"Who Will Remain Whole? Who?: The Pursuit of Power and Place in "The Displaced Person"

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"WHO WILL REMAIN WHOLE? WHO?":
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Katy L. Leedy

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"WHO WILL REMAIN WHOLE? WHO?":  
THE PURSUIT OF POWER AND PLACE IN "THE DISPLACED PERSON"

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Grand Valley State University, 2010

Abstract

In Flannery O’Connor’s “The Displaced Person,” each character works to forcefully displace others from their positions in a way that can be likened to colonization. Farm owner Mrs. McIntyre thinks she can act as a colonizer, but instead she has merely a position of power. Because she believes in her authority, she works to defend it; since she has nothing to defend, her efforts are fruitless. With the death of Guizac, the question of power is resolved: she has none. Instead, she had the illusion of power since she had workers beneath her. With them gone, there is no longer anyone for her to be “above,” and so her illusion is dispelled. Indeed, the reader should not have even been surprised when Mrs. McIntyre exclaims in vain, “This is my place.” She has been deluding herself throughout the story to think it was even her place in the beginning.
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Introduction

The American South in the 1940s and 50s was a tumultuous place. Even though the “Great Migration” had already begun, the Civil Rights movement had yet to gain momentum. Industrialism was changing the face of the North and threatened to change the South as well. With slavery part of the past, the conventional agrarian society was not holding together well. The North affected the South to such an extent that contemporary critics such as George Handley have gone as far as to say that “the South essentially was the first colony of U.S. imperial expansion” (20). Although the U.S. began as colonies and became the United States, the Civil War solidified the North and South as separate territories. Even though the end of the war was meant to bring them together as one united nation, David Payne points out that instead, “the North took on the role of ‘Self’ in America’s collective psyche; Northerners became the ‘we.’ The South, by consequence of its defeat, became the ‘Other’—Southerners, the ‘they’” (120). As the other, Southerners are much more prone to feel intruded upon since they are already excluded from the main group.

This ostracization was exacerbated by the North’s industrial influences on the South after the war. In 1930, twelve Southerners published I’ll Take My Stand: The South and the Agrarian Tradition. The collection of essays was a stand against the impending expansion of industrialism from the North to the South. In the introductory “Statement of Principles,” the authors affirm that all contributors “tend to support a Southern way of life against what may be called the American or prevailing way; and all as much agree that the best terms in which to represent the distinction are contained in the phrase, Agrarian versus Industrial” (xli). Their statement sounds more like a war manifesto. Although Agrarianism mostly died out within the two decades after I’ll Take My Stand, the tension between North and South was not eliminated.
Although Agrarianism was no longer a major force, "the agrarian setting had tremendous symbolic value during the Cold War: it functioned as a synecdoche for the United States. Rural life, in other words, was identified with the American way of life" (Bacon 9). Jon Lance Bacon writes about Americans' desire during the Cold War to return to the "security of national isolation" they could find only in the pastoral settings of the past. However, more and more people were living outside of those pastoral settings. With increasing technology and industrialization, the agrarian settings were dying out even though they were thought to represent America. This means that those who still lived in the South were mostly thought of as a minority—they remained the "they" David Payne pointed out.

Although Bacon identifies the South with the "American way of life," it remains ostracized. Howard Zinn explains how the South can be both central and other: because it is really the essence of the nation. ... It contains, in concentrated and dangerous form, a set of characteristics which mark the country as a whole. ... Those very qualities long attributed to the South as special possessions are, in truth, American qualities, and the nation reacts emotionally to the South precisely because it subconsciously recognizes itself there. (218)

The characteristics of the South that the nation recognizes in itself are dangerous because they run counter to the style of life the nation is claiming it wants—the modern, industrial way of life. In this case, the South represents the "otherness" that Homi Bhabha describes as "at once an object of desire and derision" (67). While the nation uses the imagery of the South to describe itself—the pastoral, agrarian setting—it simultaneously rejects the South as primitive and backward.
The South continues in present-day studies to be a unique focus of interest. It is part of the U.S., but it is also, as Handley wrote, in many ways a colony. In *Look Away: The U.S. South in New World Studies*, Jon Smith and Deborah Cohn begin by tracing the history of how the South has been separate from the nation as a whole. One of the important landmarks in this history is *I’ll Take My Stand*, and they point out that the Agrarians did not just see themselves as separate, but when they discussed their “region,” they meant “what Benedict Anderson means by nation or imagined community” (3). It is a significant difference between thinking of an area as a region and as its own nation.

However, Benedict Anderson’s discussion of nationalism in *Imagined Communities* does provide a useful framework for thinking about the South. Anderson’s definition of nation contains three major tenets. He writes that “the nation...is an imagined political community—and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign” (6). The first element, and the one that gives the book its title, is that the community is actually *imagined*. In any nation, its inhabitants cannot know all of its elements or all of what surrounds it. However, the inhabitants can imagine that the others in their nation share some traits; they are similar in some fashion that makes them a nation, whether that is geographic location or ideological belief. It is this difference, “the style in which [the communities] are imagined,” that Anderson claims should be the distinguishing feature among communities—not “their falsity/genuineness” (6). A nation, therefore, is defined by how it was created rather than its success by some arbitrary qualifications.

Anderson’s second tenet of nationalism is that nation “is imagined as a *community*, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship” (7). Whatever it is that the inhabitants have in common, being able to imagine that commonality is what makes them a community.
Each person knows, regardless of how physically isolated she is, that she is connected to others in her nation. Although it might seem paradoxical, Anderson's third characteristic of a nation includes a community with both limited and sovereign power. Anderson presents the nation as a community with limited power because it has “finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations” (7). No modern nation, he points out, imagines that it will encompass the whole world. Instead, a nation's boundaries encompass its inhabitants. This does not mean nations do not sometimes try to extend those boundaries, but they are recognized as finite. However, each nation is also sovereign. In order to be a nation, it must be in charge of itself. Anderson notes that “nations dream of being free, and, if under God, directly so. The gage and emblem of this freedom is the sovereign state” (7). This freedom to govern itself is what the Agrarians were searching for in the 1930s and what Northerners were trying to avoid by creating the South as other.

By being both the other and the essence of the nation, Smith and Cohn explain that “the U.S. South comes to occupy a space unique within modernity: a space simultaneously (or alternately) center and margin, victor and defeated, empire and colony, essentialist and hybrid, northern and southern (both in the global sense)”; the South maintains a “literally uncanny (unheimlich) hybridity” (9). This double existence is a result of the issues of identity in the South and its relationship to the rest of the nation. Living in this in between space makes it difficult to declare any one identity.

Handley also assumed the South as its own nation when he declared it as “the first colony of U.S. imperial expansion” (20). The classification is also borne out in examining the definition of imperialism. Edward Said defines “imperialism” as “the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan center ruling a distant territory; ‘colonialism,’” which is almost
always a consequence of imperialism, is the implanting of settlements on distant territory” (9).

While applying this definition to the South may not be how Said first imagined imperialism and colonialism, his definition certainly can fit. The North, especially in the first half of the twentieth century, was more metropolitan than the South, which is thought of as rural or agrarian. As far as people in the North were concerned, the South may as well have been a distant territory, and vice versa. They had vastly different ideas and ways of living and those were not merged with the end of the Civil War or even the dying of the Agrarian movement. For the most part, it was people of the North effecting policies that would apply to both the North and the South.

It may seem anomalous to examine the South as a postcolonial nation, but it would not be the first time a concept has been applied outside of its original findings. Even Frantz Fanon reminds us that although his “findings are valid for the French Antilles; [he is] well aware, however, that this same behavior can be found in any race subjected to colonization” (Black 9). Any nation or part of a nation—such as the South—who has had another’s culture pressed upon it generally reacts in a similar fashion to those who have been colonized.

The issues resulting from colonization extend past the battle over land. Said explains that “when it came to who owned the land, who had the right to settle and work on it, who kept it going, who won it back, and who now plans its future—these issues were reflected, contested, and even for a time decided in narrative” (xii-xiii). The adage about the winners writing history stands true. The narratives that are taken as truth actually create the history since the author has written with her own perspective and perhaps even made up details as she saw fit. Examining these narratives allows for a deeper understanding of the culture that created them. In particular, the short story is a useful form for examining the issues of imperialism.
It is the particular qualities of the form that allows the short story to portray the results of colonization so clearly. Frank O'Connor explains the elements of the short story in *The Lonely Voice*, arguing that “the short story has never had a hero. What it has instead is a submerged population group” (18). A population group can be “submerged entirely by material considerations” or “submerged by the absence of spiritual ones” (18). This includes those of a lower class status, those without spiritual guidance, or simply those who desire escape from their conditions. All of these groups are submerged by various forces. Clearly then, colonized people can be considered a submerged population group since they are forced to follow someone else’s wishes. Therefore, because of its aptitude for representing the submerged population groups, the short story is an ideal form to examine the issues inherent in being colonized. Even if the characters of a short story have escaped colonization, O'Connor’s statement that “always in the short story there is this sense of outlawed figures wandering about the fringes of society” allows for related situations (19). After the Civil War, many people in the South had their way of life outlawed. Without slaves, it was nearly impossible to keep the large plantations running. The Agrarians attempted a return to that type of life, but could not garner enough support, remaining on the fringes of society and creating Southerners as a submerged population group. This is the kind of life the short story as a genre best depicts.

Although Frank O'Connor's is just one perspective, other short story theorists define it using similar ideas. Nadine Gordimer states that “the short story as a form and as a kind of creative vision must be better equipped to attempt the capture of ultimate reality at a time when (whichever way you choose to see it) we are drawing nearer to the mystery of life or are losing ourselves in a bellowing wilderness of mirrors” (264). Gordimer also gets at this sense of the fringes of society. Those discovering the meaning of life and those completely lost in it are rarely
at the center of society. Instead, they are at its edges, separated from the mainstream. Gordimer states that the short story attempts to capture “ultimate reality,” which is what we seek in order to understand the “mystery of life.” “Ultimate reality” is what is beyond the winners’ accounts of history—the truth.

In a way that is similar to the ideas Frank O’Connor expresses, Flannery O’Connor’s characters “stand outside the circumference of American society’s definition of acceptable women and men and children, and none want to enter it” (Giannone “Displacing” 74). The characters in her stories are not only on the fringes of society, they are grotesque. The short story best explores these kinds of characters because, as Charles May declares, “the short story attempts to be authentic to the immaterial reality of the inner world of the self in its relation to eternal rather than temporal reality” (133). The short story is not necessarily an exploration of daily reality, but instead the more ephemeral experiences that separate each of us. By presenting characters, as May says, in relation to eternal reality, the short story allows examination of their essential being instead of simply the surface reality. In addition, it allows the short story to present characters in their “essential aloneness,” reminding readers that each of us is, in some way, on the fringes of society (May 137).

The grotesque is not just those who are on the fringes of society; instead, it “inhabits borders and displays tolerance for borders and for crossing them” (Reesman 40). These are the kinds of stories Flannery O’Connor writes—a story of those in between the conventional and the uncanny. Jeanne Reesman sums up the effect of O’Connor’s fiction: “through the story’s grotesqueries, we find the boundaries blurred between our own worlds, inner and outer, verbal and visual” (47). Any world the reader thought she knew before reading is disrupted through O’Connor’s stories. The reader must reconsider both what she previously considered grotesque
and how O’Connor has represented that world. By presenting the grotesque, O’Connor
disconcerts the reader’s notions of boundaries of the normal. The roles of hero and villain are
mixed up and intertwined, one character never being completely hero or villain, but somewhere
in between.

According to Anthony DiRenzo, the grotesque in general has a disrupting trend similar to
the one that is a hallmark of O’Connor’s fiction. DiRenzo writes that “the grotesque presents
opposites without trying to reconcile them” (9). O’Connor makes a point of refusing to grant
complete reconciliation at the end of her stories. She often presents the opportunity for
reconciliation and redemption, but does not actually show the act. In “The Artificial Nigger,”
Nelson and his grandfather do return home together after the day in the city, but it is clear Nelson
has been changed by his experience there. It is unclear, however, to what extent his grandfather
has been changed and whether that change will stick.

In a discussion of stories such as these that do not end with a pat wrap-up, Thomas Leitch
argues that “it is quite possible to challenge the character’s, and the audience’s, assumptions
about the world without substituting any more-authoritative knowledge, so that such stories
constitute not a form of knowledge but a challenge to knowledge, that is, a way of debunking
assumptions which are not really true” (133). “Debunking assumptions which are not really true”
is ostensibly a tenable goal of O’Connor’s works, for she is constantly challenging the accepted
way of thinking and acting by placing her characters in those borders. As she states in her essay
on the grotesque, “to be able to recognize a freak, you have to have some conception of the
whole man” ("Grotesque” 44). If readers can recognize what is lacking in the characters, then
they can grasp what the whole man is comprised of. Leitch continues his examination of these
“debunking” stories by arguing, “More specifically, these stories commonly debunk a particular
subject: the concept of a public identity, a self that acts in such a knowable, deliberate way as to assert a stable, discrete identity” (133). Identity is often a source of conflict for O'Connor’s characters, and that conflict is not always resolved by the end of the story. In addition the conflict of identity in “The Artificial Nigger,” “Good Country People” leaves Joy-Hulga alone in the loft considering her outlook on life after her nihilistic attitude has failed her in recognizing the opportunistic Manley Pointer. “The Comforts of Home” provides a similar dilemma in that Thomas thinks he knows about Star Drake because she has come from the prison. Instead, he learns that he is more like her than he previously recognized or cared to admit. However, O’Connor’s stories do make use of this conflict, often externalizing it to the extent that there is a central conflicted character and two other main characters, each with opposing viewpoints. The central character is thus outwardly in between the sides of the issue she is inwardly conflicted about. The two characters she is in between vie for the central character’s identity in such a way that they can be viewed as colonizers. The conflict for identity is essentially a conflict of power. Each character uses what power he or she possesses in an attempt to control the central character’s identity and thus her power as well.

