . intended to create a balance between personal needs and conflicting public interests" (361). The practice of decorum, caring, and balancing needs makes societies function as harmonious entities. The key to these definitions is a "code of caring," a common element in any definition about civility. Caring starts on local levels where it signifies most for individuals. Consideration for others applies to families, friends, neighbors, and co-workers, the people with whom individuals interact the most. This civic level is where individuals, and also characters in fiction, most interact and where this study will focus. Sociologists expand their definition of civility to include citizens having a sense of duty or obligation to society and acting on that duty to Others through volunteer or nonprofit activities (Peck 360). This is an apt addition to the definition because people who choose to limit interaction with others are not as invested in their neighbors or communities. They behave more like the self-centered, unconcerned characters in these stories. Duty to society, volunteer efforts, and codes of caring directly contrast with codes of civility that negate respect, care, and compassion for Others.

Acting civilly in society goes beyond polite conversation, duty, and caring, however. Anthropologist Sharika Thiranagama et al. note that practicing civility is "intimately tied up with class and race privilege" (155). To this grouping I add gender. First, I add gender because of the women authors and their works being studied here. The authors and characters are all different races. More importantly, the stories tell about women who support themselves or take care of themselves in demanding situations. These women authors *and c*haracters should be part of discussions about class and race privileges because of their own genders, races, classes, and life experiences.

I am also thinking that the historical, contrived classification of women as the weaker sex prone to hysterics qualifies women for this grouping about race and class privilege. Men in almost all cultures subjugated women for sexual and domestic reasons; some still do in very conservative religious sects. Men commodified women as child bearers and homemakers. They were denied the right to have property, to have higher education, to work, and to vote—all rights that changed with time due to women's movements. Interestingly, all the women in the stories are self-assured, including the young girl, Rae Ann. They do not need men to support them.

As Thiranagama observes, practicing civility goes beyond gender and politeness. Regrettably, the codes of civility outweigh the codes in of caring in these stories. Much of the reason for studying the two types of codes in the stories is taking a tally in our own lives to see how the scale on codes leans. Only one character chooses to invest in her community, and she does it fulltime as a community worker. Dada Bibi connects with the children in the projects by telling them about their ancestors, sewing outfits together, and engaging with them when they visit the Community Center. Dada Bibi is the type of person who would find a way to invest in children even if it was not her job.

The main factors that obstruct civility in America today are intransigent divisions and violence that evolved from the confluence of racial, ethnic, and religious influences that created this nation. Due to education and earning power, colonizing European immigrants in time gained racial, ethnic, gender, and class privileges while also marginalizing Native American communities and exploiting African slaves, among others. For these white men and their descendants, civility, or caring for the stratified society they had developed, meant creating and enforcing unspoken codes that protected

their wealth and power, rules such as limiting education and voting powers to white men only, restricting property and inheritance rights of white women, and forcing Native Americans and Black Americans to live in designated areas.

Vestiges of these methods of colonialism haunt the short stories analyzed here. The immigrant influence in America resides in each story. The narratives center around racial, ethnic, national, and gender tensions that test the abilities of civility and find them lacking. Each story shows acts of dominance by revealing forms of Othering in different cultural contexts of the United States. All the stories take place in the twentieth century, yet the particular forms of Othering characters face developed over centuries. These women authors present varied perspectives that integrate alternative experiences of the evolved codes of civility that in part enabled America to achieve its predominance in the world. These studied perspectives are mostly devoid of duty to society or compassion. This thesis consequently contributes a comparative multiethnic and postcolonial reading of oppression enabled by codes of civility crafted at the nascence of America.

It may seem counterintuitive to think of civility causing oppression. A basic question addresses this binary opposition: To whom do the restrictive codes of civility apply? The dominant class or the subjugated one? When designers of codes of civility create these unwritten rules of behavior and restrictions, the rules mirror their worldview, that is, the rules reinforce their superior images of themselves as civilized and also protect them and white society from encounters with those they deem unsophisticated or savage. The civility in these rules applies only to the ruling class. There is nothing civil about the rules for those who must practice them in deference to white citizens. These demeaning rules also reinforce framers’ positions of power (Wiebe 636).

Codes Mandate Reservations and Education

Consider colonists in pre-revolutionary America who were commoners subject to their British king. The code of the court, according to historian Gordon Wood, made them keenly feel "their subordination to gentlemen" so much so that they developed a physical "down look" and "knew their place and willingly walked while the gentlefolk rode" (29-30). They were generally agricultural laborers, semiliterate, and landless. Following the American Revolution, these same subservient "common folk" who had rid themselves of their oppressors—King George III and Parliament—soon othered Native Americans and African slaves alike. The irony is that those revolutionaries who quickly devised subverting codes of behavior had only just freed themselves from monarchic rule and the class-conscious peerage system of nobility in Great Britain.

The new Americans, banned for centuries from inheriting property in England, quickly appropriated vast lands Natives had lived on for millennia. They and the media painted Natives as bloodthirsty, unintelligible savages, when these indigenous people were instead responding to encroachments and attacks on their lands, people, and way of life. The new "subjects" lacked much recourse for their loss of homes and hunting grounds, other than warfare and raids that ultimately proved ineffective. Likewise, their efforts to coexist with white communities invariably failed. The Haudenosaunee, also known as the Iroquois, built log cabins, grew crops, engaged in fur trade, and intermarried with white settlers when the latter moved near their campgrounds (Smith-Rosenberg 217-18). This went on for fifty years until the Revolutionary War when the

Iroquois ultimately sided with the British, who had honored Native land agreements over the years more than the colonists had. Consequently, General George Washington instructed his troops to decimate the Iroquois nation, mandating the "total distruction [sic] and devastation of their settlements . . . [their] country may not be merely overrun but destroyed" (Koehler 429-30).

This history of the Iroquois is pertinent to the treatment of Native Americans, especially by General Washington, because it shows American attitudes toward the first inhabitants of these lands and their codes of civility that worked against this minority. The Iroquois sided with the British because the British treated them more civilly more often than the Americans did. Also, they expected the British to win the war. It is accurate to say broken treaties and casualties are part of war. Yet, the fact remains the first Euro-Americans, including Washington, forced their Native counterparts off their long-time territories and frequently broke treaties with Natives. This started even before the Revolutionary War. Hypothetically, had the Euro-Americans been the minority and here first, they would have expected treaties to be honored, and they technically could have been decimated by some more powerful nation.

These protracted wars between Native Americans and white settlers over land control lasted from 1622 until 1890. Prior to the end of armed conflict, Congress passed the Indian Appropriations Act in 1850 which created the reservations system. The United States government coerced Native Americans to move to tracts of land out West, far from their ancestral homes (congress.gov). This is how the older generations of the Native family in "Lullaby" were forced to leave their homelands and move to a reservation in Nevada. This tactic made Euro-Americans feel safe as they settled new lands and

augmented Euro-American territories and trade. It also increased control over the Natives, including attempts to assimilate them into Euro-American society and culture.

Another significant control measure was forcing Native American children to attend boarding schools where they had to learn English and other subjects and abandon their tribal languages, customs, cultures, and spiritual practices. In addition to being separated from their families, Native children often suffered physical and sexual abuses at these schools far from their homes (Rose and Fear-Segal 1-2). Historians uniformly denounce Native boarding schools as primary cudgels the federal government used to deculturize indigenous people, a tactic Silko features in her story “Lullaby.”

Colonists and their descendants blatantly crafted these “codes of education” to demoralize and acculturate these Native “others” (Burich 1). Silko implies this is what happened to the two Native American children in “Lullaby.” Government medical authorities in the story kidnap the children from their family and put them in school to acculturate them. Danny and Ella never see their parents again. This background information tells readers how pervasive and traumatic this practice of domination was. It also explains the code of civility that white settlers used to force English education on people they wanted to control. It was a blatant case of Othering because the Euro-Americans showed no respect for or interest in the Native American culture, the welfare of the children, or the grief of the parents.

Looking more closely at codes of civility applied to Native Americans shows that these codes increased as Euro-Americans continued to defeat the indigenous residents

militarily. Preservation of their homelands ended brutally with the Trail of Tears.[2] This massive relocation depicts the history of relocations like those ancestors in "Lullaby" were subjected to. Characters in the story live on a desolate reservation in Nevada, where their grandparents and others would have been forcibly displaced to by the government.

Discrimination Defines Short Stories

Many of the codes of civility examined in "Lullaby" also apply in chapter two to the African Americans in "A Girl's Story." Like the removal of Native Americans to reservations, the codes of civility existed to separate Black and white Americans. This segregating tactic ensured the code makers lived better than and had limited contact with the segregated Others—the African slaves and their descendants. To strip them of their culture and control them, white owners othered slaves by replacing their birth names with Christian ones, often assigning the slave-holder's surname as a last name. These newly democratized Americans further acculturated slaves by replacing their native religious practices with Christianity and their native languages with English (Strauss and Ford 37-38). Native Americans had received similar treatment even before Euro-Americans removed them to reservations. The codes permitted white Americans to think their discriminatory, and often violent and murderous, acts were civilized and allowable given their "superiority" as the ruling class and the "savage natures" of slaves.

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[2] Cherokee Natives were marched from their homelands in the southeast to the west in Oklahoma 1,200 miles away. More than 3,000 Natives died on the grueling trek known as the Trail of Tears. Repeated treaty travesties occurred and culminated in the Battle of Little Big Horn in 1876, which ended with the enforced removal of Sioux and Cheyenne tribes to reservations. Their sacred grounds became the sites of gold rushes. For generations, tribes have been asking the United States to honor the written agreements they made, with some success. Harjo "After the Trail"; Healy and Liptak "Supreme Court Ruling."

The codes also enabled them to exploit these Othered for financial, material, and sexual gain (Weissman 628-29). In the case of Native Americans, white conquerors primarily desired the Natives' gold and hunting and home grounds. Southern white men wanted more than land as the threat to the institution of slavery grew during the Civil War. Following the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, new codes of civility, called the Black Codes, appeared. These oppressive laws created a legal way to replace outlawed slavery with indentured servitude. The laws allowed, for example, confiscating property owned or rented by freed slaves, compulsory signing of restrictive work contracts, revoking voting rights, controlling travel and home locations, and forcing children to work. To keep a cheap labor pool nearby, instead of reservations, the patriarchs created segregated neighborhoods (Weissman 628-29). The Black Codes, which evolved into the Jim Crow laws, ensured not only second-class citizenship, but also the white class's ongoing fiscal, corporal, and emotional dominance over slave descendants through physical separation of the two races. Segregated public housing projects, like the one where "A Girl's Story" is set, are an outcome of the Jim Crow laws.

The protagonist in "A Girl's Story" never experienced any of these segregating codes or laws, but her elders would have. One in particular, Dada Bibi, teaches Rae Ann and others at the Community Center about their African heritage and civil activists working to gain equal treatment for Black citizens in America and around the world. Rae Ann starts to understand this issue but has not yet taken a place in that activists' arena.

Black Americans, like Native Americans and a Polish immigrants in the stories, suffer under multiple forms of discrimination and Othering from white American rule makers. The reservation in "Lullaby" paints a bleak, heart-wrenching existence for the

Native Americans compelled to live there. “A Girl’s Story” shows Black families unjustly denied opportunities to build generational wealth because of where they are forced to live and the mortgage lending laws that discriminate against Black Americans . In the “The Displaced Person,” a racist law against miscegenation ultimately kills a Polish farmhand.

In December 1865, the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment formally ended slavery in America. Yet, it offered no financial or advisory measures to those launching from life-long servitude immediately into total economic independence. The constitutional amendment freed African American slaves only on paper because they mostly lived in southern states, which were still seceded from the Union. Destitute, some former slaves opted to work under the contrived Black Code system. Others moved to the North where they faced the cruel truth that racism thrived there also. Black men and women willing to work for less money threatened residents’ jobs. Their Black skin color and willingness to accept lower wages caused them to suffer racial slurs, alienation, minstrel parodies, and physical attacks (Roberts 261). The discrimination endured by freed slaves resembles what Native Americans experienced after colonists expanded in America. The Native Americans were also othered by racist acts, segregation, physical attacks, and wars. Their main difference was that they were not brought to this land in chains.

Long-lasting effects of the subjugation of Native Americans, African Americans, and immigrants appear in all three short stories as racism, alienation from white neighborhoods, and acculturation, among others. In fact, each of these oppressions obviously stirred the authors to write these three short stories in the first place. Writers

are keen observers, and these women authors studied their communities and wrote about them often. They report descriptively here about oppressed lives that they saw. They likely hoped their readers would be motivated by what they read and act.

This hope is the prescriptive goal of my thesis: motivating readers to respond to the inequities written about in the stories, reflecting on the commonality of the abhorrent wrongs committed against marginalized people, and readers acting on their ideas about how to limit their own discriminating or uncivil ways of thinking and acting. Actual codes of civility manufactured much of the kind of misery inflicted on the characters and on real people in this country. None of these atrocities are fictional. They manifest what true, lasting harm human beings can inflict on one another. They show the reasons that incite wrongdoers to execute such deeds: desire for money, status, land, or fear of the Other.

This historical review of American society, culture, and laws in terms of race reveals origins of the setting for "A Girl's Story" and "The Displaced Person." Such a review informs Bambara raising harmful physiological, economic, and cultural factors related to living in public housing. For example, economic factors are outside of the girl's control, and in many ways are beyond her family's control. Also, Othering in the form of alienation occurs within the family when the grandmother does not educate the girl about her developing body. Cultural attitudes toward Black girls and their bodies also reflect historical submissiveness to males and unwanted pregnancies (Unger 28). In "The Displaced Person," consequences of the lack of knowledge about racial codes dominates the short story, as seen in the next section that covers codes.

To understand the origins of the codes of civility that affect African Americans in two of the stories means remembering the incivilities of their treatment after Emancipation. (Some affect Native Americans in regard to segregation and general discrimination.) Fear over loss of status and power after Reconstruction motivated white Americans to devise the Black Codes and the related Jim Crow laws to control the Black population through extreme segregation. These codes, along with total Black segregation instituted after the Plessy v. Ferguson federal ruling, insured that Black families would live away from white families, have lower job and banking opportunities and wages, along with substandard quality of education and medical care. The codes also restricted travel, recreation, shopping, and mixed-race marriages.