Since power is central to this conflict of identity, a definition is imperative. Power, in Foucauldian terms, “is not conceived as a property or possession of a dominant class, state, or sovereign but as a strategy...and a relation of power does not constitute an obligation or prohibition imposed upon the ‘powerless’, rather it invests them, is transmitted by and through them” (Smart 77). In O’Connor’s stories, this translates to a triangle of power among these three central characters, each one using his or her position to attempt to control the others. However, there is another element of power that comes into play: “Foucault argued that ‘where there is power, there is resistance’, that power depends for its existence on the presence of a ‘multiplicity
of points of resistance” (Smart 77). Just as the status of hero or villain is never clear, the resistance is neither completely successful nor a failure, but its existence is readily apparent.

Flannery O’Connor’s short story “The Displaced Person” readily exemplifies this triangle of power. This story that was first published in the Sewanee Review in 1954 and revised for publication in her collection A Good Man Is Hard To Find in 1955 is, as Robert Fitzgerald so aptly stated, “a tale of the displacement of persons, or, better, of the human Person displaced” (393). The story takes place, as do many of O’Connor’s stories, on a farm. It seems to be an isolated community of its own; the only interaction with the outside world depicted in the story occurs when the priest visits the farm. Mrs. McIntyre is the farm owner, but only because her husband, the Judge, died bankrupt with the farm as the only way to pay his bills. Before marrying the Judge, Mrs. McIntyre was just a secretary. There is a clear power structure to the farm—at least prior to the arrival of the Guizacs. The Guizacs are a Polish family a local priest has convinced Mrs. McIntyre to hire on the farm. They have managed to survive the war, but are now displaced from their home. Although Mr. Guizac as the newcomer might be expected to be at the bottom of the social ladder of the farm, the unprecedented level of knowledge he brings to the farm threatens to displace the other workers. The Shortleys are the white farmhands living on the property. Mrs. Shortley provides companionship to Mrs. McIntyre since they are the only females on the farm, but Mrs. McIntyre does not hesitate to sacrifice their friendship to fire Mr. Shortley when she wants to give Mr. Guizac a raise. Although Mrs. McIntyre’s goal is to run her farm well and make money, the decisions she makes throughout the story lead her to lose it. By the end of the story, the only characters who are not displaced are the priest and the peacocks, who wander the farm with impunity. However, James Cox notes an important distinguishing feature of this story: not only is each of the characters displaced, but “more important, everyone
in the story is forever at the point of displacing someone else” (339-340). It is this conscious attempt to displace forcefully others from their positions that I liken to colonization and that I will be exploring in this paper.

Mrs. Shortley

Mrs. Shortley is the first person introduced in “The Displaced Person.” Indeed, in the first version of the story, she was the center of it—the story ended with her death. The peacock is named first, but even it is following her. It quickly becomes clear that she believes this is how it should be. When the priest arrives with the Guizaes, Mrs. Shortley is watching from the top of a nearby hill. Her presence is so large that “she might have been the giant wife of the countryside” (285). As the “wife of the countryside,” the land is hers, and she is wary of any intruders into it. She even “ignored the white afternoon sun which was creeping behind a ragged wall of cloud as if it pretended to be an intruder” (285). Nothing will slip past by her, or at least so she thinks. From her position on the hill, she looks down on not only Guizac, but also Mrs. McIntyre. The narrator pointedly watches this scene from Mrs. Shortley’s perspective; Mrs. McIntyre is not even given the right to tell her own story. Mrs. Shortley stands there “on two tremendous legs, with the grand self-confidence of a mountain, and rose, up narrowing bulges of granite, to two icy blue points of light that pierced forward, surveying everything” (285). Her presence as if she is made of granite indicates that she is inherently part of this farm. Her ability to survey everything makes it seem as if she is the owner and not merely a hired hand. Mrs. Shortley takes her assumption of power so far that she attempts to control the others of the farm in much the same way a colonizer might take over a native population. Mrs. Shortley saw herself as the most important person on the farm—hence the watchful gaze from the top of the hill—but Guizac’s
arrival threatens her place. With the Displaced Person now on the farm and Mrs. McIntyre so happy with his productivity, Mrs. Shortley must reestablish her position more forcefully.

Mrs. Shortley comes down from her perch on the hill to meet the Guizacs. When the priest admires the peacock, Mrs. McIntyre dismisses it saying, “Another mouth to feed,” and Mrs. Shortley echoes, “Nothing but a peachicken” (289). Mrs. Shortley is mimicking Mrs. McIntyre in order to reinforce her position. Homi Bhabha states that “mimicry emerges as one of the most elusive and effective strategies of colonial power and knowledge” (85). Mrs. Shortley is vying to become part of the colonial power established on the farm. Both Mrs. Shortley’s position at the top of the hill and her mimicking of Mrs. McIntyre’s statement give her status over and knowledge of Mrs. McIntyre and her place. Her statement is also a reminder that she is disdainful of all that is below her. Christina Bieber Lake explains that “the peacock symbolizes everything grotesque ‘other’ or unnecessary ‘extra’ that does not fit into Mrs. Shortley’s system” (45). Just as Mrs. McIntyre will later term her workers “extra,” Mrs. Shortley sees here that the peacock is extra, but she does not see it as a threat because she it does not fit into her idea of the social scheme of the farm.

Before Guizac arrives on the farm, it seems the power structure is clear to all, although both of the women on the farm believe they had more power than they really do. Mrs. Shortley constantly attempts to assert her power over the blacks on the farm. After the Guizacs first arrive, Mrs. McIntyre asks about Mr. Shortley. Mrs. Shortley responds not just with his whereabouts, but also with a reminder of the less-useful blacks: “Chancey’s at the barn...He doesn’t have time to rest himself in the bushes like them niggers over there” (288). Mrs. Shortley also directly reminds the blacks of their inferior position, telling Astor and Sulk, “The time is going to come...when it won’t be no more occasion to speak of a nigger” (297). Of course, she ends up
being right, but not in the way she thinks she is: today the time has come when her term is no longer appropriate. Karl Martin calls this power structure the “oppressive hierarchy” of the farm; Martin writes that this hierarchy doesn’t bother Mrs. Shortley because as long as her position trumps someone else’s, she “believes her economic position is secure” (145). She is so sure her position is superior that she tells Chancey, “I aim to take up for the niggers when the time comes” (298). This belief does not change with the Guizacs’ arrival because she does not understand what impact they might have on the farm. The Guizacs are merely people who “ain’t where they belong to be at,” so of course they won’t stay (290). Mrs. Shortley’s ignorance of the arriving culture is as severe as that of a colonizing force invading a country for its resources with no knowledge of its people. As Frantz Fanon states, “Understanding something new requires us to be inclined, to be prepared, and demands a new state of mind” (Black 75). Because Mrs. Shortley, and said colonizers, sees no reason to revise her state of mind, she does not, and it ultimately becomes part of her downfall. In fact, each of the characters who become displaced over the course of the story does so because he or she will not enter a new state of mind. They are sure that their course is the best one, but each time it leads them away from where they hoped to go.

Mrs. Shortley’s assumption of authority is also reinforced by her relationship with Mrs. McIntyre. According to Richard Giannone, “Mrs. Shortley establishes a bond with Mrs. McIntyre on their shared feeling of deprivation” (Mystery 104). They both feel they deserve more than they have been given. Their equality is also emphasized when we learn that “Mrs. Shortley respected [Mrs. McIntyre] as a person nobody had put anything over on yet—except, ha, ha, perhaps the Shortleys” (O’Connor 288). The fact that Mrs. Shortley is proud of fooling Mrs. McIntyre shows that there isn’t actually any respect. Mrs. Shortley feels that Mrs. McIntyre
is smart like her, but not quite as smart as she is. Mrs. Shortley also feels affirmed because Mrs. McIntyre speaks about “trash and niggers” with her; Mrs. Shortley “could listen to this with composure because she knew that if Mrs. McIntyre had considered her trash, they couldn’t have talked about trashy people together” (293). But the truth is that Mrs. McIntyre has limited options for a confidante, so she confides in Mrs. Shortley regardless of how “trashy” she may be.

Mrs. Shortley uses these conversations, as well as language in general, to bolster her position on the farm. As Mrs. McIntyre is admiring Guizac’s work and discussing the possibility of raising his salary, Mrs. Shortley responds twice with different sayings of the Judge, her first husband from whom Mrs. McIntyre gained the farm: “You can always tell a nigger what to do and stand by until he does it” and “the devil you know is better than the devil you don’t” (299). However, afterwards, “she had to turn away so that Mrs. McIntyre would not see her smile” (299). Mrs. Shortley knows that she is using the Judge’s sayings, as Betsy Bolton writes, “simultaneously to win her mistress’s approval and to mock her blindness” (96). Bolton points out that throughout the story, “status is awarded through languages” (96). The Guizaes must be of a lower status because they don’t speak English, the Judge is venerated through the use of his sayings, and Mrs. Shortley gains the Judge’s power by repeating them. Mrs. Shortley also gains power through not using language. When Mrs. McIntyre is complaining about the quality of her hired help over the years, Mrs. Shortley’s response is heard only through the narrator: “You hire and fire, Mrs. Shortley thought, but she didn’t always say what she thought” (294). Silence can be just as powerful as speech, particularly in this place because her retort is not heard, so Mrs. McIntyre remains unaware of Mrs. Shortley’s belief in her own superiority.

Nevertheless, both Mrs. Shortley and Mrs. McIntyre are interested in maintaining the status quo in order to keep their positions of power and status: Mrs. McIntyre as farm owner and
Mrs. Shortley as perceived “giant wife of the countryside.” However, as Frederick Asals explains in his article on violence in “The Displaced Person,” “it is the refusal of change, the rigid insistence on traditional distinctions that is likely to produce an explosion” (“Differentiation” 2). Asals goes on to explain that the traditional distinctions “seem to have wobbled, become unstable, [and] blurred,” such as “traditionally clear separations—black and white, adult and child, male and female, employer and employee, ‘quality’ and ‘trash’” (“Differentiation” 4). Mrs. Shortley’s position on the farm has already blurred the lines between employer and employee and between quality and trash, and Guizac’s presence and increasing influence on the farm further blurs these lines. However, the characters do not recognize that the traditional distinctions they rely on are changing because, as Fanon references, they refuse to adopt a new state of mind. As these lines continue to blur, eventually the roles they claim will no longer exist. The result of this will be the inevitable explosion Asals foreshadows.

It is not just the women of the farm who refuse to change their state of mind. Mrs. Shortley’s husband Chancey, who is also the farm’s dairyman, goes as far as to necessitate visual distinctions: he would only want to travel to places like “China or Africa” because when “you go to either of them two places...you can tell right away what the difference is between you and them” (324). The traditional visual distinctions are important to the Shortleys so they can immediately see to whom they are superior. Without a visual distinction, “you couldn’t tell what they knew” (296). This is especially problematic in the case of Guizac. Because she knows so little about him or what he knows, “Every time Mr. Guizac smiled, Europe stretched out in Mrs. Shortley’s imagination, mysterious and evil, the devil’s experiment station” (296). In some respects, Mrs. Shortley is right to fear what she does not know, but she could overcome that by finding out more about the Guizacs, which she never bothers to do. Instead, she assumes that
since they come to the farm with nothing of their own, they will not ask for more than their allotted place at the bottom of the social ladder of the farm.

According to Rachel Carroll, the Shortleys' denial of place to the Guizaes is just one example of many in O'Connor's work: "The historical experience of the American South is constituted, in O'Connor's fiction, by denials and displacements" (98). David Payne points out that the problem with this culture of denial is that "the heart and defining feature of Southern culture as a whole [is] the fact that it is Creole" (122). The South as a whole and the Mrs. McIntyre's farm in particular are made up of blacks and whites working together. However, Mr. Shortley is not talking about that kind of difference; instead, it goes back to "the devil you know is better than the devil you don't." With the "devil he knows," Mr. Shortley does not need to rely on visual distinctions. With the "devil he doesn't know," he can only assume that people who look different from him must also be inferior. His point of view can be likened to the colonizer Edward Said describes when he writes, "thinking about cultural exchange involves thinking about domination and forcible appropriation: someone loses, someone gains" (195). If Mr. Shortley is going to consider entering someone else's culture, then he feels he must give up some of his own, and he is not willing to do this. Instead, he will stand his ground and expect anyone who enters his territory to adapt to his ways; if they do not, he will force them to.