Redlining, which likely kept Rae Ann's family in the projects, denied lending to those in Black neighborhoods, which were considered risky loans, regardless of a family's ability to pay. White families' ability to get desirable mortgage loan insurance through the Federal Housing Administration was also denied to Black families. This in turn restricted the generational wealth that accompanies property investments to pass onto children. These incredibly discriminating measures insured that Rae Ann's family would not be able to move out of the projects. The entire reason for these onerous restrictions was to make sure white neighborhoods stayed homogeneous and desirable places to live.

The Supreme Court ruling in Plessy v. Ferguson made it nearly impossible for Black citizens to lead free lives like their white counterparts. The unanimous ruling was like putting nails in coffins of Black citizens prematurely. This "separate but equal" decision thoroughly segregated every aspect of life for Black citizens: education,

business, sports, recreation, transportation, travel, restaurants, and miscegenation. The last law on forbidden mixed-race marriages will play an important part in the last story, “The Displaced Person.” The reason for these laws was twofold—to limit white contact with Black persons, and to subjugate this minority class, even though human bondage in America had been outlawed more than fifty years before.

Of all measures racist white patriarchs instituted to protect their dominant status, three caused the most severe restrictions and stymied African Americans’ latitude to transcend their centuries of bondage: denial of lending through the Federal Housing Administration programs, redlining, and Jim Crow laws. Each of these legislated or business-implemented actions directly demeaned and disadvantaged Rae Ann’s family and others like hers and permanently segregated them into notoriously unsafe and structurally unmaintained public housing projects.

In the 1960s, three Civil Rights bills and the Fair Housing bill ended these unjust and uncivil strictures that seriously limited Black families being able to buy homes (Richardson). These restrictions hindered them in acquiring generational wealth to pass onto their children. Consequently, their children had less to start their own lives.

Codes of Civility and Othering Divide the Farm

The third story analyzed in this thesis uses Jim Crow laws and codes of civility practiced on a farm in rural Georgia after World War II. Historical background on these codes and laws is covered in the preceding section of this introduction. These codes and laws are covered in chapter two, but they are very publicly practiced in this story in ways they are

not as openly displayed in the setting of the public housing projects in “A Girl’s Story.” In this story, Flannery O’Connor employs a federal jobs program as the catalyst for her plot. The program introduced the country to thousands of displaced foreign workers and inspired O’Connor’s story about a Polish immigrant to America in 1951. An estimated seven to eleven million displaced persons were living in Germany, Italy, and Austria alone by the end of 1945.

At the request of President Harry Truman, the U.S. Congress enacted the Displaced Persons Act of 1948. Requirements included, among other points, “that all applicants . . . present guarantees by sponsors that housing was waiting for them and they would not displace American workers” (Displaced Persons Act). This meant they also had to demonstrate a job skill. Voluntary churches and social organizations placed them with families and businesses and arranged their passages overseas. This landmark federal law admitted 415,000 displaced persons into the United States from 1948 to 1952 (Ibid.). (Some of those working in the social service agencies would likely have been first- and second-generation American citizens, whose immigrant parents and grandparents had made transatlantic trips similar to those of refugees admitted under the Displaced Persons Act.) The act frightened American workers who thought they would lose their jobs to foreigners. Jobs were already tenuous because of returning service men re-entering the work force. Such fears of immigrants persist in America today.

O’Connor’s interest in the act became personal when the Polish Matysiak family came to work on her family’s farm near Milledgeville, Georgia, in 1951 (Griffith). The refugees moved into a three-room shack at Andalusia, the O’Connor homestead. The curtains in the shack were made of feed sacks, just as they are in the short story. The

presence of this foreign family, coupled with the humanitarian initiative of President Truman, inspired O'Connor's story that took its title from this Displaced Persons Act of 1948 (Ibid.). The author used the real situation of displacement fictively to show how codes of civility and xenophobia can negate human caring and understanding. She also shows how lack of cultural knowledge can be lethal to someone new to a country.

Being in Georgia was advantageous for the creation of this story on incivility, but not for the author of it. She was forced back to Georgia because of lupus. It was an incurable, chronic autoimmune disease that turned her body against itself, just as it had her father. Medical challenges might not normally apply to an author's work. In this case, however, the disease might have given her special insights into being Other and displaced. During a thirteen-year period, the deforming and debilitating disease bore down on her mentally and physically. Her rashes, swollen features and joints, and unsightly crutches set her apart in a modern society that highly valued physical perfection (Basselin 103-5). Her circumstances might have, in fact, given her insight into displaced and Othered characters like Mr. Guizac which she might not have had otherwise.

These disabling circumstances also gave the homebound writer the opportunity to comment firsthand on the treatment of refugees in the United States. Many citizens resisted their presence because of fear of their foreignness and of losing jobs to them. Her 1955 immigration story is as current now as it was sixty-five years ago. The codes of civility and the theory of Othering work well for analyzing the nativist forces at play in "The Displaced Person" and in America today. Both lenses reveal the outcomes of fear and some people's needs to feel superior. Understanding the codes and Jim Crow, and their origins, reveal the motives behind the characters' violent actions. It also puts today's

border concerns and immigration restrictions found in the thesis's conclusion into comparative perspective.

The foreign Mr. Guizac disturbs workers on the farm. First, they primarily fear lack of job security, though O'Connor implies their fears would not be as great if the three men worked harder to make the farm productive. Mrs. McIntyre, the owner of the farm, regularly tells the farmhands they are "[s]orry people" (O'Connor, "The Displaced Person" 293). Job security vanishes after the immigrant proves his value to Mrs. McIntyre. Instead of improving their own work ethics, the employees focus instead on criticizing the alien as strange for oddities like being in constant motion working and reporting Sulk stole a turkey. The three original workers choose not to take responsibility for themselves or their low productivity. They choose to blame their threatened jobs on the Other, the foreigner who does tasks well and efficiently. He also increases the owner's profits. Mr. Guizac hence becomes the scapegoat, which is a defining term used in Othering for people considered undesirable and responsible for whatever wrong is perceived. Of the Polish man and others like him, Mrs. Shortley thinks "there ought to be a law against them" coming to America (205).

Mr. Guizac is displaced and comes to Georgia because Nazis destroyed his home in Poland. Across the Atlantic Ocean, xenophobia scapegoats him again even before Mrs. McIntyre learns of the planned mixed-race marriage. In addition to lack of job security, farmhands also other the differentness of his Polish ethnicity and Catholic religion. They are suspicious of his way of life that they do not know and do not want to understand (196, 199). His situation is similar to others reviewed in this introduction. Native

Americans, slaves, freed slaves, and Black Americans all experienced oppression and Othering by the white ruling class as he did.

Such fears about job security and Otherness are the same in America today concerning immigrants, because of, for example, reductions in steel and coal production, COVID-19, service industries, entertainment, and air lines (Iacurci "Unemployment"). In the story, displaced workers flee their war-torn homes in Europe. Today many immigrants flee wars, killings, and kidnappings associated with drug cartels in Mexico and Central and South America, among other places and reasons (Thompson). In all instances, citizens already in America fear job losses due to immigrant workers, especially when new workers might work for less money just as freed slaves did. This fear can turn into severe incivility and Othering toward newcomers, as it does in O'Connor's story. Issues facing newcomers like Mr. Guizac to America are still relevant today. "The Displaced Person" offers a haunting lesson about what kinds of receptions immigrants can receive in any given year and what fear can motivate people to do.

Civility and Meaning-Making in American Literature

Using three short stories by American authors, this thesis delves into the origins of codes of civility and Othering techniques devised to accommodate the fears, dreams, and desires for wealth that created this country. By creating context for the development and enforcement of these codes, this study shows how various leaders made America predominant in the world in part by marginalizing some of its own residents. This is first seen in "Lullaby" by Native American author Leslie Marmon Silko, who writes of loss

and forgiveness on a Navajo reservation in New Mexico. In “A Girl’s Story,” Black American author Toni Cade Bambara writes about a prepubescent girl experiencing menarche alone, without ever being informed about such bleeding. White American author Flannery O’Connor shows the dark capabilities of closed minds confronted with an unknown and unwelcome displaced person. The stories provide a diverse cultural platform for reviewing unjust codes of civility used to divide citizens within their communities and in the nation. Such an approach speaks to the origin of America and how diverse populations have created this country, while at times severely opposing one another.

Analysis of events in each story show how pernicious codes and Othering negate civility and reveal the corrupting side of civility, the side that explains how and why human beings oppress one another. These narratives—local in setting yet universal in their messages—convincingly portray how the *meaning of* and *practice of* civility can contradict one another in devastating ways. Likewise, the synthesis of this multicultural analysis shows an instructive binary opposition between *civility* and *codes of civility*. Readers may to some extent see themselves in these stories, either as oppressors or those subjugated. Such intensive study can occasion acknowledgment and self-examination, which can then lead to changes in individuals’ societal behaviors and reduce Othering and marginalization of people and communities. Thus literature can prompt actions that increase codes of caring and the welfare of others —true hallmarks of civility.

Chapter II

LOSS AND FORGIVENESS IN "LULLABY"

The first and third short stories in this thesis mainly show the grim side of humanity—that is, how terribly human beings can treat one another. Grim history underpins the second story, but Bambara expertly weaves encouraging threads into the fabric of her story so readers appreciate the girl's struggle and applaud the ending. Having a young protagonist aids that effort. This is also true in a different sense in the first story, only with an elderly woman. This study embraces the disparate elements and looks closely at them to understand what motivates the wrong-doers, the code makers. Then it discerns what we the readers can apply to our own lives related to the characters' actions.

Which of their behaviors do we commit: prejudice, racism, oppression, Othering, character assassination, lying, greed, or lack of caring within our families and communities? The application becomes a mental and ethical inventory. Finally, this exercise stair steps us to reflect what we might want to change about ourselves and engage more with our families, friends, and communities.

To that reflective end, this thesis analysis begins with "Lullaby" by Leslie Marmon Silko. The study starts chronologically with Native Americans because they are the oldest race of people to inhabit this country. They were the first to encounter the British settling here, and they were the first to be colonized by them. In seven pages, Leslie Marmon Silko tells one outcome of the colonization of Native Americans as seen

through the eyes of an old woman as she lies in the snow beside her dying husband. Painful memories revisit her, re-creating each adversity induced by white authorities during her family's years on the Navajo reservation. Only joyful times with her mother and grandmother comfort Ayah as she recounts the loss of her children, her way of life, and her alienated husband. Only nature and the "luminous light from the snow" lifts her sadness (Silko 47). "Lullaby" reads like a spoken story alternating between memories and the present, as if Silko is sitting on the side of an arroyo telling her listeners this tale of loss, bitterness, and oppression. It is a tale of profound loss that speaks for her people. The bitterness that pulses in this matriarch's blood courses throughout Native American nations still today. Theirs is a bitter loss indicative of colonization throughout the world. Ayah's story shows the power used to appropriate and acculturate an entire nation.

Her story, four centuries in the making, wells up from the ongoing struggle between the powerful and the powerless, in this case Euro-American settlers and Native American inhabitants. In this scenario, the settlers designated themselves as civilized and the Natives as uncivilized savages. The former became the oppressors and the latter the Others, those who are unknown or different from the ruling class (Roberts 197). With these designations come rules, or codes, of civility, dictated by the conquerors. As stated previously, powerful members of society devise these codes, sometimes enacting them into laws, to represent their belief in their own superiority and thereby their justification for demeaning and controlling those they have subjugated. Codes separate the two groups, ensuring that the code makers live better and have limited contact with Others. The codes allow them to think their discriminatory acts are civilized and suitable given

their self-fashioned status. The codes also allow them to exploit Others for their own financial gain.

In the case of Native Americans, the conquerors desired the Natives' gold and their hunting and home grounds. Once marginalized in their former homelands, early European immigrants sought to make their fortunes in America, free of class distinctions and land ownership restrictions they had always known (Smith-Rosenberg 5). In escaping millennia of class bondage, European settlers quickly created their own structured societies, ones that oppressed Native Americans who had also lived on that land for millennia. Eventually the colonizers killed or dispatched the original residents to reservations like the one Ayah lives on, and where her ancestors were segregated roughly one hundred years before.

Ayah, the old Native woman, herself discriminated against by white authorities, rests her body against a cottonwood tree growing on an unnamed Indian reservation in New Mexico. Her memories show, however, that her spirit resides in the world of her forebears and lost loved ones, all forced to live in this inhospitable country. Treaties broken with Native Americans by federal government officials—those representing new Americans eager to occupy the Natives' rich ancestral homelands—are what brought the old ones here. This brokering of treaty terms was a code of civility practiced as far back as George Washington whereby white authorities performed representative civilized behavior toward those they considered savages. The government used treaties as the first option to avoid costly wars. They determined borderlines and compensations, and professed diplomacy and honor, all the while disregarding earlier treaties that Native Americans expected to block streams of settlers in their relentless quest for land and

resources (St. Germaine 345). The perfidy of this treaty making, ostensibly done in good faith between nations, more than marginalized Native Americans by relegating them west of the Mississippi River in desolate territory foreign to them. Often these sites were arid and infertile, not lands the conquerors wanted for themselves.

It is in one such bleak place that Ayah was born and lived her life. It is a place where she now rests against a tree to wait for her husband during a snow storm. Silko sets the scene by describing the wide deep Cebolleta Creek bed near Ayah, where in springtime anemic cows try to graze on stumps of grass that get no water from the trickling stream that meanders there in the summer. As she reflexively reaches for the buffeted snow that made "thick tufts [of light] like new wool," she smiles and remembers how her babies had done the same thing (43). She remembers too how her mother and grandma made wool blankets under the tamarack tree outside their home. Just like stories Native matriarchs pass down through generations, these women passed on to Ayah the art of blanket making as her small hands combed the wool for twigs and burrs, and together they dyed and spun the yarn to make blankets. Her mother wove her blankets so tight that they repelled rain water and enveloped Ayah in warmth on cold windy nights (44),

New wool represents the all-important matriarchal lineage in Native American cultures.[3] Female hereditary lines traditionally trace kinship in the Native American culture, not male lines. This mother and grandmother perform an ancient, respected art that provides exceedingly warm wool blankets for their family in harsh winters (and later as important income from tourists). In this snow drift, Ayah clutches a green wool Army

[3] Weaving was essential to early Native American tribes for warm clothing in the winter. Weaving is still practiced and used for income. Woman use sheep's wool to make clothing, blankets, shawls, bedding, and gifts. Many women have traditionally worn these wool blankets as clothing as Ayah does. Weaving has matrilineal significance because of the skill it requires. Mothers pass this skill down to their daughters. Jailer-Chamberlain "Indian Blankets."

blanket "unraveling on the edges." It was a gift sent from her son Jimmie that told Ayah years ago he recognized the significance of wool to his mother (43). He acknowledged her skill and knew she would be interested to see this product. She never suspected she would wrap herself in it following his death in war. Even though this manufactured Army issue does not match the quality of Native blankets, it appears throughout the story as a metaphor for memories and comfort, and is a tangible life line to her son.