The first thing that surprises Mrs. Shortley about the Guizaes is that they look "like other people" (286). Before the Guizaes' arrival, Mrs. Shortley has imagined them like "rats with typhoid fleas" (287). Not only does she expect they will be rats, near the bottom of even the animals' food chain, but Mrs. Shortley imagines them carrying a deadly infection as well. In her mind, the "deadly infection" they carry is "all those murderous ways" from "Europe where they had not advanced as in this country" (287). Mrs. Shortley has also imagined the Guizaes as
"bears, walking single file, with wooden shoes on like Dutchmen and sailor hats and bright coats with a lot of buttons" (286). The image of the bears is again not just demeaning in that she expects the Guizacs to be like bears, but the image is made even more ridiculous by their clothing. While she allows that they can at least walk, the image indicates that she expects the Guizacs to act as animals in disguise. Her surprise at their seeming normality indicates that Lake is correct: "Mrs. Shortley will grudgingly acknowledge them as people and not bears, but giving them too much shared ground will threaten the inviolable self she has constructed" (42). Her position as "giant wife of the countryside" will not allow for intruders to be like her. Diane Prenatt, in her discussion of issues of identity, explains that the "alterity," or otherness, O'Connor's characters "project onto others in such a characteristic American fashion is something they must assimilate within themselves" (40). Mrs. Shortley's attempts to see the Guizacs as animals are clearly attempts to keep them separate from herself. Mrs. Shortley would like to think that she has none of the bad characteristics she attributes to the Guizacs, but unfortunately for her, the Guizacs are not so different as she thinks they are. Later in the story, Mrs. Shortley even observes that Guizac "jumped on the tractor like a monkey" (293). The animal imagery is the "arbitrary violence" Carroll refers to when she writes, "initially victims only of an overpowering fear, O'Connor's characters are transformed into agents of an arbitrary violence as if to evade becoming its victim" (102). Mrs. Shortley is not the only one who has convinced herself that perpetrating violence is the only way to avoid it herself. The majority of the actions of the people on the farm involve them trying to maintain their place, and this "arbitrary violence" is just one more tool.

If, as Mrs. Shortley imagines them, the Guizacs are not even people, then they cannot contend with her for her social position. In trying to keep everyone else below her, she engages
in a process similar to colonization and, as Aimé Césaire states simply in his *Discourse on Colonization*, “colonization = ‘thingification’” (42). Mrs. Shortley objectifies the Guizacs, seeing them as less than human, as if she were a colonizing power and they were the native population. However, Césaire also recognizes that this continued dehumanization causes a problem for Mrs. Shortley as colonizer as well: “the colonizer, who in order to ease his conscience gets into the habit of seeing the other man as *an animal*, accustoms himself to treating him like an animal, and tends objectively to transform *himself* into an animal” (41). If Mrs. Shortley continues seeing the Guizacs as animals, Césaire’s argument states that she will figuratively become an animal through her treatment of them. Her continued dehumanization of others will lead to her own dehumanization, or, as Giannone states, “The desire to oppress is Mrs. Shortley’s self-destruction” (*Mystery* 105). Her continued attempts at oppressing Guizac’s power—using dehumanization as one of her tools—does lead to her destruction. When Mrs. Shortley leaves the farm, she is transformed: “one leg was twisted under her and one knee was almost into her neck...She suddenly grabbed Mr. Shortley’s elbow and Sarah Mae’s foot at the same time and began to tug and pull on them as if she were trying to fit the two extra limbs onto herself” (304). When this happens, it is clear that Guizac, since he is not an animal, holds the position over Mrs. Shortley that she had hoped to have over him.

Regardless of what she thinks of him initially, Mrs. Shortley quickly becomes aware that Guizac is probably smarter than she expected: “I wouldn’t be a tall surprised if he don’t know everything you say, whether it be in English or not” (298). Given the power inherent in Mrs. Shortley’s earlier use of the Judge’s sayings to assert her position to Mrs. McIntyre, her acknowledgement here of Guizac’s knowledge of English is an acknowledgement of his power. She does not consciously recognize this, but she is scared by the not knowing. She wouldn’t be
surprised, but she does not know for sure. Benedict Anderson discusses “the older communities’ confidence in the unique sacredness of their languages, and thus their ideas about admission to membership” (13). Mrs. Shortley represents this older community as a person who values the traditional way of doing things, or in her case, the traditional power structure. If this unknown intruder can understand her sacred language, then her protected way of life may be in danger as well.

If she cannot protect her position merely through exerting her place, then she has reached a point similar to the one Fanon delineates: when “colonialism has realized where its tactics of social reform are leading, we see it falling back on its old reflexes, reinforcing police effectives, bringing up troops, and setting a reign of terror which is better adapted to its interests and its psychology” (Wretched 208). The failure of Mrs. Shortley’s initial methods lead her to set up her own version of a “reign of terror.” Her new methods are more violent but no more effective. She opens her new reign by creating a war of her own:

She began to imagine a war of words, to see the Polish words and the English words coming at each other, stalking forward, not sentences, just words, gabble gabble gabble, flung out high and shrill and stalking forward and then grappling with each other. She saw the Polish words, dirty and all-knowing and unreformed, flinging mud on the clean English words until everything was equally dirty. She saw them all piled up in a room, all the dead dirty words, theirs and hers too, piled up like the naked bodies in the newsreel. God save me! she cried silently, from the stinking power of Satan! And she started from that day to read her Bible with a new attention. (300)
This war of words is only another step in her war on the intruder to her place. Now she has declared war not only his person, but also his language. Carroll’s understanding is that “the alien character of Guizac’s language, Polish, is perceived as complicit in this uncanny proliferation of anxiety. Moreover, it is posited as an agent of its immanent violence” (106). If, as according to her vision, Guizac is going to attempt to attack her, then she might as well strike preemptively.

Of course, Mrs. Shortley’s war is not only in her imagination. At the time of the story, World War II had recently ended, and many Americans did feel that Europeans were invading their country. A significant number of refugees were fleeing to America; a bill first introduced in 1947 called for “the admission of 100,000 displaced persons over and above the quotas in each of four years” (Daniels 106). In the end, “the 400,000 immigrants admitted as refugees during fiscal years 1949 through 1952 represent nearly half of the 900,000 legal immigrants of those years” (Daniels 112). This is certainly a significant influx of people who had to abruptly change their lifestyle in order to be safe. For someone like Mrs. Shortley whose feeling of safety is so based on her place, an intruder threatens not only her status, but her whole way of life.

As indicated in her vision of the word war, she reaches out to God to support her in her quest to be on top at the farm. Previously, religion was just one more aspect of life where Mrs. Shortley was superior to others. One look at the priest reminds her “that these people did not have an advanced religion. There was no telling what all they believed since none of the foolishness had been reformed out of it” (288). Presumably the “foolishness” is the belief that there is a higher power. Although “these people” are the Guizacs, she is looking at the priest because she is also suspicious of him. She “suspected the priest was at the bottom” of Mrs. McIntyre’s change in behavior after the Guizacs arrive; after all, “they were very slick. First he would get her into his Church and then he would get his hand in her pocketbook” (299). Mrs.
Shortley recognizes that if the priest does get his hand in her pocketbook, there will be no money left for her and her husband. Therefore, when Mrs. McIntyre exclaims, “That man is my salvation!”—referring to Guizac—Mrs. Shortley warns, “I would suspicion salvation got from the devil” (294). More than trying to protect her, though, Mrs. Shortley is trying to create an atmosphere of fear—in particular, fear of Guizac. James Cox recognizes that “her fear for herself and her husband leads her to try to excite fear in the Negroes, Sulk and Astor, in an effort to league them with her against the threatening intruder” (338). Fear is Mrs. Shortley’s main weapon in her fight for place.

Generally, Mrs. Shortley believed that “religion was essentially for those people who didn’t have the brains to avoid evil without it” (294). However, when the Guizacs enter her world, Mrs. Shortley quickly realizes that the fragile social construction of the farm might be in danger. This fear leads her to “give new thought” to religion (294). Mrs. Shortley begins reading the Bible with renewed enthusiasm and soon discovers that “she had a special part in the plan because she was strong” (300). The religion that she is now in favor of following clearly has the “foolishness...reformed out of it” since it is hers, and she is superior. To Karl Martin, this means that her religion is one that is “stripped of its ethical power” (146). It is the religion of the countryside, a practical religion; her religion does not require ethics or concern for other people. Her part in God’s plan gives her status over others because she is special, and God would not want to use just anyone in His plan. The version of religion she has created for herself “makes her feel self-sufficient, safe, and proud” (Martin 147). In other words, it gives her additional status. Lake has a parallel assessment of Mrs. Shortley’s religion: “Scripture is not for her the book...with power to displace her. It becomes instead a text she thinks is stable, pure, and on her side” (43). Mrs. Shortley could not follow a religion that would give power to something greater
than she, but if her religion affirms her position, then she can be devout. Using religion only as a tool is also another element of her similarity to Mrs. McIntyre, who is only interested in the priest’s opinion when it can serve her.

This added dimension of Mrs. Shortley allows her to be everything Mrs. McIntyre is not. Mary Morton sees Mrs. Shortley as not only the opposite of Mrs. McIntyre, but also her more evil counterpart. Morton argues that “the flesh and soul missing from the angular women are found in their obese chthonic counterparts” (63). Mrs. Shortley’s stature over Mrs. McIntyre was evident in the first glimpse of her standing on the hill with her mountainous legs. Her new religion gives her the soul that Mrs. McIntyre has denied by letting her salvation be determined by her economy. Mrs. Shortley’s religion also gives her the power of prophecy. Again standing on a hill, she hears a voice declare “Prophesy!”, and she does: “‘The children of wicked nations will be butchered,’ she said in a loud voice. ‘Legs where arms should be, foot to face, ear in the palm of hand. Who will remain whole? Who will remain whole? Who?’” (301). According to Kathleen Feeley, she “becomes a false prophet because she fears the mysterious reality which the displaced person has introduced into her secure world” (175). Although she has become a prophet for self-serving means, her prophesy rings true. No one, in the end, can ever remain whole. Everyone must die; however, Mrs. Shortley’s death comes sooner than others’, and in much the same way as she prophesies even though she thinks she is speaking of the intruder’s demise. Although her death may appear to be a “chastening,” in Marshall Bruce Gentry’s words, she and others like her “can also be read as creators of alternate, unorthodox, personal religious systems that give them as much control over their lives as men have over theirs” (“Gender” 64). It is mostly control that she seeks in this quest to be on top of the farm—control of her life and
those around her. It is also this control that brings her to her death, although she leaves the farm on her own terms.

The control Mrs. Shortley seeks is made apparent in one of her discussions with the blacks about her concern for their place, but Astor brushes her off: “You liable to hear most anything” (290). When he walks away, ignoring her warnings, Mrs. Shortley stands daydreaming about “the ten million billion of them pushing their way into new places over here and herself, a giant angel with wings as wide as a house” (291). She is not just an angel, one of God’s chosen helpers, but a giant angel, just as she is “the giant wife of the countryside” (285). She is physically large, but her presence is “giant” as well. She is large enough to affect the farm both when she is on it and when she has left. Although her wings are “as wide as a house,” she does not have her own house, suggesting her claim on her home is as tenuous as her dream. Indeed, as she daydreams, “her unseeing eyes” are “directly in front of the peacock’s tail” (290). The peacocks have long had run of the farm, suggesting, as does Gentry, that they represent “stability: being in place” (Religion 28). However, she ignores the creature that has a place to daydream about her own. If she paid more attention to the peacock, perhaps she would notice that he takes control of his own life instead of trying to control others’.

Because of her new revelation, Mrs. Shortley becomes more focused on the priest’s negative presence on the farm. Although she previously suspected him of changing Mrs. McIntyre, now she sees him as an actual menace. Lake writes that since the priest is “a symbol of authority, tradition, and mediation, he is a real threat to Mrs. Shortley’s special place as defender of the absolute propositional truths she has discovered” (43). The priest’s religion also has not had the “foolishness…reformed out of it,” so he is still concerned with ethics, which might get in the way of her divine place in God’s plan. Indeed, Mrs. Shortley notices, “Here he was: leading
foreigners over in hordes to places that were not theirs, to cause disputes, to uproot niggers, to plant the Whore of Babylon in the midst of the righteous!” (300-301). This is the crux of the issue: the priest has brought people who do not belong onto her farm, and he has not brought just anyone, but “hordes” of people representing the Whore of Babylon. The Guizacs are too much for the righteous Shortleys to compete with. As Gentry writes, “Mrs. Shortley finds her primary source of power in her ability to choose her victimization” (Religion 29). Her power comes from her status over people; therefore, when she senses she is not winning the battle of power over Guizac, she focuses on the priest instead.