In Native American culture, green represents nature, harmony, healing, and endurance. Jimmie would have known the symbolism of this color when he sent it ("Color Meanings"). Its representations, in addition to the significance of the wool fabric, apply to Ayah. Nature calms her, as it did when "the sun warmth relaxed her and took her fear and anger away" while she hid her children from doctors who wanted to kidnap them (46). Nature balances her turbulent emotions, and this balance is even more pronounced in her lullaby at the end of the story. The green blanket is also comforting and helps bear the loss of her son. It is all she has left of him. As for green being a color that represents endurance, she wears the blanket like a shawl during countless hours of waiting for Chato outside the bar, and more importantly when she enters the bar. There she endures the unwelcoming stares of the men and then prevails over their affront as she "look[s] back at them steadily," stating by her presence—in a place she is Other—that the white men have wronged her people (48). She feels their fear as she stands planted on "her" land with teeth "clenched tight, like there was nothing anyone could do to her now" (49). Ayah gains this defiant courage after she boldly dries the green blanket on the bar's stove. It gives off the wet wool smell "of new-born goats" warming at her family's fire (48). The blanket drying here is redolent of new birth and community. In this hostile, foreign place,

the non-native green Army blanket, and its sensory value, still affects her all these years later so that "[s]he felt calm" as she silently accuses her oppressors (48). As an old woman who has nothing left to lose, she boldly dares them to do anything to make her move before she is ready to leave.

Earlier she was thinking about the wool blankets her mother and grandmother made. In reminiscing, Ayah acknowledges that "her life had become memories" (43). Her existence lacks physical substance and purpose. She steers her mind to the wool blankets of her childhood to deflect from the faded, tattered green Army blanket that embraces her in the snow. Her pleasure in nature does not spare her from that shabby blanket or the memory of her older son's death. Jimmie died in a helicopter crash presumably in the Vietnam War. This story was written in the 1970s, yet Silko does not name the war, which is in keeping with other vague details about places or events such as where their children are taken and whether they actually had tuberculosis. When an Army officer appears at their door, codes of civility rock this family. He " . . . . gave them a yellow piece of paper and told them that Jimmie was dead" (44). There is little likelihood his body will be sent because the helicopter he was in burned after it crashed.

Minimal appropriate signs of respect are shown at this death notification. The military man did not follow Army protocol afforded white families at such times of loss. A notification team, including someone close to the family, requests permission to enter the home, and introductions are made. Only when he knows the names of family members does the lead officer respectfully deliver the official notice of death, when, where, and how the soldier died, and the deep regret of the soldier's commanding officer and that of the Commandant of the Army. The officer also explains burial ceremonies,

funeral honors, military benefits, and entitlement assistance for the family. These benefits can include monetary compensation and gratuities after death, life insurance benefits, GI death benefits, and social security payments ("Military").

Not one of these courtesies or compensations is extended to this Native American family by the unidentified man in the "khaki uniform trimmed in gold." Lack of consideration begins with him not bringing a Navajo interpreter or friend of the family, especially knowing there could be language barriers on the reservation; he also does not identify himself, ask to come in, or even verify Chato and Ayah as Jimmie's parents. A code of silence occurs when he does not name or acknowledge the war that was the cause of the soldier's death and where exactly their son died. He does not suggest as a kindness or sign of respect that they sit. He only hands Chato "a yellow piece of paper" and announces Jimmie is dead. He extends no condolences or thanks for their son's service and ultimate sacrifice. The man is understandably bewildered when Chato says for the Army to keep their son's burned body, but he does not inform the family of any benefits or entitlements they are eligible for as next of kin and that they could clearly use. He only nods and leaves the grieving family without speaking.[4]

Had they been white parents, fuller civility would have been extended to this couple, as stipulated in the Army Manual of Conduct. The officer considers these parents as Other and treats them as though he might catch a disease from them. No one would relish such an assignment, but he performs the minimum requirements of his task and

[4] Silko provides no explanation for Chato's instructions about the burned body, but some Native tribes like the Poncas believe the body should return to nature in burial, without embalming. They likewise consider cremation, which burns a body to ashes, to be taboo. Cremation is akin to modern-day funeral pyres, which would be antithetical to some traditional Native burial ceremonies. Cantrell "Death." The section on the Ponca burials includes information on burned bodies.

leaves as quickly as possible, never once showing sympathy or concern for this bereaved family. He would not have understood, or try to understand, the Native American tradition of natural burials and marred bodies. Judging by the boxcar shack they live in with no electricity or running water, he would have seen the destitute family's need for income and should have told them about available assistance with death benefits they have a right to collect. He performs none of these stipulated duties. What he does perform is a breach of duty that denies these Native Americans equal treatment and care under the regulations of the U.S. Army. He obviously does not think these marginalized people deserve humane treatment, the kind of treatment he would hope to receive in a similar circumstance. He just leaves the grieving family without speaking. Merit aside, it is ironic that Jimmie is good enough to fight and die for a country that did not accept him or treat him and his family as equal citizens, but he and his family are of no value to the United States after he could no longer fight in its war.

This encounter typifies how marginalized people are expected to be civil and responsive to those in the majority class. The couple responded to the stranger even though he did not introduce himself. If Chato or Ayah had been afraid of, or refused to listen to, the military man because they did not know him, a police officer from the Bureau of Indian Affairs would have been the next person to stop at the boxcar. Reverse civil behavior is generally not the case, as this exchange shows. Whether the Army officer decides on his own to behave as he does or whether this kind of disregard for the dignity of grieving Navajo families was common treatment, he sees no need to extend common civility to this family.

The same kind of disregard, extreme cruelty really, forced on Ayah almost cripples her: the removal of their two young children, ostensibly to a tuberculosis facility in Colorado. Again, white government officials arrive unannounced in khaki uniforms when Ayah is home alone with Danny and Ella. Once again there is no Navajo interpreter to explain to Ayah that the doctors think her children have tuberculosis because her grandmother recently died of it. There is no proof of this presented, however. All Ayah understands is the doctors want her to sign papers, which she knows how to do, and she wants them to go.

She is proud and pleased Chato taught her how to write her name in English so she can make them leave by signing their papers, only understanding the import of her action when the doctors move to take her two children. She spirits them to the foothills and eludes the medics until the next day when the authorities come back with a Native American policeman from the federal Bureau of Indian Affairs. Native Americans negatively viewed these officers as complicit agents of the U.S. government who dictated to tribes what they could and could not do in relation to treaties between the two nations ("From War"). This posse comes back to tell Chato they can take the children because Ayah signed the papers allowing it. The white doctors have insured the removal is legal even though the children are not coughing blood and there is no proof of infection provided. It cannot be disputed successfully in a court because of the signed document. It could, however, be disputed on the grounds of immorality.

Multiple layers of this abomination start with the ability of the doctors to get a signature without the signee understanding the document. They know Ayah does not understand them, and had maybe even waited until Chato, who could speak English, was

at work. The fact that " . . . they waved papers at her and a black ball-point pen, trying to make her understand their English words" shows her incomprehension about what she was signing. Fear of their presence and the way they eyed her children, "like the lizard watches the fly,"[5] causes her to sign the papers "in three different places he pointed to" (45). Ayah operates out of fear and submission to the white doctors. She keeps her head bowed and never looks at the man's face while signing. She "stared at the ground by their feet" waiting for the intruders to leave her home. They intimidate her into signing her children away. Had the medical team behaved this way in a white person's home, there would have been a far different outcome. In fact, these immoral acts of intimidation and kidnapping would not have even been attempted there. Yet, these sorts of separations occurred often on reservations.

Fear of tuberculosis, also known as White Man's Plague, was prevalent in the United States at this time. In this reservation case, doctors could contain the two children's possible contagion by sending them away. Reservations lacked, among other facilities, sanitoriums or convalescent centers where infected persons could be treated near their homes, options which existed in cities around the country. As early as 1897, Dr. James R. Walker worked unsuccessfully in South Dakota to construct sanitary camps on reservations. He proposed economical tent camps to create a familiar environment and

[5] Silko's reference to the watchfulness of lizards transcends hunting here. In Native American lore, lizards hold multiple forms of symbolism. Most lizards are considered harmless but can be omens. That the doctors eyeing her children remind her of a lizard watching and waiting to eat its prey symbolizes some of the negative connotations in Native culture. Her thought of a lizard could be an omen about spies and informants. Chameleons are seen as messengers of impending sudden changes in someone's health, lifestyle, or home. Lake-Thom 149.

increase the success of eliminating infected waste from reservations.[6] But, the commissioner of the Indian Service Agency, Francis E. Leupp, opted "for the safety of society" and placed the sanitoriums in large cities, far away from reservations (Southerton 123).

Had Leupp adopted even some of the measures Walker proposed, children like Ayah's could have been monitored on their reservations while staying home. Danny and Ella would not have been ripped from their family, and they and their parents would not have suffered anguish. This is yet another example of how Native American lives were less valued than the lives of white Americans. In the story, the children are forced to leave home without even being tested for the disease. There is also a plausible reason for this maneuver.

Authorities engineered opportunities to separate children from their parents. They could be removed from reservations for tuberculosis treatment and then to boarding schools for assimilation into mainstream American society. Eradication of indigenous cultures was the larger goal (Davis 20). The education engineers wanted to assimilate Native children to grow up amenable to Euro-American society and not resistant to losing

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[6] Walker described permanent log homes with earthen floors—funded by Americans to "civilize" the Natives—increased TB infection on reservations. Sick individuals spit sputum onto the dirt floors, then dust carried pathogens into the air and infected others in the poorly ventilated shacks. He also said the Natives refused to live in a log home where a person had died, whereas a tent could be disinfected and put in another location after a person died in it. Southerton 118, 122. Death inside a dwelling would cause Navajos to abandon it and build a new home, or hogan, elsewhere. In addition, they would make a hole in the northern wall of the vacated hogan to enable the deceased's trapped spirit, or chindi, to escape. The hole also indicated that structure was contaminated by death was never to be inhabited again. "Navajo Indian Hogan" navajorug.com/pages/navajo-land-and-history#3.

Native culture and territories (Smith 89). This family-splitting measure was one more travesty foisted on an already-uprooted population that had little recourse to combat forced separations.

Boarding schools served as the vehicle for assimilation. Operators showed incivility and immorality in their methods of increasing enrollment and destroying cultural upbringing. Richard Pratt, the founder of the first off-reservation boarding schools, said he would "[t]ransfer the savage-born infant to the surroundings of civilization, and he will grow to possess a civilized language and habit" (90). This was done by physically punishing students for speaking in their Native languages, in addition to indoctrinating the children in Christianity and Euro-centric cultural values (Ibid.). Journalist Mary Annette Pember investigated records at her mother's Native boarding school and verified her stories of a traumatic childhood there. Pember said, "Students were stripped of all things associated with Native life. . . . They were physically punished for speaking their Native languages." Survivors described "pervasive physical and sexual abuse" and scarce food and medical attention. Her mother "carried the pain of those lessons for her entire life" (Pember).

Ayah would have known about the ongoing abduction of Native children initiated by colonizers in the 1800s. She does not appear to have been subjected to forced assimilation herself because of her childhood memories with her mother and grandmother. But she sees the effects of her children's separation from her. Danny and Ella's two return visits lend credence to the assimilation theory. During neither visit do they show evidence of having tuberculosis. They do, however, display remoteness toward their mother. The white caretaker brings Danny and Ella home for the first unannounced

visit about six months after their removal. Danny is shy and "hid behind the thin white woman who brought them." Ella, a baby, does not know her mother until Ayah holds her and Ella "nuzzled close to her as she had when she was nursing" (49). What could this mother have been feeling as she witnessed her young children growing away from her?

The trauma of forced separation will be felt by all members of the family. This is true today also for immigrant children separated from their parents at the U.S.-Mexico border, according to Dr. Collen Kraft, president of the American Academy of Pediatrics. "We know that separating parents from children is not a great idea. But science tells us this is actually child abuse," Kraft says (Fox "Child Abuse"). Ayah, because of her age, will not experience the effects of trauma as long as her children will.

In the few hours they spend with her, Ayah recognizes the white people are weaning her children "from these lava hills and from this sky." When they return six months later, in June, Ella's stare tells her mother, now a stranger, not to try to pick her up. Smiling at her daughter is the most she feels safe doing to keep from frightening her own child. She knows the whites have succeeded in making her an Other to her little daughter. When she speaks cheerfully with Danny, he responds in a broken language as "he could not seem to remember and he spoke English words with the Navajo" (49). Evidence of assimilation is making him Other to his Native world, though he instinctively appears to hold on to ties to nature when he shows his mother a scrap of folded paper he keeps in his pocket which he says is a bird.

This gesture causes Ayah to have Chato ask the woman if the children are "home for good this time." Instead, he asks the woman, "How much longer?" The way he asks the question makes its meaning ambiguous. He knows what the woman thinks as she

stares uncomfortably at the boxcar shack. The woman shakes her head and says she does not know. Ayah understands the gesture as “Never.” How would Ayah have learned this if Chato had not been there when a government car arrived unannounced, again? Like other white authorities, the woman disregards the likelihood of limited communication skills on the reservation. She does not bring an interpreter. She does not respect this place or the people, and her actions show it.

Ayah cannot witness her children leaving for good and turns away from them without saying good-bye. Her understanding proves correct because the children do not reappear, and the story shows these parents growing old. Ayah knows their abduction will accomplish their assimilation, the loss of their family ties and Native heritage, and she is powerless to stop the calculated strategy white authorities forced on her children and thousands of others. The recorded number of children taken from their families by this education code of civility is more than 100,000 (Smith 89). The incivility of abusing her children by kidnapping them in order to disabuse them of their Native family and heritage nearly incapacitates Ayah.

In the story, Ayah realizes she bore the loss of her children who died as infants better than the loss of Danny and Ella. She had two babies who died of natural causes. She carried them herself for burial nestled in crevices of nearby boulders, “covered in fine brown sand with round quartz pebbles. . . . She had endured it because they had been with her.” Their dead bodies remained near her, while the living bodies of her confiscated children “were in a place called Colorado, in a place full of sick and dying strangers, her children were without her” (47). Years later, she could still not bear the pain of intense persecution dictated by white authorities.