Mrs. Shortley’s continued attempts to prove her status above others on the farm creates a culture of imperialism. Because, as Said indicates, imperialism is “a cultural affliction for colonizer as well as colonized” (206), it is inevitable that Mrs. Shortley will encounter adversity. This adversity comes when Mrs. Shortley’s way of life is threatened as she overhears Mrs. McIntyre tell the priest that she plans to let the Shortleys go in order to afford the Guizacs. This challenge could be met with thought and consideration: Mrs. McIntyre does not have a history of actually firing her workers, and she does in fact value Mrs. Shortley’s friendship to some degree. However, as Asals recognizes,

one never finds this process in Flannery O’Connor. Possessing, as we have seen, much self-assurance but little real self-awareness, her protagonists meet the challenge of the double only with repudiation, outraged resistance, an increased hardening of attitude that presses the tensions of her stories to the bursting point. (Imagination 118)

As Mrs. McIntyre’s “chthonic counterpart,” Mrs. Shortley is in some ways Mrs. McIntyre’s double, and the threat of being fired is certainly a challenge to her power. Mrs. Shortley reacts
with the outraged resistance Asals writes about and refuses to allow Mrs. McIntyre the power that would be hers if she were allowed to control the Shortleys’ lives by saying whether they stay or go. Instead, Mrs. Shortley instructs her husband, “Bring the car around to the back door...You ain’t waiting to be fired!” (303). This action does bring the tension of the story, and Mrs. Shortley’s life, to its bursting point.

On their way out of town, when her family asks her where they are going and Mrs. Shortley does not have a ready answer, there is suddenly “a peculiar lack of light in her icy blue eyes. All the vision in them might have been turned around, looking inside her. She suddenly grabbed Mr. Shortley’s elbow and Sarah Mae’s foot at the same time and began to tug and pull on them as if she were trying to fit the two extra limbs onto herself” (304). These her final moments are reminiscent not only of her prophecy on the hill asking “Who will remain whole?” and declaring “Legs where arms should be, foot to face, ear in the palm of hand” (301), but also of the newsreel she recalls early in the story “of a small room piled high with bodies of dead naked people all in a heap, their arms and legs tangled together, a head thrust in here, a head there, a foot, a knee, a part that should have been covered up sticking out, a hand raised clutching nothing” (287). The resulting trauma she has witnessed in a newsreel and that she has imagined for others in her prophecy has now come to her. It is not just death that overcomes Mrs. Shortley, though, it is a death that causes her to try to “rearrange the whole car at once” (304). The grasping of body parts indicates her “fear of losing the integrity of the body” (Kahane 190). She has been trying to control not only her life but her large body as well. However, as one breaks down, the other follows. Lake explains, “As Mrs. Shortley’s solid self disintegrates, her mind cannot preserve the hierarchy it had imagined; it cannot preserve the rigid distinction between
self and other it had inhabited” (47). The boundaries she had so carefully established and maintained are broken down as she is left without control of her place or her body.

It is in the midst of this trauma and the breakdown of these boundaries that she “seemed to contemplate for the first time the tremendous frontiers of her true country” (305). Karl Martin sees this insight as “her final vision [when she] clearly sees her proper place” (149). He argues that she finally realizes that she does not belong with Mrs. McIntyre but with “the displaced of the world” (150). The disintegration of her body along with the disintegration of her status is more than Mrs. Shortley can handle. As her family watches, the narrator tells us that “they didn’t know that she had had a great experience or ever been displaced in the world from all that belonged to her” (305). The phrasing here is significant. Whereas previously she had only “seemed to contemplate” and moved “as if” she were trying to fit the limbs onto herself, O’Connor here transgresses boundaries that normally limit her third-person narration in order to add meaning to this reenactment of violence. She steps beyond the figure of “as if” in order to assert that Mrs. Shortley has indeed had a great experience and been displaced in the world from all that belonged to her.

(Olton 100-101)

Although she had already been displaced from her house, which she didn’t actually own, she is now displaced from the only thing she did own: her confidence in her own superiority. It is necessary that she die after coming to this realization because after a lifetime of living without this realization of equality, she would not know how to live with it. Because of her qualities akin to a colonizer, Aimé Césaire’s contention that violence is a natural consequence of being a colonizer is apt. He argues that “colonization works to decivilize the colonizer, to brutalize him in the true sense of the word, to degrade him, to awaken him to buried instincts, to covetousness,
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violence, race hatred, and moral relativism” (35). The flailing in the car is a brutal death, but her prophecy was evidence of her earlier brutalization as well—she saw it coming. Indeed, Césaire’s statement even predicts her relativistic religion, which Mrs. McIntyre later shares as she adopts Mrs. Shortley’s position as attempted colonizer on the farm.

Although the Shortleys’ world is now changed completely, the farm, on the surface, remains as it was. Just before Mrs. Shortley’s death, the family driving away from the farm pass Astor and Sulk on their way in to the farm. The two men “looked straight at the car and its occupants but even as the dim yellow headlights lit up their faces, they politely did not seem to see anything, or anyhow, to attach significance to what was there” (304). This purposeful lack of comprehension allows the Shortleys to leave without comment and allows the blacks to continue on their business without any additional responsibility. This is the kind of understanding that is part of the implicit expectations of the social hierarchy of the farm and the kind of understanding with which Guizac refuses to comply. Mrs. Shortley had been concerned earlier about Mrs. McIntyre finding out about Mr. Shortley’s still. She knew the blacks wouldn’t tell—that implicit agreement—“but with foreigners on the place, with people who were all eyes and no understanding, who had come from a place continually fighting, where the religion had not been reformed—with this kind of people, you had to be on the lookout every minute” (295-296). This disruption of the basic tenets of the farm causes the others to be afraid of Guizac, and their fear allows him to have more power. The repercussions of Mrs. Shortley’s power as well as the loss of her presence on the farm do not take long to become evident. Largest among these is Guizac’s increasing power on the farm.
When Guizac first arrives on the farm, he cannot communicate at all in English, requiring his son to translate for him. The longer he is on the farm, the more knowledge of English he gains, although he is not quick to show it. When Mrs. McIntyre speaks to Guizac, “His face showed no comprehension. He seemed to be piecing all these words together in his mind to make a thought” (314). Learning English, albeit only bits and pieces, allows him to be subversive to the dominant culture of the farm. Indeed, it can be seen as an act of mimicry—he is mimicking the language of the farm as he also learns to mimic the actions and attitude of those with power. Derek Walcott writes that “mimicry is an act of imagination” (262). To be able to use his imagination to gain power is clearly more than Mrs. McIntyre or Mrs. Shortley can do. Each of them uses her imagination only to mire herself deeper in her current situation. In addition, neither of them picks up on Polish by listening to the Guizacs speak. Guizac is not only gaining another language, but that language gives him a foothold in their culture. As Frantz Fanon explains, “to speak a language is to appropriate its world and culture” (Black 21). Because Guizac speaks their language, he knows far more about their world and culture than they do about his, and so has far more power over them.

Although everyone on the farm has an opinion about Guizac, Guizac himself is given little voice. Instead, the reader must gather what she can from others’ perceptions of him. Indeed, while his presence causes quite a stir, little attention is paid to his actual person. There is not even any physical description of him until the last third of the story. The description we do finally get is at least partially a product of the narrator’s perceptions:

His forehead and skull were white where they had been protected by his cap but the rest of his face was red and bristled with short yellow hairs. His eyes were like
two bright nails behind his gold-rimmed spectacles that had been mended over the nose with haywire. His whole face looked as if it might have been patched together out of several others. (313)

The patched-together look of his face represents the patched-together identities he has been assigned by the various members of the farm. He is equal parts refugee, savior, and malefactor. These characteristics play into the farm members' views of Guizac. According to Barry Smart, the body is a particular “object of knowledge” and “target for the exercise of power” (75). Guizac’s body is a focal point for both Mrs. McIntyre and Mrs. Shortley as they seek to use him to display and enhance their own power. His appearance allows him to be readily labeled as a foreigner, and his spectacles allow him to stand in for any other evildoer who has also happened to wear glasses, like the “one man who had thrown a hand-grenade” at Mr. Shortley who had worn “little round eye-glasses exactly like Mr. Guizac’s” (318-319). Guizac’s appearance allows him to be easily labeled as other, also allowing Mrs. McIntyre and the Shortleys to label themselves as the norm that he is different from.

However, Guizac’s appearance leads to more than just othering. According to Sarah Gordon, “The fact that Mr. Guizac’s face seems a composite of ‘several others’ implies his connection with all of humanity” (189). As each person seeks to use Guizac, they also create a connection with him. As Hegel’s master-slave dialectic indicates, when one person tries to enslave another, the result is somewhat paradoxical: “the master remains in the state of dependence while the slave (slowly) educates himself toward independence” (Spencer and Krauze 61). Mrs. McIntyre and Mrs. Shortley become not only connected to Guizac as they try to use and other him, they become dependent on him, while Guizac is steadily working to better himself.
Mrs. McIntyre cannot ignore the fact that, in addition to the multiple identities Guizac is assigned, he seems to be able to work as several people. She sets him to be superior to everyone on her farm. Not only is Guizac capable of doing the work of several men, she indicates that he does it better than her current men:

Mr. Guizac could drive a tractor, use the rotary hay-baler, the silage cutter, the combine, the letz mill, or any other machine she had on the place. He was an expert mechanic, a carpenter, and a mason. He was thrifty and energetic. ... He could work milking machines and he was scrupulously clean. He did not smoke.

She notes here that not only can he do the job he was hired for, but he can also do Mr. Shortley’s job in the dairy, and he does not smoke as Mr. Shortley does. Karl Martin points out that Mrs. McIntyre primarily “wishes to use him to control her other workers” (142). If she has a worker to measure the others against, then it is much easier to mark one as out of line, or even as “extra.” In this way, she can see Guizac as a “package deal”—she gets not only a great worker, but a way to make her other workers measure up. However, using Guizac in this manner spells trouble for her in the end. Peggy Castex sees how Guizac’s multiple identities point to both the saintly and the demonic: “Carpentry points to Christ. A mason builds rather than destroys. Mechanics, however, is a dead giveaway of the demonic and refers back to the 19th century realistic grotesque which cast diabolical figures as clock-makers, astronomers or mechanics, those who possess an uncanny knowledge of the inner workings of the physical universe” (10). Guizac has that “uncanny knowledge” in that he seems to know how to both work and fix any machine he comes upon. He came from a brick house in Poland, which indicates city life rather than a farmer, but yet he is an extraordinary farmer. Of course there are many possibilities for where he
picked up this knowledge, including in work camps during the war, but the uncanny connection is there nonetheless. Guizac can both connect to everything and everyone as well as be separate from all. His conflicting identities parallel the conflicting ideas the various farm members have about Guizac. Similar to the use of his physical description to further their prejudices, each farm member can use his skills to support their claims from salvation to demonic.

Guizac’s many talents on the farm likely contribute to his impressive work ethic on the farm. Early in the story, Sulk and Guizac are working on attaching the wagon, cutter, and tractor. When Guizac finishes his job before Sulk, Guizac “pushed the colored boy out of the way and attached the wagon to the cutter himself, gesticulating with a bright angry face” (O’Connor 293). If Guizac was the lowest member of the farm as Mrs. Shortley expects him to be, he would submit to all others, or at the least work with them as a team. Instead, Guizac takes the lead and uses Sulk as his helper instead of his equal. However, Guizac also does not just help Sulk finish the job; he uses violence to take over the position, becoming angry that Sulk is not performing up to his standards. Small actions such as this lead to Guizac gaining power on the farm. He has asserted himself over the blacks, making his superior skill and work ethic evident. That he first evidences this with the blacks, overtaking their position on the farm, indicates he is aware that they are the lowest socially.

Guizac again attempts to use Sulk to advance his position when Guizac discovers him stealing a turkey. After Sulk stuffed a “frying-size turkey” in his sack, Guizac had “jumped on him, dragged him to Mrs. McIntyre’s back door and had acted out the entire scene for her” (O’Connor 293). Once more, Guizac does not just inform Mrs. McIntyre, but uses violence to forcibly deliver Sulk to Mrs. McIntyre. When Mrs. McIntyre explained to Guizac that “all Negroes would steal,” Guizac left with a “startled disappointed face” (O’Connor 293). Everyone
on the farm knew that Sulk stole the occasional turkey, but they look past it as part of the nature of the community. Betsy Bolton recognizes the ignoring of others’ business—including the stealing of turkeys and running of stills—“as passive courtesy, as an acceptance of the world as others make it” (92). Guizac’s disappointment at Mrs. McIntyre’s rebuttal indicates that he is unwilling to accept the world as others make it, and understandably so: it has not served him or his family well so far in life. In turning Sulk in, he was hoping for the status that would have been his by apprehending a criminal for Mrs. McIntyre. Since this opportunity fails, he goes on to push himself above Sulk in other ways. This continued pressure indicates that overtaking Sulk’s position is more than a passing desire, but that Guizac is making a concerted effort at power. Using Fanon’s definition of a culture under siege lends additional understanding to the situation: “A national culture under colonial domination is a contested culture whose destruction is sought in systematic fashion” (Wretched 237). It is possible to view the farm as the “national culture under colonial domination.” Clearly there is a framework of power set up, and Guizac’s attempts to break into that hierarchy are certainly systematic. Through his consistent refusal to submit to the social norms of the farm, Guizac subverts them and continues to gain power.

Unfortunately for Mrs. McIntyre, Guizac’s strong work ethic has more consequences on the farm than just allowing him to accomplish more work. For Guizac, working is more important than relationships with his fellow workers, and more important than Mrs. McIntyre. When she tries to talk to him, he makes it clear she is interrupting: “Mr. Guizac was spraying the barn, standing in his sway-backed way with one hand on his hip. He turned off the hose and gave her an impatient kind of attention as if she were interfering with his work” (322). This kind of inattention indicates the level of respect Guizac holds for Mrs. McIntyre, which is also related to the amount of power she has over him. His distrust of Mrs. McIntyre is not surprising given his
past. Edward Said writes that “post-imperialism has permitted mainly a cultural discourse of suspicion on the part of formerly colonized peoples” (194). Guizac can certainly be considered a formerly colonized person—he has come from the camps of World War II where all power was removed from the inhabitants and lives were used or disposed of as they assisted and entertained the captors. After such an experience, the Guizacs have a clear reason to be distrustful of anyone in a position of power—in this case, Mrs. McIntyre.

Although Guizac is suspicious of the power she holds, Mrs. McIntyre is also suspicious of her new worker. She tells Mrs. Shortley that she is surprised “the Pole and all his family were getting fat; she pointed out to Mr. Shortley that the hollows had come out of their cheeks and that they saved every cent they made” (321). Kathleen Feeley explains that “Mr. Guizac evokes the hostility of the people around him because he orders his life to a reality which they cannot grasp” (175). Mrs. McIntyre expects that the Guizacs should remain as refugees: “grateful for anything they could get.” Instead, he and his family are prospering on their meager wages. If they are able to gain weight, then they are likely able to gain status as well, which means Guizac might be a threat to Mrs. McIntyre’s power.

What Mrs. McIntyre does not recognize is that the Guizacs have already begun to gain status. Instead of being merely a guest or worker on the farm, Guizac becomes the center of it, and Mrs. McIntyre becomes intimidated by him—to the point she can hardly even think about him, let alone speak to him:

There was a certain stiffness about his figure that seemed to make it necessary for her to approach him slowly, even in her thoughts. She decided this was because she couldn’t hold an easy conversation with him. Whenever she said anything to him, she found herself shouting and nodding extravagantly and she would be
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conscious that one of the Negroes was leaning behind the nearest shed, watching.

(307)

She tells herself that language is the barrier between them, but even in her mind, her fear is not of being misunderstood, but of having her other workers witness her failure to communicate with Guizac. Benedict Anderson indicates that this language barrier is actually a defining factor of the nation of the farm. He explains that “a small segment of literate bilingual adepts drawn from each vernacular community performed the unifying rites, interpreting to their respective followings the meaning of their collective motion” (Anderson 54). Guizac is this “bilingual adept” who creates the community around him. Because he is in the process of learning the language, additional ties must be created. Mrs. McIntyre talks to Mrs. Shortley about him, then talks to his son Rudolph in order to communicate with Guizac. This does not lead to much in-depth conversation, but it still places Guizac at the center of the conversation. Having one foot in each community creates Guizac as the connection between them. Frederick Asals recognizes the significance of this placement for Guizac and other similar intruders in O'Connor’s stories: “‘Know me,’ they appear to threaten, ‘or be destroyed’; or, even more terrifying, ‘Know me and be destroyed’” (Imagination 117). This is where his bilingualism gains him power. The community both knows him and is ignorant of him. Despite Guizac’s difficulty with the language, both women suspect that “he understands everything, he only pretends he don’t so as to do exactly as he pleases” (314). Unless he responds to them, they can never know what he understands and what he doesn’t. While Mrs. Shortley uses both her words and the words of the Judge to gain power, Guizac relies more on silence. Without saying a word, Guizac is suspected of knowing all. The members of the farm must join forces in an attempt to keep him out of power.
and eventually to remove him from the farm. The “unifying rites” Guizac performs do not necessarily lead to positive ends, but they are unifying nonetheless.

The workers of the farm understand the danger to “know him or be destroyed.” They know something about Guizac that Mrs. McIntyre does not, and, in the end, it does lead to her destruction. Astor tells Mrs. McIntyre only vaguely that something is going on: “In Pole it ain’t like it is here...They got different ways of doing”; and after further questioning: “It warn’t like it was what he should ought or oughtn’t...It was like what nobody else don’t do” (307). Astor’s admonitions clearly indicate that he knows, but also that Guizac is separate; he is not from this place and does not do things as they are done here. This exclusion of Guizac from their community emphasizes that they have a community. If they did not, there would be nothing for Guizac to be excluded from.

The Shortleys also recognize that the Guizacs come from a place that “ain’t like it is here.” Mrs. Shortley is near disgusted when she tells Mr. Shortley, “Sledgewig said that in Poland they lived in a brick house and one night a man come and told them to get out of it before daylight” (298). She finds it hard to believe that people she thinks so little of could have lived in a brick house. Indeed, a brick house is unnecessary in her eyes: “That’s just airs. A wooden house is good enough for me” (298). However, if we examine Mrs. Shortley as a possible colonizer, it is possible to see her as envious of Guizac’s increasing status. Mrs. Shortley has long been trying to ingratiate herself with Mrs. McIntyre and gain her power. Guizac entered Mrs. McIntyre’s good graces as soon as he arrived on the farm, and only rose in her estimation as he remained (at least until she discovers his secret). In addition to this, now she learns that he has also come from a better position than her own (ignoring the intervening time in the camps).

Homi Bhabha writes that “colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a
Mrs. Shortley is expressing her difference from Guizac, but is sure to point out that he is not that different, maintaining the possibility that she could be like him and gain the power that he is accumulating.

While Mrs. Shortley is quite possibly envious of Guizac, she also does not want to be him. Her statement “a wooden house is good enough for me” expresses some satisfaction with her current state. Rachel Carroll elucidates, however, that “the gratitude for social and racial privilege which O’Connor’s characters express transparently exposes a sense of its fragility, even its illegitimacy, and fear of its loss” (108). Mrs. Shortley claims to be happy with her current situation, but her behavior indicates her knowledge of its fragility. She talks about Mrs. McIntyre behind her back, lurks around corners to watch what’s going on, and gossips about the Guizacs in an attempt to lower Mrs. McIntyre’s esteem of them.

However, it isn’t actually possible to make a direct comparison between Mrs. Shortley’s and the Guizacs’ way of life. Erich Auerbach points out that “the events of classical history and legend and also those of the Bible were not separated from the present simply by an extent of time but also by completely different conditions of life” (282). Similarly, Mrs. Shortley and Mrs. McIntyre were initially separated from Guizac not simply by distance, but by their completely different conditions of life. The Guizacs’ cheeks are filling out not necessarily because they are getting rich, but because they have a much more stable living situation. Imagining a different condition of life is near impossible for both Mrs. McIntyre and Mrs. Shortley, though.

Mrs. McIntyre imagines that in Europe, Guizac had everything handed to him:

She was sorry that the poor man had been chased out of Poland and run across Europe and had had to take up in a tenant shack in a strange country, but … Mr. Guizac had probably had everything given to him all the way across Europe and
over here. He had probably not had to struggle enough. She had given him a job.

She didn’t know if he was grateful or not. (310)

Because Guizac has not lived her life, Mrs. McIntyre imagines that he has had it easier. Indeed, Mrs. McIntyre is beginning to imagine that instead of Guizac arriving on the farm to be rescued, he has arrived as an invader. While this was certainly not the case initially, it is easier to contemplate Guizac as an invader after his attempts to overtake the other members of the farm.

James Cox recognizes that with the Displaced Person, “the condition of post-war Europe” is brought to the “rural South with all the force of an invasion” (340). Although the priest arranges the invasion, Guizac is the actual invader. Mrs. McIntyre and Mrs. Shortley are uninterested in the events of the outside world, but the effects of that world are forced on them through Guizac’s arrival. It is only after Mrs. Shortley begins considering Guizac’s growing power that she recalls the newsreel she had once seen that showed a room piled high with dead, naked bodies. His presence brings with it a fear that the outside world may bring change to the farm. Of course, Mrs. McIntyre had hoped to experience only the benefits of the displaced person, but she does not live in a vacuum.

Not much is known about the Guizacs, and it seems that every new piece of information about them leads only to further displacement. The farm members know only that the Guizacs are displaced persons from Europe. Julia Kristeva in Strangers to Ourselves “identifies a paradox that emerges out of the common genealogy shared by the concepts of the universal ‘rights of man’ and of nationalism: the person without a state is a person without a claim to humanity” (qtd. in Carroll 102). Since Guizac is clearly identified without a place, Mrs. Shortley and Mrs. McIntyre see no problem identifying him without humanity either. He is merely an object to be used. Because the farm goes on day to day, its members are able to assume that it is working. In
Carroll’s analogy, it is as if they have gotten on a train: “Relinquishing individual agency, they are possessed by its dynamics but all the while lulled by the impression of movement; the effortless conveyance that the train delivers mimics the myth of history as progress” (100). However, the progress made when Guizac arrives clearly points to the lack of progress before his arrival. As Carroll states, Mrs. Shortley and Mrs. McIntyre let themselves be carried through daily life on the farm by the “impression of movement.” They readily accept the myth that just because you are still living, you are progressing. Instead, their ideas and beliefs are stagnant. Each of their belief systems is reinforced by the other only because it is beneficial to herself. However, the challenge that arrives in the form of Guizac’s attempt to save his cousin indicates they were not yet prepared to move on with modernity. Time may have continued, but they have not moved on with time enough to know what’s going on, or at least to understand it.

Mrs. McIntyre

Mrs. McIntyre thinks she has power on the farm, but instead merely has a position of power. Because she believes in her authority, she works to defend it. Since she has nothing to defend, her efforts are fruitless. Instead of it being clear to all, she must state and reiterate, “This is my place.” If the farm did not already represent some of the characteristics of colonialism, the conditions Paul Coates lays out aptly describe the farm. He writes that “the climate of colonialism” is created as these two conditions interact: “when other people begin to be viewed as akin to ourselves; and when the self is projected into a space hitherto defined as other” (32). After Mrs. Shortley’s departure, Mrs. McIntyre begins to recognize their similarities. In addition, through her confrontations with Guizac, Mrs. McIntyre recognizes more similarities. Because of this identification, Mrs. McIntyre’s “self” becomes defined by relationships with those she had
previously defined as other, throwing her whole identity into question. However, as Coates points out, this realization does not lead her to back down and accept the equality of man. Instead, she continues to work for a climate of colonialism—and continues to fail.

Mrs. McIntyre is confident in her status as head of her farm, and so “treats her workers, not as human beings, but as interchangeable parts in the economic system of the farm” (Martin 142). This dismissal of their humanity also leads her to dismiss “the possibility of her own suffering and displacement and her responsibility for the suffering of others” (Martin 150). Ignoring this possibility allows it to occur. Her workers know they are only tools to her, and so they feel no loyalty. When Mrs. Shortley feels her economic and social position is in danger, she has no hesitation in abandoning Mrs. McIntyre, sure that “Mr. Shortley should not adjust another milking machine on the place” (303). If Mrs. McIntyre and Mrs. Shortley had a more stereotypical relationship, they would be friends because they were the only two women on the farm. However, Richard Giannone recognizes that O’Connor’s women skip this kind of bonding by gender “in favor of a code of primitive survival and self-interest” (“Displacing” 74). Each woman maintains the relationship only as long as it is beneficial to her.

Although Mrs. McIntyre’s priorities will eventually be her downfall, this is not immediately apparent to her. After the Shortleys leave, Mrs. McIntyre is dismissive of her relationship with Mrs. Shortley and only gives them enough credit to think “they had been not quite trash” (305). She had appreciated having someone to talk to, but of course, Mrs. McIntyre would rather have her farm running well than have a social companion. Indeed, Mrs. McIntyre is even “delighted” that the Shortleys left because “it meant she wouldn’t have to fire them” (305). Mrs. McIntyre’s aversion to firing people is indicative of her fragile position at the top of the farm. She wants to be in charge, but she does not want to have to enforce her power.
Mrs. McIntyre’s joy at the Shortleys’ departure serves another purpose as well: it prevents her from considering how close she and Mrs. Shortley actually were and that she was actually dependent on Mrs. Shortley. Mrs. McIntyre must not completely relegate Mrs. Shortley to the category of “trash” because she only reached her precarious position of power through association with the Judge, just as Mrs. Shortley is trying to improve her position by befriending Mrs. McIntyre. Mrs. McIntyre met the Judge when she was his secretary, and “she had married him when he was an old man and because of his money but there had been another reason that she would not admit then, even to herself: she had liked him” (309). When she reminisces about the years they were together, she thinks of them not only as the “most prosperous,” but also as the “happiest” years of her life (309). Although economic prosperity was still paramount to Mrs. McIntyre, she admits she was emotionally satisfied as well. However, her economic power does have a great effect on Mrs. McIntyre’s happiness, so when her husband dies and leaves her bankrupt, her fight to keep her position as farm owner is the largest challenge to her happiness and status.