When it first happened, she stayed in the hills where memories of the blue sky, pebble toys, broomstick horse, and swing simultaneously fed the intense pain in her belly and "choked life from her." The pain left no room in her stomach or lungs. Her bitterness about the cruelties of white men fill her body so much that she cannot eat or breathe. Her hate for Chato is what fuels her body. She does not hate him because he let the men take the screaming children. She understood it was her action, the signing of the papers, that enabled this rupture in this family. Rather, she hates her husband because "he had taught her to sign her name" (47). He made it possible for her to be used by white authorities determined to dismantle the Native way of life.

Silko does not say whether this lesson was Chato's idea, or whether Ayah had asked him to teach her. She only writes, "It was something she was proud of" (45). Ayah's pride indicates she may have requested the lesson, which only compounds the treachery. This seemingly small concession to the ways of the white world obliterated her family. She still tortures herself with memories of "the old ones" counseling her never to learn their "language or any of their ways: it endangered you." She realizes she could have avoided this fate if she had not mastered her signature, or if Chato or Jimmie been present; they would have read the papers and explained them to her. She would have never signed them, and they could have become a non-compliant family shorted on rations, with their remaining children intact. This so-called code of civility not only separated the children from their parents, but it also separated the parents. Ayah slept alone on the hill until winter set in. Then she moved to the children's vacant sleeping place in the hogan. She was resolute in her hatred and "did not lie down beside Chato again until many years later" as he lay dying (47). If Ayah requested that Chato teach her

to sign her name, it is difficult to understand her hatred. He would have been doing what she requested. She acknowledges she was the one who signed the papers. Possibly she hated that he had ever learned any white men's skills. This seems plausible given the way she repeatedly scoffs at his white men's skills. This would not be a rational time, though, for Ayah, even years later. It would be impossible to recover from the loss of children under these treacherous conditions. It is interesting Silko only gives Ayah's perspective.

In effect, this white decree about education causes Ayah to lose her children and then her husband by Othering him the same way whites Othered Native Americans. Though for a different reason, she rejects Chato just as Euro-Americans reject the Native American race. White people show no interest in learning the Native culture that is foreign to theirs. The invaders view their culture as superior and seek to oppress the Natives as inferiors. Chato chooses to assimilate some of the English ways: he learns English and Spanish, he drinks at the saloon, and he works on the rancher's farm tending cattle and building and inspecting barbed-wire fences, with both the cattle and fences once being foreign to his own people. His choice to be different from his wife, who has learned only one white way, is necessary for survival in their new, money-oriented world. On the desolate reservation, Chato cannot follow traditional ways of hunting to support his family. The spouses' differences, except in the fateful learning to sign her name, ultimately cause Ayah and Chato to lose their remaining children and each other.

Ayah chose not to learn to read English when she learned to sign her name. Had she allowed herself that form of assimilation, she would not have signed away their children. But even by learning just her signature, she goes against the beliefs of the elders, who contended learning the language and ways of white men only "endangered

you" (47). Her transgression leads to pride in what she has learned and is paradoxically analogous, in a basic way, to the fatal bite of the apple in Eden, that desire for knowledge related to self, no matter how seemingly insignificant here. In Ayah's case, she does not seek to know more than someone else. For her, it is pride in knowing how to put her name on paper: knowing something the English know, something that relates to her name and to her alone. This desire for penmanship goes against her oral culture, severs her from those she loves. It leads to the complete dissolution of her family. Her signature signifies her break with her people, and it banishes her family, in essence making them Other to her. Her children are carried off and soon lose the ability to talk with her in their Native tongue. She physically separates herself from her husband, who becomes Other to her because he made it possible for her to go against the teaching of their elders and to lose her children.

Years later the rancher also banishes Chato because he said the Native ranch hand "was too old to work for him anymore" and he and Ayah had "to be out of the shack the next afternoon" (47). The incivility of the white code of civility toward Native Americans allows the rancher to disregard Chato's years of loyalty and hard work and discard him with no consideration or monetary compensation. Ayah takes a perverse satisfaction in the rancher's indifference, thinking, "All of Chato's fine-sounding English talk didn't change things" regarding societal treatment of white men toward Native men (47). She feels the same satisfaction about his later being reduced to tending old ewes after the many years he rode the white man's "big quarter horses and worked with cattle." Feeling no sorrow for his demotion, she reasons, "[H]e should have known all along what would happen" (50).

One can reason that the grave loss of her children—due first to the white men's war and second to their determination to assimilate Native Americans—caused her to judge Chato's efforts and choices so harshly. In a place that was more of a prison than a home, Chato earned the best living he could. As Natives became increasingly confined on reservations, women fared better in this diminution of Native life: they continued in their traditional roles of weaving, growing crops, and rearing children, although the abduction of Danny and Ella denies Ayah a large part of her role. Also, she only remembers weaving with her mother and grandmother, but she is not shown weaving herself. In addition, the land around their shack is parched and unable to sustain crops. All of these imposed factors contributed to her loss of her culture and family.

Being confined to reservations restricted men more and limited their options for supporting their families. Hunting grounds mostly disappeared, as did the need to protect their tribes. White authorities pushed them to farm, but that was women's role and went against their long traditions and culture. Also, land on reservations was often not arable. For all these reasons, Chato chose the white man's way of cattle ranching, likely the only option available to him. He needed to know English and Spanish to be employed by the rancher. This work enabled him to feed his family and feel successful. Even so, knowing English did not help either husband or wife in the end. Assimilation, in its varying degrees, only divided them. It separated them from—and made them Other to—their children and to each other.

Although he is Other to her, Ayah breaks her reverie beside the tree and seeks out Chato after he has not come from the bar as he said he would. This trek returns the story to the beginning of the narrative, where Ayah rests against the cottonwood tree

contemplating the snow and memories of helping her mother and grandmother weave blankets. Now back in real time, she looks for him at Azzie's Bar, where the bar owner, who did not allow Indians, let Chato in because "he could talk Spanish like he was one of them" (48). Usually she would find her husband sprawled drunk on the steps. At these times, she thinks he has remained a stranger to her after forty years. This particular time, unlike any other, she walks inside the bar, leaving the door open wide letting snow drift in. Even though she is Other in this place, she holds herself straight and immediately displays she has no fear. She is slow and deliberate as she walks the room looking for her husband. The men remain silent.

While making the bold move to dry her wet blanket near the stove, "the wet wool smell reminded her of new-born goats" warming near the home fire. This familiar smell makes her calm. Here again a sensory memory brings her comfort in a time of need. Her age prevents the men from making her leave. She feels their fear as they look at her "like she was a spider crawling across the room" and "[s]he looked back at their faces steadily" (48). The bar owner does not even tell her to shut his door. Ayah knows she has complete control of the room, something she has never experienced around white people.

Ayah then realizes these speechless men look like the frightened woman who brought her children back the second and final time. The shabbiness of the boxcar shack, the children talking in their strange Native language, and the towering snow clouds scare the white woman. In this table-turning setting in the bar, the bold self-assuredness of this old, second-class woman unnerves the white men. She stares at them the way she could not look at the abductors of her children years ago. Time grants her fortitude.

Not finding Chato there, Ayah leaves the bar only when she is ready, satisfied (for a third time in the story) that here the white men were afraid of her. She thinks the set of her face and her clenched teeth told them "there was nothing anyone could do to her now" (49). White men had already thoroughly oppressed her by taking everyone she loved. They seemed to sense she had nothing to lose and maybe thought she could be a threat, possibly through a curse or hidden weapon. Her mere defiant presence made them feel vulnerable, which gave her the justified satisfaction of forcing them to experience the menace of hostility she often had been subjected to.

Pleased with her new-found ability to intimidate the white men, Ayah finds that Chato's harsh dismissal has literally made him ill, "sick and shivering." She steers him to a slope of boulders to find relief from the wind. Then she gathers half of Jimmie's green blanket around him and lies beside him once again because "only her body could keep him warm" in this frigid weather (47). She realizes he is dying and will not feel his life leave him because the wine will make him sleep. The familiar tucking motion reminds her of putting her babies to bed, which fills her heart. Maybe this intense feeling for her babies allows her to soften toward this husband she estranged. She sings him into his final sleep with a tender song her mother and grandmother sung to her, one that Silko composed herself:

> *The earth is your mother,*
>
> *She holds you.*
>
> *The sky is your father,*
>
> *He protects you.*
>
> *Sleep,*
>
> *Sleep.*

Rainbow is your sister,

She loves you.

The winds are your brothers,

They sing to you.

Sleep

Sleep.

We are together always

We are together always

There never was a time when this was not so (51).

Ayah ensures her husband's spirit leaves his body on the wings of their Native tongue and with the words of their ancestors. It is a gift she can give because her spirit still revels in green nature. Oppression has no power over that. In the end, that spirit is all she has. All of Ayah's matrilineal worth matters little against the centuries of cultivated patriarchal oppression that continues to rule her world. Her lineage did not save her children or her husband. It did not protect her from the multiple codes of civility that subjugated her: degradation, forced assimilation, disenfranchisement, isolation, loss of culture and habitat. Her lineage does, however, enable her to make a last stand on the bar room floor, a white male bastion, when she boldly stares down the men who gladly took her husband's money but offered him only tolerance, not friendship. Her lineage also saves her spirit as she cradles with death among the boulders. It does so through a Native song she had forgotten but that abides in her being through her ancestors. The lullaby she sings to her dying husband rises from the Native cosmos unbidden, a tribute to earth and sky's eternal protection. It transcends property lines and acquisitions, oppression and entitlement, racism, and indifference. Her long bloodline underscores the continuity of

nature and humans' place in it, asserting, "We are together always." Amidst rocks weather-worn smooth, this vast immutability embraces all her losses, oppression, bitterness, and anger. It shoulders her accumulated resentments and sorrows so she can forgive her husband long enough to lie beside him one last time to comfort him and cradle the two of them in their enduring Native heritage. The English language and ways have no place in this pivotal moment. It is only the ancient oral tradition that blankets them both.

Chapter III

PRAGMATISM TEACHES SELF-RELIANCE

Spirit and nature close “Lullaby” and in similar yet different ways open “A Girl’s Story” by Toni Cade Bambara. Ayah’s spirit enables her to forgive her past oppressions and her husband. She sings him a nature lullaby about the Earth as he lies dying in the snow. Rae Ann experiences nature on a very different level at the opening of her story. Her encounter is also biological but expresses itself as menarche, not outdoor nature. Because menstruation has never been explained to her, she must rely on her own determined nature, or spirit, to deal with a disturbing flow of blood by herself. The elderly woman and the girl share a like struggle relative to each one’s age, and the way each one responds to adversity is analyzed here.

Young Black girls mattered to Toni Cade Bambara. Their particular vulnerability to males and systems that would harm them concerned her. In some of her short stories, she made the uncommon choice of featuring pubescent girls like Rae Ann as protagonists, role models of feisty girls, quick to speak up about an injustice, eager to right a wrong done to them or others (Muther 448). In “A Girl’s Story,” Bambara introduces the lead character lying perpendicular to a wall in the midst of a young-life crisis: never-explained menarche. Rae Ann distracts herself looking at artwork on the wall, contemplating a foreign language, and how to stanch this inexplicable, insistent flow she thinks might kill her. Even so, she persists in her life-saving efforts that show

ingenuity while dealing with a scary situation. Her ability to push through fear and think pragmatically models to young readers how to handle scary situations. Children like Rae Ann growing up in public housing projects especially need skills of self-reliance because of bullying, segregation, or often being left alone in threatening neighborhoods. They and Rae Ann have been intentionally set apart and cut off from mainstream society solely because of their skin color. Their chances of employment are fewer than those outside of the projects, and they earn less if they do find a job. Their chances of being arrested for violent crimes are greater also. They are more likely to have higher school dropout rates (Chyn 3029). Rae Ann is learning how to take care of herself, and her involvement at the Community Center indicates she will help those around her do the same.

Public housing projects resemble reservations because both represent rejection and marginality. Both were designed to exclude the so-called inferior Black or Native class from the 'superior' white class. Projects are an urban version of reservations built on concrete for primarily Black residents. It never states that Rae Ann and her family live in public housing or in what city, but various pieces of information indicate the story is set in an inner-city housing project: the Community Center near the apartment building ("A Girl's Story" 152), references to street fighting and gang activity ("A Girl's Story" 152, 156, 158), being "on the block" (154, 155, 162), policemen who frequently beat up boys from the block (163), Rae Ann's cinematic vision of a dude running from police through alleyways "back of the projects" (163), and the presence of air shafts between the dwellings and a pigeon coop on the roof. Of these facts, the existence of air shafts is the most telling about the physical structure of the tightly spaced project apartment

buildings.[7] This information describes a set-off neighborhood that experiences street and gang violence and physical encounters with the police.

Each glimpse of Rae Ann's world indicates it is not a safe place. Intentional violence surrounds her. Now she must contend with those dangers and the natural violence disrupting her own body. The organic shedding of bloody uterine tissue contrasts with unnatural violence in the projects caused by resentments about segregation and feelings of inferiority it causes. Also, the girl's natural menarche is the antithesis of the unnatural violence done to her mother's body. On this day, Rae Ann does not feel safe from her own body or her neighbors. Violence is part of this young girl's life.

Included with these concerns is the aggressive behavior of boys regarding girls in the projects. They and her brother, Horace, degrade girls by standing on a corner and hollering for "their women" whom they expect to "show up quick or later for their asses" (154). They use a racially cultural "bragging voice" that shows they do not respect girls. Their arrogant, oppressive behavior shows they demean girls and make disrespectful, domineering demands of them that the girls submit to. This hollering and one boy in particular, Pee Wee, are on Rae Ann's mind as she thinks of new strategies to deal with her bleeding. Rae Ann is right to only "halfway" like Pee Wee and not respect him "any" (154). This discernment shows she is developing good judgment skills that she will need when she encounters demanding, uncivil people in the future.