Mrs. McIntyre’s unstable position gives her more in common with Mrs. Shortley than she would care to admit. Nonetheless, this commonality becomes a kind of equalizer that frequently occurs in imperialist societies. Edward Said notes that imperialism often works “to disguise the power situation and to conceal how much the experience of the stronger party overlaps with and, strangely, depends on the weaker” (191-192). Peter Stallybrass and Allon White take it a step further:

A recurrent pattern emerges: the ‘top’ attempts to reject and eliminate the ‘bottom’ for reasons of prestige and status, only to discover, not only that it is in some way frequently dependent upon that low-Other (in the classic way that
Hegel describes in the master-slave section of the *Phenomenology*, but also that the top includes that low symbolically, as a primary eroticized constituent of its own fantasy life. The result is a mobile, conflictual fusion of power, fear and desire in the construction of subjectivity: a psychological dependence upon precisely those Others which are being rigorously opposed and excluded at the social level. (5)

Indeed, when Mrs. Shortley leaves, Mrs. McIntyre discovers she was dependent on Mrs. Shortley for her status. Mrs. McIntyre has the same realization at the end of the story after Guizac’s death when she does not regain any of her status. Instead, it becomes evident that Mrs. McIntyre has been exhibiting the “psychological dependence” that Stallybrass and White describe.

If Mrs. McIntyre condemns her, she is also condemning herself, which would deteriorate her tenuous hold on her position at the top of the agrarian hierarchy. Even so, she cannot actually recognize Mrs. Shortley as her equal because then she would allow Mrs. Shortley to exchange her ‘rightful’ culture for the one that Mrs. McIntyre had to earn. Said clarifies this idea: “cultural exchange involves thinking about domination and forcible appropriation: someone loses, someone gains” (195). Mrs. McIntyre cannot allow Mrs. Shortley to gain a position without someone else losing theirs, and the only person she believes to have more power than Mrs. Shortley is herself. Mrs. McIntyre does not want to give up her position for Mrs. Shortley, but needs Mrs. Shortley in order to maintain her position.

Even though these class lines are blurred, Mrs. McIntyre feels superior because she has already climbed the social ladder and Mrs. Shortley is trying but has yet to accomplish this. Peter Smith addresses power in O’Connor’s stories and believes “it is the persistent belief in [her] own superiority that entitles [Mrs. McIntyre] to denigrate [her] fellow human beings” (41-42). Smith
argues that O’Connor’s women “contribute to their own defeats by their constant assertions about the social hierarchy” (41). Mrs. McIntyre is not as superior as she believes herself to be, and by attempting to keep a clear delineation between herself and Mrs. Shortley, Mrs. McIntyre loses a potential ally in keeping her farm. Although Mrs. McIntyre thinks Mrs. Shortley is dispensable, Mrs. Shortley is necessary because she reinforces Mrs. McIntyre’s position of authority.

After the Shortleys have left, Mrs. McIntyre stands talking to her black worker Astor, who it would seem would support Mrs. McIntyre’s status in a way similar to Mrs. Shortley since he is lower on the social scale than she. However, their conversation indicates otherwise: “‘We’ve seen them come and seen them go,’ she repeated with satisfaction. ‘And me and you,’ the old man said, stooping to drag his hoe under a feed rack, ‘is still here’” (305). In one way, this statement is no different from her initial claim to joy because she did not have to fire the Shortleys. After all, “the people she hired always left her—because they were that kind of people” (305). However, this statement is different from her earlier sentiment in that she is expressing it to someone else, and not just anyone, but a black man. In dismissing the Shortleys, Mrs. McIntyre also dismisses class structure by equating black and white as equally unimportant to her. Traditional class distinctions have imploded on her farm as Mrs. McIntyre is interested only in keeping her own power, not in the rest of the farm’s hierarchy. She fails to realize that her own power is dependent on the rest of the farm’s hierarchy; without it, the other workers are free to reach for her position, and she is even more vulnerable.

Mrs. McIntyre’s vulnerability is made even clearer after Mrs. Shortley leaves the farm. Robert Fitzgerald aptly points out that Mrs. Shortley’s “role as the giant wife of the countryside devolves upon Mrs. McIntyre” (389). This meshing of roles represents a further implosion of
class distinctions on the farm. Instead of maintaining her role as head of the farm, Mrs. McIntyre conflates her and Mrs. Shortley’s roles. Taking on Mrs. Shortley’s role includes adopting her attitude toward the world. Whereas Mrs. McIntyre was previously trusting of both the priest and Guizac (hence allowing them on her farm), she now adopts Mrs. Shortley’s suspicion of them; they become opponents in her fight for control of the farm, and she is outnumbered. Mrs. Shortley’s continued presence on the farm after she has physically left is evidence of her power on it. William Burke goes as far as to call her “the center of gravity” (220). After all, the story’s narrative perspective is hers, and although this shifts to Mrs. McIntyre when she is gone, Mrs. McIntyre spends much of her time reminiscing about Mrs. Shortley and adopting her more fearful perspective.

Mrs. McIntyre looks like a strong woman. She tries to portray that image outwardly as well as trying to convince herself. She even tells herself “she had survived”:

She had survived a succession of tenant farmers and dairymen that the old man himself would have found hard to outdo...and she had even managed to hold her own against the incidental bloodsuckers, the cattle dealers and lumber men and the buyers and sellers of anything who drove up in pieced-together trucks and honked in the yard. (309-310)

Having survived against the dairymen, lumbermen, and other bloodsuckers who are likely to have been men as well indicates that she has survived even though she is a woman. In addition, as a woman who has had three husbands, two she divorced and one she buried, it seems Mrs. McIntyre should be able to hold her own. However, a closer examination of her relationships with the males who pass through the farm indicate that she does not stand on her own two feet, but relies on the men around her. It is not as if she is imposing on the men; rather, as Peter Smith
explains, when O’Connor was writing, a female farm-owner is a “paradox” society is “unwilling to embrace” (47). Instead, a woman’s class status should be dependent on a male, so without a male, Mrs. McIntyre’s status is viewed as unstable, and she has not rejected this view.

Although it is Mrs. McIntyre who now owns the farm and the Judge who is dead, the power on the farm seems to reside in the center of the cornfields with the Judge as he “lay grinning under his desecrated monument” (315). Indeed, the Judge is given even more power as Mrs. McIntyre returns to his office for courage and repeats his sayings. After a conversation with Sulk that reveals Guizac’s plan to have his cousin come to the U.S. to marry Sulk, Mrs. McIntyre retreats to her room to cry. However,

When she had cried all she could, she got up and went into the back hall, a closet-like space that was dark and quiet as a chapel and sat down on the edge of the Judge’s black mechanical chair with her elbow on his desk. … there was a small safe, empty but locked, set like a tabernacle in the center of it. She had left this part of the house unchanged since the old man’s time. It was a kind of memorial to him, sacred because he had conducted his business here. … She sat motionless at the desk for ten or fifteen minutes and then as if she had gained some strength, she got up and got in her car and drove to the cornfield. (312)

By going to his office and not her own room for strength, she is making the Judge the origin of her strength instead of herself. In addition, she has elevated the Judge almost to the level of a deity by leaving the safe—its emptiness a reminder of the monetary support he did not leave her—set “like a tabernacle,” an object of holiness, in the middle of the room. The room is sacred because he conducted his business there; however, she makes a point of telling Astor, “The Judge has long since ceased to pay the bills around here” (308). Even so, there is no mention of
the space she uses to “pay the bills,” and it is certainly not the space she retreating to in stressful times.

Mrs. McIntyre also still worries about her dead husband’s feelings: “She kept the peacock only out of a superstitious fear of annoying the Judge in his grave. Of her three husbands, the Judge was the one most present to her although he was the only one she had buried. But the Judge, sunk in the cornfield with his family, was always at home” (309). In this way, Mrs. McIntyre allots power to both the dead Judge and to the male bird allowed to roam her property. The peacock does nothing to earn his keep and does not even deign to open his feathers except “just when it suits him” (289). Although Mrs. McIntyre later accuses all of her workers of being “extra” (323), the bird—who, according to Christina Bieber Lake, “symbolizes everything grotesque ‘other’ or unnecessary ‘extra’ that does not fit into [the] system” (45)—is allowed to wander freely.

The Judge’s words are also used to keep his presence on the farm. His pithy one-liners are repeated no fewer than six times by the various characters of the farm, each one using the line to make an attempt at placing themselves in his position of authority, including both Mrs. Shortley’s and Astor’s use of “the devil you know is better than the devil you don’t” (299, 308). Mrs. Shortley used it to indicate her superior knowledge over Mrs. McIntyre; Astor, on the other hand, used it simply to remind Mrs. McIntyre that he was there, a known quantity, and someone who had been there when the Judge was, too.

This reminder of his presence is part of an ongoing conversation between Mrs. McIntyre and Astor. The two do not readily acknowledge one another, but Mrs. McIntyre speaks with Astor as if they were the ones who were married. When Astor “thought it necessary, he would work under a window where he knew she was sitting and talk to himself, a careful roundabout
discussion, question and answer and then refrain” (308). The easy way he does this indicates that this is a long-standing practice of talking to himself for Mrs. McIntyre’s benefit. After the Shortleys have left the farm, Mrs. McIntyre stands looking over the farm with Astor and uses “we” to indicate that the farm will move on without them (305). The use of “we” indicates a camaraderie, an equality between them. Astor supports this view by echoing Mrs. McIntyre: “‘We seen them come and we seen them go,’ he said as if this were a refrain” (306). The refrain aspect of his statement indicates the use of “we” is not foreign to him, but something that has been repeated again and again. Unlike Guizac, who used Astor as a stepping stone, Mrs. McIntyre leans on Astor for support. It seems irrelevant to her that he is at the bottom of the social ladder of the farm and that he is black; what does seem relevant to her is that he is a male.

It is not just the males on her farm that Mrs. McIntyre turns to for support; the priest also seems to have more and more influence over her thoughts and actions. Before seeking out the Displaced Person, Mrs. McIntyre “had never known a priest,” but “after he had got her the Pole, he had used the business introduction to try to convert her—just as she had supposed he would” (316). Even Mr. Shortley has noticed the increased influence: he “had no doubt that the priest had some peculiar control over Mrs. McIntyre and that before long she would start attending his Masses. She looked as if something was wearing her down from the inside. She was thinner and more fidgety and not as sharp as she used to be” (321). Although Mrs. McIntyre sought out the priest to obtain her workers, after she has what she wants, his presence seems onerous to her. When she watches Guizac work, she realizes that “the sight of his small stiff figure” had become “the most irritating sight on the place for her, and she felt she had been tricked by the old priest” (319). But yet, even after she has determined to fire Guizac, she feels the need to wait to fire him until she can convince the priest that she has “no moral obligation to keep him” (316). Her moral
obligations seem limited to what is convenient to her, which Mrs. McIntyre reinforces with her own words when she proclaims to the priest, “I’m not theological. I’m practical! I want to talk to you about something practical!” (316). And in a practical sense, Guizac is “extra…He doesn’t fit in” (316). Guizac has disrupted the status quo of her farm, and, according to her, “he’s not in the least grateful for being here,” so she wants rid of him (316). Instead of simply firing him and thereby taking charge of her own farm, Mrs. McIntyre turns to the next in a line of males and turns her power over to him by deferring her decision to fire Guizac until the priest agrees. If she can convince the priest, then her power, her control of her own farm will be acknowledged by the priest. Although she distrusts him, he is a male, so it seems that without his male endorsement, her power as farm owner is nonexistent.

Of course, the male with the most influence over her is Guizac himself. While Mrs. McIntyre’s relationship with Mrs. Shortley takes up the first section of the story, the next two sections focus more on her relationship with Guizac. Mrs. McIntyre’s expectations for their relationship are high, but while she had the most to gain by bringing the Guizacs to her farm because of the increased productivity, she also had the most to lose. She was short-sighted enough to think that the social strata of the farm would remain unchanged with Guizac’s presence. Even she cannot remain unchanged. Mrs. Shortley observes that “since the Displaced Person had been working for her,” Mrs. McIntyre “had begun to act like somebody who was getting rich secretly and she didn’t confide in Mrs. Shortley the way she used to” (299).

This oversight is possible because Mrs. McIntyre does not view her workers as people, but, as Karl Martin points out, as part of her economic system. When Mrs. Shortley leaves, Mrs. McIntyre only briefly considers the loss of her friend, thinking, “she would miss her but as the Judge used to say, you couldn’t have your pie and eat it too” (305). Mrs. McIntyre’s “pie,” or the
most important element of her life, is economic stability. Indeed, because Guizac “has to work,” his worth is far above Mrs. Shortley, who could only provide companionship. Mrs. McIntyre goes as far as to call Guizac her “salvation” (294). She registers cheap labor as most important and ignores the societal aspects of running a farm. As long as she has people to work her farm, she doesn’t think it matters who they are.

She soon begins using Guizac as the measuring rod for her other workers, pointing out to Mrs. Shortley for the “fifth time within the week” that Guizac “doesn’t smoke,” implying disdain for any worker who does, namely Mr. Shortley (296). Peter Smith likens this to a provoked sibling rivalry, hearing in comparisons a “why-can’t-you-be-like-your-brother admonition” (38). Unfortunately for him, Mr. Shortley has no desire to be more like his “brother” and is consequently lowered in Mrs. McIntyre’s esteem until she decides to fire him. Karl Martin calls this process “the politics of oppression” (153). The blacks don’t seem to mind, or even be included in the comparison, as Astor reminds Sulk, “your place too low for anybody to dispute with you for it” (297). However, Mrs. McIntyre’s place is certainly not so low that no one wants to dispute it.

The battle for her place takes its toll on Mrs. McIntyre’s appearance. Mr. Shortley notices that “she didn’t look too well these days. He noticed lines around her eyes that hadn’t been there when he and Mrs. Shortley had been the only white help on the place” (320). Mrs. McIntyre’s physical appearance as initially described places her as quite feminine:

Mrs. McIntyre was a small woman of sixty with a round wrinkled face and red bangs that came almost down to two high orange-colored penciled eyebrows. She had a little doll’s mouth and eyes that were a soft blue when she opened them.
wide but more like steel or granite when she narrowed them to inspect a milk can.

(287-288)

The penciled eyebrows indicate a care for her appearance, and both the “little doll’s mouth” and “soft blue” eyes seem to be those of a girl. Without the statement that she is sixty and has wrinkles, her description paints her as a young woman. That description is checked by the additional detail about her eyes that become “like steel or granite.” As farm owner, Mrs. McIntyre has tried to suppress her feminine side; however, as Smith notes, she “ultimately fail[s] to fully synthesize the necessary aspects of both traditional gender roles” (45). Mary Morton also sees this attempt at gender appropriation as problematic, writing that “O’Connor’s stories dramatize the luidicrousity of women who have denied the spirit of femininity, the anima” (57).

By trying to deny one gender in order to appropriate the other, Mrs. McIntyre is left in between them, with her gender as one more aspect of her displacement. As a female, she can never completely take on the characteristics of a man and take advantage of the assertiveness and power that is associated with the gender, but in the attempt to do so, she denies, as Morton says, her “anima” and thereby gives up the deference that is generally afforded to females. Having the characteristics of neither gender to work for her, Mrs. McIntyre is left leaning on the men around her and thereby giving up her power.

Mrs. McIntyre’s gender issues become forefront in her most important, and telling, battle for power with Guizac. She learns from Sulk that the picture he carries of “a girl of about twelve in a white dress” is Guizac’s cousin, and Guizac is bringing her to the farm to “mah me,” as Sulk says. Mrs. McIntyre “shrieked” in response, but composes herself quickly, and when she walks away from Sulk, “there was nothing about her small stiff figure to indicate that she was shaken” (311). The “shriill,” “high-pitched,” or even “hysterical” nature of a shriek causes it to be
something often associated with females (OED). In addition, it is after this moment that Mrs. McIntyre goes to the Judge’s office. Both of these actions show the feminine side Mrs. McIntyre thinks she is suppressing but clearly is not.

She has further problems when she confronts Guizac on the subject, expecting him to recognize her authority over him. Mrs. McIntyre expresses shock at Guizac’s audacity at bringing that “poor innocent child over here and try[ing] to marry her to a half-witted thieving black stinking nigger! What kind of a monster are you!” (313). When she gets nowhere with that, she continues to talk, arguing that “I will not have my niggers upset. I cannot run this place without my niggers. I can run it without you but not without them and if you mention this girl to Sulk again, you won’t have a job with me. Do you understand?” (314). This quick switch between a “half-witted thieving black stinking nigger” and the black men as necessary is indicative of both her economic view of her workers and her increasing awareness of the importance of her place. The black men do not challenge her for her place, and so she is more willing to accept them and happier to continue using them as opposed to the increasingly powerful Guizac. However, the next time Mrs. McIntyre interacts with Guizac, she tells him that he and all her other workers are “extra,” contradicting her statement that she cannot run her farm without her black workers and further indicating that she is only interested in her workers as far as they can uphold her place and status. As Guizac continues refusing to acknowledge her position, Mrs. McIntyre feels her vulnerability more and more.

Because she feels her place being threatened, Mrs. McIntyre escalates her argument, stating, “This is my place…I say who will come here and who won’t,” “I am not responsible for the world’s misery,” and “You should be grateful to be here…but I’m not sure you are,” but Guizac only repeats, “‘Ya,’…and [he] gave his little shrug and turned back to the tractor” (314-
Equating Guizac with “the world’s misery” makes it easier for her to dismiss him since she could not relieve all of the world’s misery. If she cannot be responsible for all of it, why should she bother with the single family staying on her farm? More than her ability to dismiss Guizac, though, Mrs. McIntyre is focusing on her statement that “This is my place.” Although she owns the farm in name, it is clear she is having trouble controlling it. She later stands on top of the hill imperialistically restating “This is my place,” but that does not make it any truer. In order to convince anyone else that the farm is hers, she would first have to be convinced of it herself.

In attempting to dismiss Guizac so easily, Mrs. McIntyre forgets that he has come to her farm to escape the oppressive power of Nazi Germany. He has experienced powerlessness and could even be described as what Derek Walcott calls “ex-colonial” since he escaped that power structure. Walcott suggests that “perhaps powerlessness leaves...the ex-colonial world no alternative but to imitate those systems offered to or forced on it by the major powers” (258). Although Mrs. McIntyre indicates that Guizac is without power, he has been watching her and just as he learned to mimic her language, he has also learned to mimic her attitude. He does not care to empathize with her and instead acts as if the farm is his. His knowledge of the farm has, in reality, made it as much his as hers, and he knows it, so as Mrs. McIntyre attempts to assert herself without a solid place to stand, Guizac rejects her power, place, language, and gender in one fell swoop.

Guizac’s rebuff causes Mrs. McIntyre to feel “a peculiar weakness behind her knees” as she recognizes her lack of control over him (314). It is significant that this is also a feeling associated with falling in love. Even though Mrs. McIntyre wants to be in the position of power, she is affected by Guizac’s unyielding assertion of his power, and the effect it has is one specifically related to their gendered relationship. In the midst of this confrontation, “Mrs.
McIntyre remembered Mrs. Shortley’s words: ‘He understand everything, he only pretends he
don’t so as to do exactly as he pleases,’ and her face regained the look of shocked wrath she had
begun with” (314). Mrs. Shortley believed that Guizac was trying to take advantage of Mrs.
McIntyre, and Mrs. McIntyre is adopting that perspective. In addition, this pretence of not
understanding is demonstrative of the lack of power Mrs. McIntyre has over Guizac. She cannot
even get him to communicate with her openly, and he maintains the power in their conversations
by not allowing Mrs. McIntyre to know what he understands and what he doesn’t. As Guizac
continues to threaten her power, Mrs. McIntyre takes on many of Mrs. Shortley’s perspectives,
filling the void left by Mrs. Shortley by creating her persona in her own mind.

After Guizac turns away from her, Mrs. McIntyre climbs “to the top of the slope and
stood with her arms folded and looked out grimly over the field,” where she can at least be above
him physically if she can’t best him mentally (315). She must express her power over him when
he is not in earshot, so as she stands on the hill, she talks to herself: “‘They’re all the same,’ she
muttered, ‘whether they come from Poland or Tennessee. I’ve handled Herrins and Ringfields
and Shortleys and I can handle a Guizac’” (315). “Handling” indicates a power to manipulate
someone lesser than herself. However, as she continues, she diminishes the differences between
herself and Guizac: “You’re just like all the rest of them...only smart and thrifty and energetic
but so am I” (315). Instead of placing herself above Guizac, she has emphasized their
resemblance, creating what Betsy Bolton calls an “unexpected identification” (93). This
identification is also a factor of her relationship with Mrs. Shortley and explains their increasing
resemblance after Mrs. Shortley has left the farm. It is much harder to degrade a person with
whom you identify, and so Mrs. McIntyre undermines her own power. In addition, as Clare
Rosenfield points out about these types of reflective relationships, “what is important is not their
contrary natures and descriptions, but the way in which they reveal the loss of identity of the main character” (328). Because Mrs. McIntyre reflects Mrs. Shortley, Guizac, and even the Judge, it becomes increasingly clear that she is not able to claim her own identity as much as imitate those of others.

As Mrs. McIntyre stands on the hill in the same position as the wary Mrs. Shortley from the beginning of the story, she narrows her gaze on Guizac “as if she were watching him through a gunsight” (315). While this description of violence is certainly prescient, Bolton pays special attention to the specific use of “as if” here: “The omniscient narrator’s description (‘as if’) conflates aggression and sight, giving outlet to Mrs. McIntyre’s strong feelings while maintaining the safety of a figural account” (93). The “as if” allows Mrs. McIntyre to imagine the violence without actually having to perpetrate it, or to do anything at all. Instead, she remains still, with her heart “beating as if some interior violence had already been done to her” (O’Connor 315). Violence has already been perpetrated against her by Guizac, who has wrenched control of her farm away from her and is gaining the position of power she thought she held. His is not a physical violence but “interior” since he is using subversive methods to take control. He is no longer the foreigner, but has taken over her home instead. This exchange of control must be violent because, as Said summarizes Frantz Fanon’s argument, “the empire never gives anything away out of goodwill. It cannot give...freedom, but must be forced to yield it” (Said 207). The battle between Mrs. McIntyre and Guizac is not military, but as Mrs. McIntyre is the head of this quasi-nation, it is political and cultural. Some critics, such as Gretlund, argue that “it is only at the murder of Mr. Guizac that Mrs. McIntyre begins to suspect that she may not be in full control even on her place” (204). However, the text at this point seems clear that Mrs. McIntyre is watching Guizac maneuver to take her farm away from her.
The violence implied here without a hand being laid on anyone is, according to Frederick Asals, inherent in O’Connor’s style: “Caught within the dualistic pincers of the grotesque, O’Connor’s characters are all etched in images which deny them human completeness and which carry unmistakable reminders of death” (Imagination 93). Each character’s faults lead him or her to implied or actual violence. In the midst of what Rachel Carroll calls “the trauma of violence,” they are then led to hasty decisions, often “mak[ing] a choice as if the roles of victim and perpetrator were the only positions available” (Carroll 103). Caught inside this struggle for power, O’Connor’s characters exert any influence they can in order to gain power and avoid the victimization inherent in being colonized. Unfortunately, their efforts only serve to weaken them further.

In the third section of the story, it is clear Mrs. McIntyre is particularly affected by the fight for place. Not only is she not in control of her farm, but she is already feeling displaced from it. When Mr. Shortley returns to the farm, “she had the feeling she was the one returning, after a long miserable trip, to her own place. She realized all at once that is was Mrs. Shortley she had been missing. She had had no one to talk to since Mrs. Shortley left” (318). Mrs. McIntyre missed Mrs. Shortley because having her as a friend gave Mrs. McIntyre both affirmation and status. Mrs. McIntyre could feel she was above someone if she could overlook Mrs. Shortley’s attempts at social climbing, and Mrs. Shortley’s ability to take charge of her life gave Mrs. McIntyre confidence that she could do the same. Recognizing this “kinship,” as Asals calls it, “is as self-estranging as it is self-revealing” (Imagination 99). It means that Mrs. McIntyre may not be all she thought she was and that without someone like Mrs. Shortley to affirm her, Mrs. McIntyre feels lost. The loss Mrs. McIntyre feels is also indicative of the power
Mrs. Shortley had over her since she no longer has the direction and drive she seemed to have when Mrs. Shortley was by her side.

With Mr. Shortley back on the farm, Mrs. McIntyre hopes he will perform Mrs. Shortley's role for her. Although Mrs. McIntyre initially claims Guizac as her “salvation,” James Cox recognizes that her stability of place had a lot to do with that designation. He writes that once Mrs. McIntyre is “confronted with the social disruption which would accompany the financial salvation, she rejects Guizac and allies herself with Mr. Shortley” (339). Mr. Shortley seems to be the perfect ally because he harbors as much resentment against Guizac as she does. When he reveals that Mrs. Shortley is dead, he says, “I figure that Pole killed her”—one more facet of Guizac’s power (318). Mrs. McIntyre expects Mr. Shortley to take his wife’s place in upholding Mrs. McIntyre’s status, but unfortunately for Mrs. McIntyre, Mr. Shortley also refuses to be submissive to a woman.

In an attempt to gain Mr. Shortley as an ally, Mrs. McIntyre “told him she was going to give thirty days’ notice to the Displaced Person at the end of the month and that then he could have his job back in the dairy” (318). However, she creates reasons that she cannot yet fire Guizac, and she continues putting it off. The root of the problem becomes clear when it is revealed that “she had never discharged any one before; they had all left her” (322). Mrs. McIntyre has claimed her place as head of the farm in name only. She has counted on those under her to leave on their own, which means that they actually have more power than she does since they determine when they go. The contrast between her desire to be rid of Guizac and her lack of action to fire him is explained by Fanon’s reminder that it is “always easier to proclaim rejection than actually to reject” (Wretched 219). Mrs. McIntyre wants to separate her farm from
the control of Guizac, but when it comes to decisive action, she is afraid of the damage his leaving might cause to her productivity, so she waits.

Mrs. McIntyre’s eventual decision to fire Guizac is precipitated by a dream, similar to Mrs. Shortley’s vision. Mrs. McIntyre dreams “that Mr. Guizac and his family were moving in to her house and that she was moving in with Mr. Shortley” (322). Although she has changed her alliance from Guizac to Shortley, moving in with him carries the physical and visual representations that she is no longer in charge. Even if Guizac has more power than she, she is still the farm owner in name. The closeness of this dream to reality leads Mrs. McIntyre to make up her mind “that she would give him his notice at once” (322). She does not think any further about it and just walks “down the road with her table napkin still in her hand” (322). Perhaps it is this lack of forethought that leads the conversation to deviate dramatically from her expectations. Guizac does not take her hints and instead just shrugs her off:

“Mr. Guizac,” she said, “I can barely meet my obligations now.” Then she said in a louder, stronger voice, emphasizing each word, “I have bills to pay.”