In her family's apartment, Rae Ann lies on one of the beds in a bedroom she shares with her grandmother. She thinks again of this all-too-real re-enactment of her

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[7] Shafts allow a slender opening between close buildings that developers had to create to meet design requirements for one window facing outdoors in each apartment room. The pigeon coop on the roof suggests the possibility of a tenant's enterprise either for self-sufficiency or income. Pigeon, or squab, meat is a form of livestock dating back to ancient Egypt. Heisler "Breeding Pigeons."

mother's bloody death after a mangled barbershop abortion. Not only did that experience traumatize Rae Ann, but she is increasingly convinced she could meet the same fate because none of her attempts to stop the insistent discharge succeed. Her maternal grandmother, M'Dear, has never told her about menstruation. The girl has no other frame of reference except her mother's death from similar bleeding. Here Bambara illustrates her recurring theme about the importance of educating young girls. In her stories, she teaches that women need to "establish protective bonds with young girls in the community in order to pass on to them advice needed for survival" (Butler-Evans 101).This is a time she could have used education on cycles. Rae Ann's predicament shows what happens when her grandmother does not prepare her for her changing body. Dada Bibi is aware of the girl's changes and wants to talk to her, but menarche begins before that conversation happens.

Consequently, the girl does not understand what this blood represents or how a woman even gets pregnant, and how she can end the pregnancy and have life-threatening problems. It is unknown if she was ever told why her mother was bleeding. Rae Ann only knows she is bleeding, not why, and she is not able to make it stop. This is a case of the community of older women not preparing Rae Ann in the way that Bambara thinks is so important. Even with the great concern this experience causes Rae Ann, though, she figures out what she needs to do to take care of herself, and this helps her become more confident and self-reliant.

Speculative Incivility

Biologically, one could speculate this girl is likely experiencing menarche early. Rae Ann is probably only eleven based on her intermediate level status for the next school year. In most school systems, children at this level are eleven and twelve. It is possible M'Dear has not talked to her about menstruation because she thinks her granddaughter is too young. Or it is possible M'Dear entered womanhood the same un-informed way Rae Ann has. Regardless, after M'Dear gets home, she quickly launches into vehement accusations when Rae Ann emerges from the bathroom in a bathrobe. She focuses vociferously on suspected consequences of her granddaughter's fertility, which she must have had to assumed already exists. In a furious barrage of allegations, she accuses Rae Ann of playing hooky from school, having sex, getting a backstreet abortion, and turning out just like "your mama all over again" (160). That she voices these terribly serious accusations to such a young person she knows and loves amounts to abuse and cruelty. In fact, this scene, and Rae Ann's concerns about M'Dear's temper in general, establish the woman as a benevolent oppressor prone to speculative incivility about her granddaughter's supposed promiscuity. This speculative behavior occurs elsewhere in the story, and in the world. It is most prevalent on social media and the internet. This common Othering behavior damages a person's and groups' integrity and self-esteem by unfairly charging them with untrue accusations that change other people's perceptions of them. It is vicious behavior intended to harm. In fact, it comes across as a type of witch hunt where accusations are made without any evidence.

Horace also tyrannizes his little sister in several exchanges in this scene, most notably about taking her to a nurse to do an abortion right. He is not trying to be helpful talking like that. He also appears pleased he is not the one in trouble. Possibly he is

scared too because he is old enough to know the truth about their mother's death. He could want his sister to have a safer procedure, although she does not need it. To add to concerns about demanding boys and violence in the projects, she also must defend herself from maltreatment at home.

Regarding M'Dear's tirades, her onslaught is hard to excuse, but it is probably rooted in the tragic loss of her daughter and in the reality of dangers in their neighborhood. This mother has been traumatized, and she likely acts out of fear for her granddaughter. Also, she does not want to be traumatized again. She has witnessed what a true unstoppable flow of blood means. She also knows pressures young girls face in the projects. Rae Ann could become a pregnancy statistic. The irony of this extreme upset is that M'Dear presumes this eleven- or twelve-year-old girl has already started her period. But, they have never discussed puberty. She has operated under the premise they have not needed to. That discussion and one about sexual intercourse have not transpired—only dire warnings about "not letting boys feel on your tits" (155). There has also been no education about how Rae Ann could get pregnant, new birth control methods, or an option for ending a pregnancy medically.

Whatever reason these talks have not occurred, it is still not rational for M'Dear to engage in speculative incivility toward her young granddaughter. That M'Dear should get ballistic is true to character. Her behavior in the situation exposes her deep fear and her formidable nature. It also shows why Rae Ann would loathe going to this imposing woman the way M'Dear now surprisingly whispers she should have (161). M'Dear was not the person Rae Ann wanted with her when she began this struggle with the unknown. Dada Bibi was. Rae Ann knew her teacher would treat her civilly and assure her she was

“not being punished” and “[w]ould give an explanation and make things right” (153). Of all the characters in the three short stories analyzed here, Dada Bibi is a case study in humaneness and civility.

Further Incivility and Insensitivity at Home

Like Pee Wee, Horace uses the same unfamiliar confusing voice when he comes home and is momentarily concerned about his sister locked up in the bathroom crying and screaming at him not to come in. The first time he bams on the door saying, “Hey . . . You okay?” the tone of his voice makes her tear up and shiver. The second time he queries with her given name, Rachel, and she screams for him not to come in. He stops turning the knob and whispers a last time, “Hey. . . . You okay?” (157-58). She does not reply, and he walks away after this third query. In a matter of minutes, though, he pulls a bait and switch like Pee Wee’s and jumps on the train of accusations when their grandmother gets home. He readily engages in speculative incivility by accusing her of trying to end a pregnancy. He is not anxious now that he is not responsible for his sister with M’Dear home. He is old enough to understand Rae Ann’s supposed situation and the reason for M’Dear’s anger. Horace is old enough to be drafted into the military (153), so he is at least eighteen and knows about sex and some of its consequences.

As the confrontation unfolds, he is quick to comment on why his sister is wearing a bathrobe and that her tears tell him “a damn thing,” meaning she is guilty of M’Dear’s claims. His eagerness to go with M’Dear to assault the suspected barber causes him to burn his fingers while grabbing his to-go snack from the toaster. She instead goes to the

drug store leaving Horace with his bewildered sister. Apparently what he does *not* understand is the difference between menstruation and bleeding profusely from an abortion procedure. He cruelly taunts her about the old barber Freeny "botch[ing] up the job" and how "next time" he, Horace, can take her to an experienced nurse. When Rae Ann tells him to "[go] to hell," he atrociously retorts not to yell for him "when that dead baby drops down and rips you open. . . .You'll bleed to death first" (162-63). Horace's treatment of his sister's distress shows his lack of true concern for her and secures his place as a hollerer on the corner. It also shows his insecure heartless nature and need to have a victim to feel better about himself.

Horace's insensitivity also underscores another reality of the projects: the difficulty of getting safe medical care. Horace and M'Dear reference the ineptitude of the neighborhood barber, Old Freeny, the "filthy man" her grandmother accuses the girl of letting "go inside you with a clothes hanger" (160). Already legal in certain circumstances in twenty states, abortion became legal across the country in 1973 following the *Roe v. Wade* and *Doe v. Bolton* Supreme Court rulings. Up to that point, many women had few options for safe medical terminations of pregnancy. Even fewer of those options existed in low-income areas with limited or no clinics. (Grimes). The barber option was fatal for Rae Ann's mother. Unlike women with means, she could not fly to Sweden for a safe procedure before legalized abortions or even afford a city hospital after legalization of abortion. This inaccessibility framed life in the projects. It was one more example of what money could buy for those who had had opportunities to accumulate it. The reality is that safe medical care is a marker of civility, but it is a marker limited only to those who can afford it.

Her brother's incivility only adds to Rae Ann's feelings of vulnerability. She might not understand the medical-type talk about Freeny, but she knows seeing the old barber is not a good thing. Horace does nothing to help her distressing situation. Even under this pressure, her young confidence shows when she throws a shoe at her tormentor, telling him to leave her alone.

Segregated Housing Categorizes Rae Ann

Public housing and medical care are only two components of the "separate but equal" history of America relevant to "A Girl's Story." Historical context here gives more understanding of the significance of these factors in Rae Ann's life and her family's. The apartment projects she lives in, the school she attends, and the American civil rights activists she learns about at the Center all result from events and efforts pertaining to African American history dating from the start of the slave trade in the 1600s. Understanding how African Americans were treated during this time span, how they existed, relates directly to how Rae Ann lives her life in the twentieth century. The end of the Civil War in 1865 signaled a shift in class structure. Quick to secure their status, white leaders devised unspoken codes of civility that still subjugated African Americans and ensured their second-class status in America, just as similar codes demeaned Native Americans living on government-run reservations. The codes also guaranteed the financial profits of the white majority. Civil Rights legislations in the 1960s abolished these racist codes, but racist sentiments still existed.

This review of American society in terms of race reveals origins of the world Rae Ann and her contemporaries are growing up in. Bambara raises physiological, economic, and societal factors beyond this girl's control, and in many ways beyond her family's control. The long history of these factors and their reality in the 1970s are affecting and will affect her life in the future. Glimpsing the history of her people, one traumatic day in her life, and recollections of other days reveals volumes about the story of her short life thus far.

Dada Bibi uses the same approach with her students, giving them glimpses of their ancestors in Africa and America, the problems they faced, and how they solved them. She recollects the past for the young people and makes sure they know the activists working for the people in the present day. Like the author, she equips them to be feisty, even if it means using harassment of teachers to motivate students to go to school (164).

Examining the evolution of these codes and the progress of African Americans toward full emancipation in spite of them sheds light on characters and situations in Rae Ann's public housing world. Grouping like-skinned people into living situations is a way of categorizing human beings. It is one of the first steps of Othering. It also denies the basic humanity of the Othered group and allows them to be viewed as subhuman (Guttormsen). The codes also enabled patriarchs to exploit those Othered for financial, material, and sexual gain. It makes sense that Bambara sets her story in a public housing project because the government-sponsored facility reflects the reality of her audience of low-income young Black girls. This is where they have been relegated to live.

Of all the measures racist white patriarchs instituted to protect their dominant status, three caused the most severe restrictions and stymied African Americans' latitude

to transcend their centuries of bondage: denial of lending and Federal Housing Administration programs, redlining, and Jim Crow laws (Richardson "Redlining"). Each of these legislated or business-implemented actions directly demeaned and disadvantaged Rae Ann's family and others like theirs and permanently segregated them into notoriously unsafe and unmaintained public housing projects that eventually became sites of blight. FHA programs and redlining, which denied mortgage lending to people who lived in "risky" public housing areas, all but guaranteed Black families like Rae Ann's could not move to better, safer neighborhoods.

Activism Responds to Oppression

The response to racial injustices covered here—the Civil Rights Movement—already motivates Rae Ann. At Dada Bibi's urging, she is contemplating how "to serve her people." Her mentor will make sure the girl continues to learn the history of her people in America, in addition to her people in Africa and others oppressed throughout the world. Again, Bambara is mentoring her young readers through the actions of her characters. Seeing Rae Ann's interest in her heritage and the discrimination and struggles associated with it can influence young girls.

Jim Crow laws made it possible to unjustly deny lending and insurance programs and use redlining to segregate African American families into false "separate but equal" neighborhoods. Named for a buffoon minstrel character in vaudeville shows, these local and state laws enforced racial segregation to disenfranchise African Americans (Thompson-Miller 90-97). These laws varied from state to state and focused on

segregated facilities such as schools and their textbooks, theaters, restaurants, busses, trains, water fountains, restrooms, elevators, cemeteries, public pools, phone booths, hospitals, asylums, jails, and facilities for the handicapped and elderly. It also banned miscegenation, a law that plays a central role in the final story (Ibid. 8). Vestiges of segregated education likely still lingered in Rae Ann's school because of white families moving to the suburbs and the decreased tax dollars this caused for her school. This would have meant less funds to pay for teachers, materials, and building maintenance, all of which would have negatively impacted the quality of education for Rae Ann and her fellow students. Also, separation of the races still occurred after desegregation because white families left the urban areas and moved to the suburbs, and Black students remained in urban areas.

These are only some of the Jim Crow laws that directly affected, and still affect, the finances and generational wealth of African Americans. For example, Black adults limited to urban areas, as in Rae Ann's family, had limited job opportunities that paid lower wages. Consequently, they were less likely to be able to save money to move out of the projects. This would in turn limit possibilities of passing on accumulated property wealth to their children or family members. Vestiges of the separation of the races likely still lingered in her school because of white families moving to the suburbs, and Black students remaining in urban areas.

Bambara Mentors Young Black Girls

In this short story, Toni Cade Bambara shows the impact one day can make on a young girl and how it will figure prominently in her life. A day like this one will prepare Rae Ann and young Black girls like her for the codes of civility and mores that will challenge them in their communities and in the world. Rae Ann's anxieties surface throughout the story, but rather than be stymied by them, she pragmatically thinks through or responds to each one by, for example, testing ways to stop the blood flow and clean soiled linens; calming herself by focusing on the admirable African queens; and defending herself successfully to M'Dear who accused her of being with a boy.

These concerns and others become less important when M'Dear tosses the mysterious, all-important bag onto Rae Ann's bed. Its arrival prompts the young girl's methodical nature, and she realizes the answers she needs at this moment are in that box of Kotex she finds in the bag. The cardboard box is the springboard for all the adult challenges ahead of her and how she will approach them—methodically and sensibly.

Later in life Rae Ann and girls like her will learn about things they do not understand, like how white or any color patriarchy justifies oppressing people who are different from them. She will understand, though, the inhumanity of slavery and how it haunts America still. Learning the systems of slavery, Jim Crow laws, and housing inequities will decode for her white Americans' need to dominate for profit and self-worth. Her life in the projects will be clearer to her. What she will do with this knowledge is not part of the short story.

Bambara, however, shows just enough to establish two important points about Rae Ann's future that will teach young Black girls. First, the girl on her way to womanhood will heed Pee Wee's urgent advice and stay away from guys like him. She

wants to respect the people she spends time with, and she wants to respect herself the way the queens did themselves. She will not dishonor herself as the girls on the sidewalk do.

Second, Rae Ann has partly answered one of her pressing questions about the future: what will she do for the people? She has actually already started and is already a visible role model in the community as a storytelling activist. She spends time with an impressionable group of people—the younger kids on the block who listen to her retell stories she hears at the Center (155). She chooses to interject parts from group discussions at the Center into her stories—Gretchen scoffing at old people marrying because they are too old "to get down anyway" and the group's response for her "to shut her big mouth"—and this choice indicates the young girl's creativeness and insight. It is a creative and subtle example about listening to all viewpoints (155). For Rae Ann, sidewalks are positive places for sharing time and life lessons. She creates a satellite Center for telling her version of "Girls' Stories."