“I too,” Mr. Guizac said. “Much bills, little money,” and he shrugged.

… “This is my place,” she said angrily. “All of you are extra. Each and every one of you are extra!”

“Ya,” Mr. Guizac said and turned on the hose again. (323)

This scene encapsulates all of the methods Guizac has used to rebuff and undermine Mrs. McIntyre’s power thus far. In raising her voice (in the hope that more decibels will equal more understanding), Mrs. McIntyre tries to reinforce Guizac’s lower status because of his inferior knowledge of English. However, Guizac has clearly heard her; he just refuses to comply with her
wishes. Language is power, but Guizac’s refusal to use it, similar to Mrs. Shortley’s use of silence, allows him to subvert Mrs. McIntyre’s position and affords him more power.

Also problematic for Mrs. McIntyre is the continued identification between her and Guizac. Just as she previously recognized that both she and Guizac were “smart and thrifty and energetic” (315), Guizac here reinforces that identification since they both have “bills to pay.” This is additionally subversive because Guizac’s identification lessens the power of the superiority she believes comes from being the one who pays the bills. Fanon claims that in a “national struggle, colonialism tries to disarm national demands by putting forward economic doctrines” (Wretched 207). As the saying goes, money talks; however, Guizac pays the bills for his family, and that position allows him to match her sense of leadership so that Mrs. McIntyre has no means of intimidating him. In this situation, Guizac has an “economic doctrine” of his own and so rejects Mrs. McIntyre’s. Mrs. McIntyre could put forward the authority she has to fire him, and thus rid herself of one of her bills to pay and rid Guizac of his means for paying bills, but instead she merely proposes this economic doctrine and expects Guizac to take action based on it.

Mrs. McIntyre tries to claim that he and all of her other workers are simply “extra,” unnecessary. However, if all her workers left, she would be unable to run the farm. Presumably Mrs. McIntyre declares her workers “extra” because she knows there are many others who could do their job. Benedict Anderson explains that as part of an imagined community, “Each communicant is well aware that the ceremony he performs is being replicated simultaneously by thousands (or millions) of others of whose existence he is confident, yet of whose identity he has not the slightest notion” (35). The ceremony he refers to is any daily act that is shared by many others in that community, from reading the newspaper to working the farm. Both Mrs. McIntyre
and Mrs. Shortley express fear of this imagined community: Mrs. Shortley through her vision of "the ten million billion of them pushing their way into new places over here" (291), and Mrs. McIntyre through her designation of Guizac as "extra" and her statement to the priest that she doesn’t "find [her]self responsible for all the extra people in the world" (317). By stating that, she is indicating that she feels as if the priest does think she is responsible for all of these others in her imagined community, and she wants none of it. This refusal to take any responsibility is part of the reason she has nothing at the end of the story.

At the end of this conversation, just as in the incident about his cousin and Sulk, Guizac refuses to recognize Mrs. McIntyre’s authority. He does not cower or "yes, ma’am" her, he just shrugs and turns around. The narrative echoes nearly word for word their last encounter when Guizac had disregarded Mrs. McIntyre: "‘Ya,’... and [he] gave his little shrug and turned back to the tractor” (315). This easy dismissal of her concerns is clear evidence that Guizac thinks himself, at the very least, equal to Mrs. McIntyre. If Guizac thinks himself equal to Mrs. McIntyre, then he cannot be an effective worker on her farm, so he needs to be eliminated by any means necessary. As Fanon points out, "if equality among men is proclaimed in the name of intelligence and philosophy, it is also true that these concepts have been used to justify the extermination of man" (Black 12). Mrs. McIntyre may not believe that all men were created equal, but she can see that Guizac does, and competition for authority cannot be tolerated if one person is to rule absolutely.

Mr. Shortley also sees the necessity to eliminate Guizac: "He was not a violent man but he hated to see a woman done in by a foreigner. He felt that was one thing a man couldn’t stand by and see happen" (322). Mr. Shortley is, of course, most interested in his own well-being and knows that he will not get his much easier job at the dairy back until Guizac is gone. In addition,
since he blames Guizac for his wife’s death, he did “stand by” and “see a woman done in by a foreigner.” Regardless, he resolves that “there was nothing for him to do now but wait on the hand of God to strike, but he knew one thing: he was not going to wait with his mouth shut” (323). With Mr. Shortley telling his side of the story “to every person he saw, black or white” (323), Mrs. McIntyre begins finally to have no choice but to dismiss her best employee.

When Mrs. McIntyre arrives at the barn, Guizac is working underneath a tractor, “his feet and legs and trunk sticking impudently out from the side” of it (325). The series of events that follow seem to be accidents, but that is difficult to believe given Mr. Shortley’s ongoing conflict with Guizac. His is a different problem than Mrs. McIntyre and Mrs. Shortley have with Guizac; Bolton writes that “the women, Mrs. Shortley and Mrs. McIntyre, experience the conflict with the Displaced Person as a struggle for place; Mr. Shortley experiences it as a struggle between stasis and change” (94). Mr. Shortley described himself as a “dead man” and does not want to change (297), while Guizac is constantly moving quickly. Mr. Shortley knows the only way to regain his “dead” status is to eliminate Guizac.

As he gets on the large tractor at the shed, “he seemed to be warmed by it as if its heat and strength sent impulses up through him that he obeyed instantly” (325). Although he is spurred to action, it is significant that the action he pursues must be his own doing since the warmth he felt came as if from the tractor. As before, the “as if” allows distance between the description and action. Ruthann Johansen sees that “all as if statements ... wrench characters and readers away from unexamined notions of themselves and from limited perceptions of reality ...[;] such statements unveil guilt, bring shadows to the light, make far things seem near, turn people into strangers to themselves and freaks into close relatives”; in other words, they create a
“space between’ where the Actual and the Imaginary, the material and the spiritual meet” (Johansen 109-110). It is in this “space between” that the following events occur.

Mr. Shortley brakes the large tractor on an incline and jumps off. When the brake slips and the tractor starts moving straight toward Guizac, Sulk silently jumps out of the way, and Mr. Shortley also watches in silence. Even Mrs. McIntyre does not say anything. The single moment in the story where Mr. Shortley, Sulk, and Mrs. McIntyre are on equal footing occurs as they watch the tractor move toward Guizac and their eyes “come together in one look that froze them in collusion forever” (326). Mr. Shortley and Sulk only move once the tractor has already run over Guizac, breaking his backbone and killing him.

Although Mrs. McIntyre had come to fire Guizac, Mr. Shortley takes the responsibility from her by killing him. Sarah Gordon sees this shift between roles—“the deed she has come to do (give the man his notice) and the deed she actually does (allow him to be run over by the tractor)”—as “possible only because she has refused to see the whole man in all of his humanity” (191). Guizac has never been a person to her; she has seen him only as a tool and then as a threat. In fact, as I have previously discussed, Mrs. McIntyre is not in the habit of viewing any of her workers as people. Since she does not think of them as having the capability to have power over her, she ignores their advances in that direction. In order to effectively maintain power, Mrs. McIntyre would have to be cognizant of the people she is trying to maintain power over. Instead, she cannot even wield the power of firing Guizac and allows the job to defer to Mr. Shortley.

It seems Mrs. McIntyre should have firm control of the farm again with Guizac dead, but as she watches the priest administer his last rites, “she felt she was in some foreign country where the people bent over the body were natives, and she watched like a stranger” (326). Indeed, she can only watch; she can’t even participate in mourning or rejoicing, as the case may
be. Even after the body is removed, the sense of displacement remains, and Jan Nordby Gretlund notices that it is the same “sense of displacement that supposedly also characterized Mrs. Shortley’s last moments... The irony is, of course, that the class conscious Mrs. McIntyre would never have expected to share an experience with one of her sorry tenants” (204). Mrs. McIntyre must finally realize that she is not who she thought she was, and perhaps that her tenants were not as sorry as she thought they were.

Conclusion

Mrs. McIntyre’s attempt to establish her absolute power allows Said’s statement about imperialism to apply to her. Said posits that imperialism is “a cultural affliction for colonizer as well as colonized” (206). The affliction Mrs. McIntyre has inflicted upon herself through her doctrine of imperialism has both cultural and physical implications for her. As Mrs. McIntyre realizes that she has no more power after Guizac’s death than she did with his presence, she quickly deteriorates. Similar to the way Mrs. Shortley’s realizations of equality killed her, the same realizations incapacitate Mrs. McIntyre: “a numbness developed in one of her legs and her hands... Her eyesight grew steadily worse and she lost her voice altogether” (326). The voice she used to declare her superiority no longer has any authority, and neither does Mrs. McIntyre.

Not only does Mrs. McIntyre lose her physical functionality, but she is unhomed as well. As Homi Bhabha points out, “to be unhomed is not to be homeless” (9). Instead, Mrs. McIntyre loses her place, becoming a displaced person. This is a common theme in this story about “The Displaced Person.” Instead of one character being displaced, by the end of the story, all of the members of the farm are displaced except for the priest and the peacock. Carroll writes that “‘The Displaced Person’ is indeed a narrative about displacement, not merely of people but of
history, memory and guilt” (102). This is evident in the pattern of the displacements. Both Shortleys are doubly displaced: Mrs. Shortley is forced to leave the farm and then she dies; Mr. Shortley leaves with her the first time and leaves again after Guizac’s death, echoing his wife’s actions. Sulk also leaves, and Astor is out of a job because he “could not work without company” (O’Connor 326). Mrs. McIntyre is left bedridden with only “a colored woman to wait on her” and the only person who “remembered to come out to the country to see her [was] the old priest” (326). Even the priest only comes to talk to her after he has fed the peacock his weekly bag of breadcrumbs; then “he would come in and sit by the side of her bed and explain the doctrines of the Church” (327), again instructing even though “she had not asked to be instructed” (320). Only this time, Mrs. McIntyre is not even able to voice her feeble complaints about not being theological, but practical, and is forced to listen and be indoctrinated.

Giannone states adroitly, “Victory does not resolve power relations. Death does” (“Displacing” 90). Although Mrs. McIntyre does not have power, with the death of Guizac, the question of power has been resolved. She has none, and never really did. Instead, she had the illusion of power since she had workers underneath her. With them gone, there is no longer anyone for her to be “above,” and so her illusion is dispelled. Indeed, the reader should not have even been surprised when Mrs. McIntyre exclaimed in vain, “This is my place” (323). She has been deluding herself throughout the story to think it was even her place in the beginning.

Although Mrs. Shortley is also displaced from the farm and even loses her life, she does not lose the control that Mrs. McIntyre does. This is partly because Mrs. Shortley does not portray the deference to gender that Mrs. McIntyre does. Indeed, when Mr. Shortley returns to the farm, he is able to fill almost the same role that Mrs. Shortley did. He talks with Mrs. McIntyre and enforces her position up until the very end of the story. In contrast, Mrs. McIntyre
is displaced as a result of her deference to males, feeling that stereotypical weakness in the knees at the sight of Guizac working her farm, and she ends up lying in a bed, continuing to be dependent on those around her. Giannone discusses O'Connor's use of gender and states, "The thrust of O'Connor's displacing gender is to show that personhood is not a property of another person or a social structure or a piece of property but a property of creation" ("Displacing" 94). Marshall Bruce Gentry goes a step further in stating, "O'Connor characters frequently find redemption as they move toward androgyny" ("Gender" 57). Androgyny is the same "space between" that Johansen wrote the "as if" statements created; a space where "the material and the spiritual meet." Mrs. McIntyre has not reached this space because she sees herself only in relation to other people, the social structure, and her property. Mrs. Shortley, although she assumes the position herself, sees herself as an agent of God with "a special part in the plan because she was strong" (300). Although her life is not saved because of her stronger identity, her glimpse of "her true country" in the moments before her death does indicate her redemption (305).

"The Displaced Person" does not end with a conciliatory Mrs. McIntyre who wants the priest to help her make up for all her misdeeds in life. However, it does end with Mrs. McIntyre in a position to learn what her misdeeds were and to seek redemption. This is a pattern in O'Connor's work: "Her stories and novels characteristically do not close on images of harmony and reconciliation, all passion spent, but in pain and violence and a profound sense of displacement, of permanent exile from the known and familiar, including the final displacement of death" (Imagination 120). As any good teacher does, O'Connor leaves the reader/student to consider what is next. It is rarely possible to learn from another's mistakes, so instead as the reader wonders what Mrs. McIntyre will do next and what else might happen to her, she also
considers her own life. William James recognizes a similar characteristic in his brother Henry’s work; his narratives give, he said, “an impression like that we often get of people in life: their orbits come out of space and lay themselves for a short time along ours, and then off they whirl again into the unknown, leaving us with little more than an impression of their reality and a feeling of baffled curiosity as to the mystery of the beginning and end of their being” (qtd. in Reid 65). Although we may be immersed in O’Connor’s world for only a brief time, the issues found there lead us to consider the very “mystery of existence” (O’Connor, “Writing” 98).
Works Cited