Through this story and others like it, Bambara fills her mission to watch out for young Black girls. She sets it in a public housing project where the most vulnerable of these girls live. She lets her uninformed readers like Rae Ann start to see how their bodies work and how to care for them. She steers them away from boys who might mistreat them. They learn about ways they can contribute to their communities and in the world, which is one of the hallmarks of civility. This story shows Bambara actively mentoring the people who mattered most to her—vulnerable young Black girls. Despite the injustices that surrounded her, the author fulfilled her mission while living by codes of caring. "A Girl's Story" reminds her readers we can do the same.

Chapter IV

CODES OF CIVILITY CORRUPT THE FARM

Like “Lullaby” and “A Girl’s Story,” Flannery O'Connor’s “The Displaced Person” focuses on vulnerability: in “Lullaby” an elderly Native American woman loses her children, husband, and way of life due to government control of their lives; in “A Girl’s Story” a young Black girl struggles with unexplained menarche; and here a foreign man displaced by war is still in danger of the ultimate alienation, death due to malice. All three stories detail how Othering and codes of civility factor into the characters’ vulnerabilities and fears. In “The Displaced Person,” the Polish man does not understand the danger he is in. His focus on his work and family—and his Otherness—obscure the growing malevolence of shiftless farmhands. This legal immigrant makes them uneasy because they think his foreignness threatens their safety and his industry decidedly disrupts their hierarchy by exceeding the productivity of the top farmhand, Mr. Shortley. White Americans on the farm employ pernicious codes of civility to subjugate Others—Mr. Guizac and the two Black farmhands—through alienation, segregation, naming, and injustices. Analysis of O’Connor’s fictional account shows how feelings of fear, entitlement, and the need to adhere to even one code of civility can “justify” Othering and self-righteousness that blinds people to civil behavior causing them to commit the ultimate oppression.

As in the first two stories analyzed in this thesis, "The Displaced Person" demonstrates how people in positions of advantage impose codes of civility on those people or groups they calculate to disadvantage (Keyes 393). Although the farmhands would not typically be considered "in positions of advantage," they are advantaged compared to a new foreigner on a farm. They are established there and know the protocols and cultural mores. Three farmhands form a micro tribe when they conspire in the displacement campaign and Mr. Shortley and Sulk in the murder. They unite to exclude the Other.

Mr. Guizac and his family are disadvantaged and in need of social civility and assistance with taking care of their welfare. They are homeless due to mass destruction during World War II. The Polish family crosses the Atlantic Ocean to be on a foreign farm because Mrs. Irene McIntyre is losing money on her land deeded to her by her now-deceased husband. Those she relies on for productivity generally avoid their jobs and grouse about their boss's shortcomings. Mr. Shortley, the dairyman, drags out his work and runs an illicit still that interferes with his job. The two Black workers, the elderly Astor and young Sulk, act the same way. They run their own still and are prone to idleness, stopping their chores to watch whatever is going on. After a twenty-year succession of tenant farmhands, tribes "of moody unpredictable Negroes," and bloodsucking cattle dealers and lumber men, Mrs. McIntyre now has no margin for low yields on crops or dairy products (O'Connor 218). She will lose the farm if it does not become profitable. Like the Guizacs, she is also at a disadvantage.

Both the Guizacs and Mrs. McIntyre are making themselves vulnerable to new situations. Their life circumstances cause them to take a risk on each other, and both have

the opportunity to gain the same thing: income. The widow sets aside any xenophobia she might harbor and hires this immigrant worker. Likewise, the Polish family must avoid fearing the foreign Americans, but their job is more challenging given the experiences they and all of Europe have had with the Nazis. A Catholic priest who administers the federal Displaced Persons Program in Georgia matches them together.[8] Despite its unusualness, Mrs. McIntyre hiring a foreign worker follows standard business models for assuming risks: significant need and possible personal gain (Parker and Stanworth 324-25). Her results do not, however, meet the typical observed outcome of voluntary risk-taking: "increasing the well-being of others . . . [and] the moral status of the risk-taker." The interdisciplinary social scientists here maintain that these two unexpected benefits "tend to be" results of accepting uncertainty in risk-taking (Ibid.). She proves an exception to the typical outcome. Hiring Mr. Guizac does not cause her to have empathy for her farmhands or anyone in the community. Her incongruity with the benefits defines Mrs. McIntyre's moral character, and foreshadows events at the end of the story.

Money's Effect on Charity

Even with the improved financial health of the farm, it is still a place in rapid moral decline. This hiring does not elevate Mrs. McIntyre's moral code in any discernable way,

[8] At the request of President Harry Truman, Congress passed The Displaced Persons Act in 1948. The Act enabled 415,000 Europeans and Eastern Europeans displaced by World War II to build new homes in America. The immigrants had to have documented work skills and employers pre-arranged in order to come to the States. Various church and relief organizations administered the program. These immigrants relocated to America between 1948 and 1952. "Displaced Persons Act of 1948." immigrationtounitedstates.org › 464-displaced-persons-act.

and it has no positive effect on the disreputable behaviors of the farmhands. Undercurrents grow increasingly fractious and fearful. If anything, the highly successful outcome of her risk causes Mrs. McIntyre to be more overbearing and threatening toward her employees. She taunts them saying the Polish man could do their jobs in addition to his own. That would make them "extra," a demeaning term she likes to use about overpopulation, and they would be fired. She thinks she has a firm upper hand, and she uses it liberally. For her, this welcome development is all about the money, not morals or being concerned about anyone else's well-being. The atmosphere here bodes ill.

Consequently, hiring Mr. Guizac increases only Mrs. McIntyre's well-being while disturbing everyone else's social equilibrium on the farm. Based on her continued domineering actions, and her later treachery, her risk-taking, as stated, also does not improve her moral code as forecasted by any measure. It also eventually incites Mr. Shortley to orchestrate an ultimate act of oppression, which would seem unusual because there is no evidence of him being an oppressor on the farm prior to this murder.

Pursuing this speculative employment measure shows that Mrs. McIntyre is open to foreigners working for her. She is not an isolationist or xenophobic when it comes to making money. Likewise her willingness to be uncharacteristically inclusive about a foreign worker and optimistic also shows how desperate she is. She takes an unprecedented chance hiring a foreigner, totally Other to her except in skin color. She is not doing it for patriotic or humanitarian reasons. She informs Father Flynn she does not hold herself "responsible for all the extra people in the world" (226).[9] This nontraditional hiring is a fiscal decision, the kind business owners make when they are struggling to turn

[9] "Extra" is her way of saying selfish people have too many unneeded children (216).

a profit. It also is her version of thinking outside the box. Her desire for more income makes her willing to think from a new perspective. For twenty years, she hired the "kind" of people she knew, white men and couples whom she dismissively calls "the world's overflow" and whom she claims worked as little as possible. She is ready to take a chance on someone who is "desperate" to work. Her ability to broaden and adjust her thinking here does not translate, however, into her perspectives changing about cultural codes of civility. She is flexible when money can be made, but not when it comes to challenging existing social norms.

In this situation of hiring a foreigner, Lajos Brons would not focus on one's income as much as he would the transcendence of Othering associated with existing social norms defined by codes of civility. He values charity being part of social norms, with charity being care and generosity toward other people, those who are different from the majority. "Charity releases the [O]ther from dehumanizing misunderstanding," he says. It not only helps understanding Others, but by being charitable "[we] understand ourselves as well" (Brons 87). He would make Mr. Guizac and his family welcome and show interest in their home country. He would want his farm to be profitable, but he would also show concern for his workers' well-being. It is useful to consider Brons' belief here because it helps in understanding Mrs. McIntyre and other characters.

This philosophy would be lost on Mrs. McIntyre. She is not a charitable person and has no desire to be. Her approach in all matters is self- and profit-oriented, like the hiring of a foreigner. She would also say she understands herself and her motives just fine. She is civil in that she abides by laws and the rules of social norms. That could qualify for being civic minded. The problem is that the codes of civility marginalize and

demean those who are subjugated by the majority class. She would not consider the segregating Jim Crow laws unjust because they rule her world and protect it. She is the antithesis of the charitable, civil people in Corey Keyes' definition who are thoughtful about their community and society. They are concerned and act on the welfare of others in their communities (393). Mrs. McIntyre does not fit Keyes' description, and paying attention to traits about her and other characters in this cautionary tale can make self-examination productive.

Challenging Social Norms

There was a time when Mrs. McIntyre challenged social norms, but not ones related to Jim Crow laws. Her challenge involved adapting to the new dynamic of owning a farm. She operates the farm, hires and manages employees, orders supplies, and keeps the books. In several ways, her experience parallels employment challenges Chato faces in "Lullaby" in the first chapter. He learns English and Spanish so he can work on a white man's cattle ranch, an occupation new to him also. Both characters face dynamics that alter their lives completely. The need for money motivates both of them. Hers was not a bid to improve anyone's welfare but her own. It was self-oriented and, again, centered around money. Chato adapted to provide for his family's welfare and to feel accomplished. He was the civil one of the two characters. Taking care of his family and making toys for the children shows he cares about others besides himself.

Being a white woman enabled the widow to work in a patriarchal business system to pursue her financial aims. She had more power over her life than most women did in

the early 1900s. She proved she could successfully challenge social norms, but her later life shows she would only do it when it benefits her financially. She probably did not hesitate to challenge the business norms then. She needed a livelihood just as Chato did. The social standing of Mrs. McIntyre and Chato show how codes of civility affect their circumstances differently. Determined and perceptive, she learns how to manage a farm and dairy, ever vigilant about male suppliers, buyers, cattle and lumber dealers, and farmhands looking to take advantage of a woman owner. Her white race actually makes her equal to the owner of the cattle ranch who hires Chato and mistreats him and his family. Her race and the codes allow Mrs. McIntyre to other the Black farmhands and apply Jim Crow laws, just as the rancher others Chato and Ayah, who are now minorities in their society. Mrs. McIntyre's race and social position also allow her to boss the Shortleys.

As a subjugated Native American, Chato others no one in the story, just as the Black farm workers do not. Yet, despite her social and business advantages over Chato, Mrs. McIntyre meets with a miserable end, just as he does. Negative codes of civility and Jim Crow laws that Mrs. McIntyre and the rancher practice are designed to harm and subject Others like Chato, Astor, Sulk, the Shortleys, and foreigners. Mrs. McIntyre's social position and her challenge to social norms did not benefit her in the end. Neither did the codes or Jim Crow. As depicted here, inflicting hurt damages the perpetrators as much as those subjugated. Her loss of sight, speech, and mobility, caused by trauma she inflicted on Mr. Guizac and herself, attest that inflicting physical, psychological, or emotional pain harms perpetrators as much as those subjugated. The lives of Mrs. McIntyre and Chato show this.

How Othering Marginalizes People

Two of the characters on the farm provide vivid examples of how Othering and Jim Crow laws subjugate Others on the farm. As a way of maintaining their status on the farm, the Shortleys, a white couple, frequently engage in biting racist, xenophobic, and Othering acts in “The Displaced Person.” O’Connor bifurcates their mistreatments of Others. They do not team up to denigrate or scare Others. Mrs. Shortley dominates these activities in the first part, while he mainly listens to or sleeps through her harangues and speculations about the Polish family and the activities of the Black farmhands. His verbal attacks occur after he returns to the farm following his wife’s stroke. Mr. Shortley was content to let his wife run the slander attacks against the Guizacs and the harassing of the Black farmhands. He appears not to want to expend the energy. He makes up for his lassitude in the second half of the story.

One particularly apt example of Othering illustrates its technique and its purpose in excluding marginalized people or groups. Mrs. Shortley provides it. Not only does she try to frighten the Black workers by relating a conversation with Mrs. McIntyre, but she also makes up the entire exchange and the number of immigrants supposedly on their way to invade the job market. She warns them, saying:

> “But yawl better look out now,” she said and nodded her head. “There’s about ten million billion more just like them and I know what Mrs. McIntyre said.”
>
> “Say what?” the young one asked.

> "Places are not easy to get now adays, for white or Black, but I reckon I heard what she stated to me," she said in a sing-song voice.
>
> . . . .
>
> "I heard her say, 'This is going to put the Fear of the Lord into those shiftless niggers!" Mrs. Shortly said in a ringing voice.
>
> . . . .
>
> "You better get on in that barn and help Mr. Shortley," she said to the other one. "What you reckon she pays you for?"
>
> "He the one sont me out," the Negro muttered. "He's the one gimme something else to do."
>
> "Well you better get to doing it then," she said and stood there until he moved off. (199-200)

This dialogue demonstrates typical Othering tactics intended to instill fear and submission in minority groups. Mrs. Shortley is skillful. She plants seeds of fear about hordes of foreign workers coming to take their jobs, and the difficulty of getting jobs now. She demeans and maligns them by calling them "shiftless niggers." She bosses them by ordering them to get to work and earn their wages as though she owns the farm. Then she enforces her command by standing by until Sulk goes where he was told. She uses fabricated words and her massive physique to intimidate them. Othering succeeds in causing submission through fear, insults, and domination. All are strategies of this technique, and she knows how to employ them adeptly. There is no clear indication, though, of how her actions affect the men other than appearances of sullenness and apparent dismissiveness. They keep their distance from the white inhabitants, whether from segregation dictated by Jim Crow or to avoid additional harassing. Either way, Mrs. Shortley satisfies herself that she is superior and in charge.

Another tactic of Othering Mrs. Shortley relies on is actually the primary move when trying to disparage a person or group: naming. Labeling people with uncomplimentary names and repeatedly using them is the first step in making minority groups lose or never gain acceptance in a majority group. Naming demeans and singles out a person or population. It isolates them from their heritage. She creates the name Gooblehooks for the new family. There is no explanation for the odd combination of animal and device, though it could be related to her idea that the Polish language was just "gabble, gabble, gabble" (209). Betsy Bolton notes Mrs. Shortley "repeatedly transgresses the boundary between human and animal" (Bolton 91). She describes Mrs. Guizac as shaped like a peanut, and the daughter Sledgewig has an "insect name." The Guizacs have recently left a place where Nazis would have disparaged them as "Polacks," among other names.[10] Slavenka Drakulic, a Croatian journalist, delves to the core of Otherness when she says, "I understand now that nothing but 'Otherness' killed Jews, and it began with naming them, by reducing them to the other. Then everything became possible. Even the worst atrocities . . ." (qtd. in Brons 69). Drakulic provides a succinct, insightful understanding about how Otherness and naming work. Using a name like "Polack," or any other pejorative, is the first step in demeaning a person and making them "unworthy" to be part of a larger, socially accepted group. Repetition is key to the success of this type of propaganda (Harding and Martin 77). Once the negative association is established, it is only a matter of time before the Othered are completely ostracized.

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[10] *Oxford English Dictionary*, 3rd ed. (2000), s.v. "Polacks."

Mrs. Shortley is persistent in her campaign to other the Guizacs and jeopardize their move to the farm for two reasons: fear and self-righteousness. She fears for the couple's own displacement. Her thoughts escalate to the point she thinks the Polish family is capable of murder because they had come from "where that kind of thing was done to them. . . . [they might] also do it to others" (196). Here O'Connor refers to Hitler and the Nazis "over there" hunting down people who are Other to Germans, just as Americans, she reasons, would be Other to the Polish family arriving. O'Connor creates this tension about Others being hunted and doing the same without ever naming Hitler or Nazis. Awareness of the master oppressor nonetheless pervades the story (Griffith). This is apparently the first time Mrs. Shortley has met foreigners, and their strangeness and war-torn background threaten her, especially due to frightful images she has seen on newsreels. She will resort to whatever dominating moves she thinks she needs to in order to protect the Shortley's position on the farm.

She fears foreigners because they are unknown and therefore threatening to her; and she senses a change of stasis on the farm with their arrival which would lessen her power to dominate there. When claiming "[t]hey can't talk," she assumes they cannot speak English and figures they do not "know what colors even is" (196). She also supposes Mr. Guizac cannot drive a tractor because he does not speak English, as though tractors can only be used on farms around the world by those who speak English (201). She harps on their foreignness, intuiting that these Others are "like rats with typhoid fleas" carrying a deadly disease "over the water with them directly to this place" (196). Mrs. Shortley resorts to this disparaging technique by likening the immigrants to turkeys, then to rodents and being unintelligent about basic things like English and colors.

Comparing them to abhorred and feared rats again transgresses the boundary between human and animal, as Bolton contends, equating the foreigners to something subhuman and unacceptable.

From the start, Mrs. Shortley launches a type of political campaign for position, replete with propaganda using name-calling. This kind of cognitive bias frightens hearers and causes them to associate the victim with something or someone negative. The key to this tactic is repetition. The person using it wants his audience to draw conclusions without studying the facts of the matter (Haselton 726). Her campaign begins by attacking Gobblehooks and ends by prophesying in a pasture surrounded by cows. Experiencing a vision there, she proclaims, “The children of wicked nations will be butchered” (210). She starts with name-calling and finishes with calling for the violence of righteous butchering. Her vision foreshadows the “justified” murder at the end of the story and actually describes her self-righteous beliefs.

Marginalization and Harassment

While Mrs. Shortley fears the arrival of the foreigners, their arrival, specifically Mr. Guizac’s, thrills Mrs. McIntyre and strengthens her control over the farm. His exceptional productivity makes her more money and gives her leverage over the other employees. She extols his work ethic, telling Mrs. Shortley, “That man is my salvation!” and goes so far as to tell Mrs. Shortley it is worth letting other employees go to raise his salary because “[h]e saves me money” (203). He knows how to run all of the equipment and enables her to buy more efficient machines; he gets field tasks done in half the time

others took; and he can do dairy duties in addition to his own (208). Mr. Guizac's profitability causes her to turn on the Shortleys the way Mrs. Shortley turned on the Negroes about being displaced. Mrs. McIntyre is not concerned about earning her employees' respect or civil behavior that encourages treating members of society well. She relies instead on keeping them off balance with dis-ease, scaring them with her threatening comments and observations. This is an effective harassment technique used in Othering to maintain or increase control over subordinates. For this tactic to work, Lawrence Cahoone says the Other must be made to feel "devalued" (Cahoone qtd. in Brons 69). The harassment works here because Mrs. Shortley feels their position slipping, especially when the boss alludes to the illicit still Mr. Shortley operates on the side. Mrs. Shortley's Othering campaign is not working. Even so, Mrs. McIntyre's support of Jim Crow laws eventually causes her savior to become the agent of her self-induced downfall, as foreshadowed by Mrs. Shortley's muttering Mr. Guizac would bring salvation "if don't no terrible accident occur" (205). Mrs. McIntyre's greed and lack of civility blind her to ways she could be charitable to others, but these personal faults also blind her from preventing her own downfall.

Lack of Empathy and Duty to Society

Movement in the story toward resolution—a supposed justification for oppression—commences with Astor. He mutters to Mrs. McIntyre against this new man who makes them all work harder. He reminds her "[h]e from Pole . . . [where] they got different ways of doing," slyly implying Mr. Guizac is doing something prohibited. The elderly man

succeeds in raising her suspicion but refuses to take responsibility for being an informant, saying only it is something “nobody else don’t do” (227, 216). He refers here to the interracial marriage between Sulk and Mr. Guizac’s young cousin to free her from a German concentration camp. Mrs. McIntyre finds out when she sees Mr. Guizac giving Sulk a photograph of the girl (219-20).

This incident is an unusual Jim Crow twist in assigned roles. Astor uses the racist law on Mr. Guizac to get him in trouble and make the marriage issue known. Despite his white skin color, the Polish man is the one in the complete minority here, the one on the outside, because of long-standing federal laws that dictate how Black citizens must live their lives segregated from wealthier white citizens. The logic of the law is lost on the Polish man, though maybe it should not be given the many ethnicities and religious groups the Nazis persecuted. Mrs. McIntyre’s highly insensitive comments to Mr. Guizac reveal her racism and lack of empathy when she says how she cannot understand how he “could bring a poor innocent girl over here and marry her to something like that” (223). By “that” she means Sulk. Her comments also show her lack of concern or understanding about the girl’s horrible situation. In this woman’s mind, nothing could be worse than being married to a Black man like Sulk. This scene is important because it shows a significant lack of a sense of duty or obligation to society, or concern for the welfare of others. Both of these attitudes signify civility and a civil society. Her condemning and cruel attitudes contradict practices of community and compassion. They make her farm a toxic place on its way to collapse.

Mrs. McIntyre likely would have opposed this marriage with or without a law. Her opposition represents white society’s perceived need at the time for strict racial

barriers in order to feel safe, protect their wealth, and avoid interaction with minorities. This anti-miscegenation law was a code of civility that, in this case, marginalized both populations if mixed-race couples wanted to marry. It policed the freedom of people to love and marry as they chose. It also prevented a chance of freedom for a young woman incarcerated in a Nazi prison camp. Mr. Guizac considered it his familial duty to get her released. He worked on humanitarian principles. Although newsreels showed the horrors of concentration camps, Mrs. McIntyre and others on the farm lacked empathy for those fated to exist in them. They were not willing to look beyond their insulated farm society to understand how other people had to exist. The farm was a microcosm of the racial and civil unrest in America, and the existence of Jim Crow laws said that white America was afraid to live equally with Black America.

Even if she opposed the marriage, which the law already did, Mrs. McIntyre could have asked the Father Flynn what could be done for the girl. There were options, but she closed herself to helping someone in need, or even considering it. She acted without civility.[11] She had been a risk taker years ago, but she refuses to do so now because there is no money to gain in helping the girl and she lacks compassion.

Propaganda Campaign Slanders

[11] In addition, Corey L. M. Keyes says the definition of civility goes beyond politeness and good manners. He terms civility as social civility, which he defines as "the manners with which individuals think about and behave toward their community and society. . . . It is the degree to which people have a sense of duty or obligation to society, the extent of their concern for the welfare of others as well as themselves, and whether they help others through volunteer activities." See Keyes 393.

Mrs. McIntyre's desire for more money is well established. It is her motivator and a significant reason that holds her back from reaching out to others. It is also what stymies her in firing Mr. Guizac. Her reticence is odd because it seems firing would come easily to a highly critical employer, especially one who is not concerned about others. But he is a money maker for her. Losing him will reduce her income. Consistently, money rules her life and now contributes to her uncharacteristic indecisiveness. Mr. Shortley returns to the farm intent on forcing her hand so he can be rid of the man he says killed his wife. This situation presents a new aspect to understanding what causes people to harm others and how they achieve their purposes.

Mr. Shortley, who was passive in the first part of the story, is intent with revenge that ultimately that blinds him to civil behavior. When he returns to the farm without his wife, who died of a stroke, he no longer acts like a dead man, a part he had played to escape work and ignore his wife when he wanted to sleep. As an unknowing catalyst for change, Mr. Guizac causes Mr. Shortley to stay vertical and direct his new-found energy to removing the immigrant from the farm. Before, Mr. Shortley had left the reliable spin and fear-mongering to his wife. But, motivated by malice toward Mr. Guizac, whom he blames for his wife's stroke, the dairyman learns he has a gift for disinformation. He relentlessly others Mr. Guizac who is unaware of the attacks. Mr. Shortley adopts the same political-type slander campaign for his position that his wife had employed against Mr. Guizac. He also adds the Othering technique of threatened violence to get rid of Mr. Guizac. This bullying ploy he justifies as chivalry to protect Mrs. McIntyre from being "done in by a foreigner" (230). When he says of his wife, "I figure that Pole killed her,"

Bolton counters he has technically already let one woman be done in by the foreigner and may not be reliable (Bolton 93).

Malice has not completely taken over Mr. Shortley at this point. His present goal is to make the Guizac family move away. He is not contemplating physical abuse, but he is frustrated. In essence, Mr. Shortley is having to wage two battles: one against Mr. Guizac and one to make his employer act. He goes to Mrs. McIntyre's house each night to deliver backdoor infomercials. He questions the fairness to a man like him "who fought and bled and died in service of his native country" not getting the same kind of opportunities as those "like them he was fighting" receive (228). He maintains the Displaced Persons Program offers job opportunities to immigrants, including enemies, that are not available to veterans like him. He expresses what some Americans thought about this immigration program. Like Mr. Shortley, they were concerned foreigners would get American jobs. Regardless, the dairyman still has a job—he is not unemployed. Also, he might have fought and bled during World War I, but he did not die "in service of his native country" and return home as he claims. He also says, "All men was created free and equal," but his other statements show he does not include immigrants in that belief (232).

The Power of Peer Pressure

He broadens his arsenal by complaining in town at the grocery store, courthouse, and street corner, just as he had to Mrs. McIntyre. This tactic proves to be the linchpin for his enterprise. When Mrs. McIntyre learns everyone in town knows the situation on her farm

and disapproves of her lack of action, she is not shamed into action as Mr. Shortley hoped she would be. Instead of demeaning her and causing her to submit to his will, he has given her the rule she needed to make up her own mind to act: the public opinion of her peers. She knew what to do about a proposed interracial marriage, thanks to the Jim Crow laws. But, in addition to concerns about the loss of money, she did not know how to fire anyone because she had never had to, and there were no rules to follow on it. That made it hard for her to do, and she therefore "shirked" the task for more than two months. Firing did not come easily to her the way criticizing and counting money did. But once she got the negative feedback from her peers, she was able to act. John Parker says people who can handle positive and negative feedback are the ones best suited to take risks. They "will have the wherewithal to go for it" (Parker and Stanworth 324-25). She feels equipped now to handle the firing situation and is convinced it is the right thing to do.

Former employees had always saved her the trouble by leaving on their own. Mr. Guizac does not know that is expected of him. She ironically resents him for not leaving on his own, for having to work, for wanting to work. But Mrs. McIntyre realizes now, based on public opinion, she has the rule she lacked. She has support she needs to do the right thing. She clearly understands it is her "moral obligation to fire the Pole," though she does not trouble over what that moral imperative might be. Resolved on a Saturday morning, she heads to the shed to conduct her "unpleasant duty" (233).

Mrs. McIntyre does not accomplish her duty quickly enough. She made this fatal moment happen. Her long-delayed resolve results in the murder of Mr. Guizac. If she had fired him initially, he might have lived. Instead, because of her inaction, Mr. Shortley has

had too much time to think about his mission. The widowed man apparently sees the sign he had sought, "the hand of God [waiting] to strike" (232). Revenge is his. He maneuvers a tractor to roll over the Polish man as he is on the ground repairing another tractor (234). Just after she reaches the shed, she, Sulk, and Mr. Shortley witness the unmanned tractor head for the prone man. She starts to shout and then does not. In that instant—just before a tractor wheel crushes Mr. Guizac's spine—the eyes of those standing lock and freeze "them in collusion forever" (234). This collusion confirms total moral depravity on the farm. Evil reigns. It completes its ultimate act of Othering. While some new displacement of Mr. Guizac was expected, his gruesome death is a shock, even apparently to Mrs. McIntyre who runs wildly after the crime and also faints.

Where Charity Does Not Prevail

What happens to Mrs. McIntyre after the murder resembles what happens to Mrs. Shortley while having a stroke in the car. Mrs. Shortley was "displaced in the world from all that belonged to her" and she "seemed to contemplate for the first time the tremendous frontiers of her true country" (214). Mrs. Shortley sees her displacement from the world. She has a vision of her afterlife in heaven.

Similarly, Mrs. McIntyre reacts to something otherworldly after the murder, but she understandably tries to run from her condemning vision. It shows her in a foreign country where she is the stranger, a displaced person like Mr. Guizac. Not long after, her body deteriorates and becomes immobile. Her mind must be functioning because it is not mentioned. I interpret she is languishing either in something like the fifth level of avarice

in Dante's *Inferno*, or possibly she is in his *Purgatory.* Wherever her mind resides, she is contemplating her many acts of evil, especially her debilitating greed and incivility.

"The Displaced Person" delivers a scathing commentary on the misery caused by materialism and the denial of civility within communities. While all three stories in this study address the wrongs of Othering and codes of civility, this is the only one that addresses overt materialism and how it possesses some people and weakens communities. Flannery O'Connor develops this theme to relate the mortal vulnerability of a foreigner who does not know the social and cultural mores of a place. This death by Othering is the ultimate Othering in all three stories. It symbolizes endless miseries of marginalized people tyrannized by those in power.

Published in 1954, "The Displaced Person" reflected the xenophobia virulent in America. It was the time of the McCarthy Era, a part of the Second Red Scare, the Cold War, and also desegregation of schools. The first two made many people feel open to attack, and the third raised concerns about reactions to the transitions in education. This feeling of vulnerability appears in "The Displaced Person." Fear settled in Mrs. Shortley even before the Guizacs arrived, when she had seen a newsreel of naked dead bodies piled somewhere in Europe. She thinks the Polish people coming could try to kill them like that too. Then she is concerned Mr. Guizac and other foreigners could replace workers on the farm. Vulnerability becomes a reality when she overhears Mrs. McIntyre's plan to have Mr. Guizac replace Mr. Shortley. The Shortley family vacates the premises the next morning.

None of the other characters display significant feelings of vulnerability, but Mr. Guizac is the one who should be afraid because of his plans to have Sulk marry his young

cousin who has been lingering in the refugee camp for three years. This is a defining event in the story. It illustrates O'Connor's ongoing contention that this is a time of moral bankruptcy and narcissistic individualism. She does not abide by John Locke's belief, which Henry T. Edmondson III quotes as civil society revolving around "the individual desires of 'life, liberty[,] and estate. . . .''' (280). In the cases of marriage, family, economics, and politics, Locke advocates the self-interest of each individual. O'Connor holds with Aristotle's belief that countries, or smaller enterprises, should be run "in the interest of the common good" (Edmondson 279). She believes in preservation of the community, not self-preservation.

Mr. Guizac represents O'Connor's philosophy. He and Astor, the elderly Black worker, are the only two characters who are moral. The Polish man pursues a way to free his cousin from the refugee camp out of family concern and duty. It did not occur to him to ask Mrs. McIntyre's permission, especially because Sulk consented. Maybe Sulk was simple, as indicated, but it also seems as though he should have known the illegality of a mixed-race marriage. Jim Crow laws were well established. Astor would have known, and he tried to tell Mrs. McIntyre in a vague way. He would not have gone to Mr. Guizac because he was not the boss and Astor had no authority to make him listen. Astor was trying to do the right thing. He knew Mrs. McIntyre could never allow it, even if she wanted to. He also knew if the cousin showed up at the farm one day, he might be accused of being complicit in the plan.

It is illogical to Mr. Guizac that his cousin cannot marry Sulk. Skin color does not matter to him, and about his cousin, he says, "She no care Black. . . . She in camp three year" (223). These two sentences define a story that derides self-interest and

individualistic cultures. First, Mr. Guizac does not see color as a barrier, something that divides people. If he knew what Jim Crow was and how it divided Black and white people, he would not understand the law. If he were familiar with the U.S. Declaration of Independence, he would have understood the contradiction, though, in the assertion "all men are created equal." His experience on the farm would tell him otherwise about the Declaration. Skin color did not matter to him. He was unbiased. Sulk could have been another race and it would have been inconsequential. Second, what Mr. Guizac does see is that his cousin needs help. He is willing to work on behalf of her welfare. Her wellbeing matters to him. He acts with empathy. This foreigner, the Other, represents O'Connor's belief in the rightness of charitable, civil societies and actions.

Astor offers a solution to the inequality of races that confronts Mr. Guizac. It comes up appropriately enough in a conversation with Mrs. McIntyre when she, so focused on her income, surprisingly says, "Money is the root of all evil." Astor recalls this statement from the Judge: "Judge say he long for the day when he be too poor to pay a nigger to work. . . . Say when the day come, the world be back on its feet." Although there is little possibility of such a deficit happening, in this simple observation O'Connor has Astor point out the harm of being in constant pursuit of money. It would not be such an evil if communities created ways to share it and other resources among its members, especially those in need. It goes back to the benefits of charity.

In the end, there is no charity on the farm. There never was until Mr. Guizac arrived. Mrs. McIntyre's single pursuit of money caused the lack of charity. Her preoccupation created a void where kindness and concern could not exist. This flaw even existed prior to her marrying the Judge. She calculated the benefits to her for marrying

him: the property and money she would inherit after his likely death before her. He was in her best interest. Once she had the estate, she ran it with no concern for her workers. She criticized them often and soundly, calling them shiftless, lazy, worthless, and extra. She never gave compliments, even to Mr. Guizac, the best worker she had ever had. Then when the issue of miscegenation arose, she made no effort to assist Mr. Guizac's cousin. If she had, Mr. Guizac might have lived because Mr. Shortley would have lacked influence on her farm and would not have returned.

Love of money poisoned Mrs. McIntyre's heart and mind. Her materialism and self-interest suffocated any compassion she might have had and prevented her from being civil to those in her community. It blocked any empathy for a young girl in a dire situation. In the end, her preoccupation with money was indeed the root of the evil in Mr. Guizac's life. It ultimately killed him.

This story presents readers with types of behavior worth examining in our own lives. Materialism has grown even stronger than it was in the 1950s. Racial divisions continue to escalate. Extreme individual beliefs and increased mobility and technology use have segregated people in new ways. Communities are less connected than they once were. "The Displaced Person" offers a different, pointed perspective on familiar challenges about moral behavior and community welfare that still challenge us today.

Chapter V

CONCLUSION

The Price of Oppression

As the action in these three stories shows, patriarchal codes of civility and Othering tactics can be inflicted on marginalized people in order to demean them and keep them subjugated. The unspoken codes also allow perpetrators to justify their oppressive measures, usually taken to acquire power, profit, or land. Those in charge view Native Americans and African Americans as subhuman and in need of being controlled. White leaders use the societal rules of these codes to hegemonize weaker people by dividing them through alienation, cultural mores, or land appropriation. These codes speak to powerful people's fears of the unknown and need to contain those they dominate. The codes also indicate white citizens' self-appointed entitlement. Those in charge are in binary opposition to civility in that they go against civility's codes of caring and concern to safeguard the welfare of entire communities (Keyes 393). The codes of civility in reality define *incivility*, a state of lacking compassion or being savage or barbarous.

Oppression intrudes into each of these stories. It relies on Othering tactics that discriminate, racialize, alienate, or physically harm. Each of the main characters suffers under oppression either because of skin color or ethnicity. In the Native American story "Lullaby" by Leslie Marmon Silko, Ayah loses her children, husband, and way of life due to government control of their lives. "A Girl's Story" by Toni Cade Bambara finds

Rae Ann in the throes of unexplained menarche that she struggles to manage and thinks might kill her. In "The Displaced Person" by Flannery O'Connor, parochial residents in rural Georgia murder Mr. Guizac after he had just survived German Nazis occupation in Poland. His oppressors in Georgia kill him for being foreign, working too hard, and not knowing the code of civility against miscegenation. Actions in the stories depict different degrees and types of oppression. They range from a family circle where the grandmother and brother dominate a young girl. In another setting, the government kidnaps children and diminishes the way of life for this Native American family. The ultimate oppression, murder, comes unexpectedly at the end of "The Displaced Person." Those in power oppress the weak in varied ways, but all pursue the same goal: subjugation of those they do not know and fear or want to exploit.

Part of the power of these stories rests in the specter of historical subjugations that informs the context of the fictional events, a specter oppressors would not welcome. Those white oppressors who did write about Euro-Americans' treatment of Native Americans typically did not acknowledge the humanity of the Natives or the depths of their losses due to wars and appropriated lands. Seeing them as base savages, as Other, allowed land-hungry settlers to justify overpowering them, abducting their children for assimilation, relocating tribes, and killing them. Africans were also viewed as subhuman, which made it "permissible" to abduct them for the slave trade and forced labor in America. Two centuries later, descendants of slaves still grapple with non-legacies and injustices stemming from slavery here. For example, the lasting effects of redlining, deeming an area in a city unworthy of credit, still affect Black families today because their homes have not appreciated as much as those in greenlined, wealthier

neighborhoods. Buyers are not interested in once-redlined areas because of the lack of amenities (Richardson “Redlining”). Redlining is also a reason that families like Rae Ann’s continue to live in public housing projects. They have no way to build equity for future moves or purchases.

Just as ramifications of historical events feature in the first two stories, the context and content of “The Displaced Person” pertain to immigration issues in America today. In this presidential election year, debate centers around recent policies that restricted access to asylum in America and also to employment-based and family-based immigration pathways. Immigration law enforcement has intensified, asylum seekers are being returned to places with warring drug cartels in Mexico and Central America. U.S. refugee admissions have been reduced to a record low ceiling of 18,000 in 2020. This reduction translates into delayed family reunifications of children separated from their parents (Price). For now, the DACA program, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, has resumed renewals following a recent ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court that says the deferral program should continue because the Trump administration dismantled the program incorrectly in 2017 (Karas and Campbell “Immigration”).

Correlations between instances in the stories and historical events like these show that the oppression depicted in fiction mirrors past and current Othering tactics used to control weaker members of society. These stories depict oppression so that readers can recognize it and choose whether to avoid such acts in their own lives, and also to advocate for codes of caring to strengthen the welfare of their communities.

It should be noted that this list of current examples of codes of civility and Othering in America is an abbreviated one and is not exhaustive. Many parallels run

between present-day oppressions and those in the stories analyzed: ongoing litigation by Native American tribes concerning alleged illegal appropriations of Native lands and also government- and business-related environmental issues; rampant poverty and joblessness on isolated reservations; immigration controversies regarding a border wall along Mexico, more restrictive travel bans and asylum policies, and decriminalization of illegal border crossings; a white supremist killing nine Black church members in Charleston, South Carolina; excessive use of police force or killing of unarmed Black men and resulting public protests; controversy over Black Lives Matter and “take a knee” during the national anthem; dismantling of Confederate soldier statues; monetary reparations for descendants of African slaves; and removal of Flannery O’Connor’s name from a college dormitory due to racist comments O’Connor made in her private correspondence.

Applying codes of caring in these situations is a positive response to the negativity of Othering that enables pernicious codes of civility seen in these recent events and in the three stories. Such codes foster the well-being of individuals and communities through showing concern for citizens, groups, and those who are Other. Emmanuel Levinas and Jacques Derrida advocate caring for Others rather than being uncivil or hostile to those unknown. Levinas promotes the positive effects of alterity, or Otherness, that can create understanding in uncomfortable or threatening situations. He considers the Other to be his neighbor (qtd. in Felluga 203). Consequently, he advocates people taking responsibility for those who are marginalized and gaining understanding from that experience. Like Levinas, Jacques Derrida believes “morality, ethics, begins with an ‘After you,’” which Levinas says is the “first sign of respect for the [Other]” and puts them before ourselves (Derrida 238). Lajos Bron says this is a call to charity

“characterized more by hospitality than hostility, and that perceives the [O]ther as neighbor rather than enemy” (Brons 86). All three philosophers promote empathy that is lacking in varying degrees in these short stories. These narratives about marginalized Native Americans, Black Americans, and a white immigrant afford multiple examples of demeaning and dominating behavior first practiced by a majority of Euro-American settlers four hundred years ago and still exists today. Studying these works provides an opportunity to examine ourselves and how we interact with Others in our communities.

Such cases of violence, racism, and Othering listed here will always exist. They come from fear of Others and the unknown and from fear of losing status and security, as seen among the farmhands in “The Displaced Person.” They come from attitudes of prejudice, greed, and domineering mindsets, as also seen in “A Girl’s Story” and “Lullaby.” Such evil acts will always occur in America and throughout the world. This stark reality did not daunt the authors of the stories analyzed here, though, as seen below.

Speaking about “Lullaby” and Ayah’s hope in spite of great losses, Leslie Marmon Silko says her goal is to reach people. “I feel it is more effective to write a story like ‘Lullaby’ than to rant and rave” about the oppression of government control over Native American lives (qtd. in Hollrah 80). Through her stories she says “that Indian life today is full of terror and death and great suffering, but despite these tremendous odds against us for two hundred years—the racism, the poverty, the alcoholism—we go on living. We live to celebrate the beauty of the Earth and Sky. . . . ” (Ibid. 80). Silko tells her readers her observations and concerns through her stories hoping they will gain understanding of the challenges of poverty, joblessness, and loss of land and culture in Native American lives. Yet she writes about oppression *and* hope at the ending of

"Lullaby." She wants her readers to see that Ayah's spirit and nature allow her to forgive and gift her dying husband in the end.

Toni Cade Bambara said stories "keep us alive. In the ships, in the camps, in the quarters, fields, prisons, on the road, on the run, underground, under siege, in the throes, on the verge—the storyteller snatches us back from the edge to hear the next chapter. . . ." That is what I work to do: to produce stories that save our lives (Evans 41). Like Silko, Bambara sees the value of stories to encourage readers in the midst of great difficulties. She applies this philosophy to Rae Ann, who keeps going back to the Center to hear stories about regal, bold African Queens and then embellishes them to retell the stories to the kids on the block. One of Bambara's "feisty girls," Rae Ann is a confident storyteller who models Bambara's belief in community involvement.

Flannery O'Connor approaches her dark stories with a different mission: she writes to disturb her readers. She sees that as the best way to get their attention. Unlike Bambara who sees stories encouraging readers while experiencing difficulties, O'Connor writes stories that distress readers in an effort to get them to act. She confronts her readers with the same choices that face her characters: will the reader, for example, also remain silent when he sees an injustice threatening someone? As seen with the murder of Mr. Guizac, she knows her stories must cause horror to be effective. She relies on it. As she wrote in a letter to a friend about one of her books, "I am not afraid that the book will be controversial, I'm afraid it will not be controversial" (O'Connor, *Habit of Being* 358). O'Connor is a social justice activist advocating for readers to examine their lives and practice civility, as the other two authors are. Her stories are, however, unorthodox.

Through their stories, Silko, Bambara, and O'Connor create varied accounts of the same barbarity: not the barbarity of the Others, but the barbarity of white patriarchs who subjected the Others and created codes of civility to control the marginalized people's behaviors toward the ruling white class. The actions taken against characters in the stories show the importance of naming, revealing, and responding to oppression. Such oppressive actions would be kidnapping Native American children to assimilate them, speculative incivility toward a young girl experiencing menarche, and a slander campaign to get a foreign worker fired. Highlighting such wrongs, even in short stories, increases awareness of incivilities which can help prevent them.

It easy to feel self-righteous in the face of extremely heinous acts of injustice. But acts committed incidentally or occasionally must also be addressed: like judging others in the checkout line or those serving in public offices, applying a generalization about a member of a different ethnic group, opting not to serve at a soup kitchen because people there make us feel uncomfortable, being sexist in hiring practices, or not stepping up when someone is being excluded, or criticized for looking or dressing differently. Occasions like the can be significant steps in creating codes of caring in our communities.

Jim Crow laws no longer segregate America, but the intent behind them still looms large. History will repeat itself. Learning from the torments caused by incivility, racism, and Othering in the three stories is one way to reduce their iterations.

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