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## A Stylistic Analysis of " A Good Man is Hard to Find " by Flannery O'Connor

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### Abstract

Stylistics is the most widely used issue in the literary studies. It aims at identifying the linguistic patterns of usage and meanings of literary text and showing their formal feature and functional value in a text. Flannery O'Connor is a short story writer she wrote stories one of them is "A Good Man is Hard to Find". This paper, however, is concerned primarily with the style of the short story "A Good Man is Hard to Find", and tries to answer the following questions how does O'Connor use element in category C (figures of speech) to maintain the stylistic effect? And how do these elements support the theme of the story? It aims at providing a stylistic analysis of the short story, deriving its underlying theories from a method of prose text analysis, proposed by literary stylists Leech & Short. The analysis is done with emphasis on the element in Category C in Leech and Short model.

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### 1. Introduction

Simpson (1997:4) <sup>[7]</sup> states that stylistics is a method of applied language study, which uses textual analysis to make discoveries about the structure and function of language. Stylistics to Simpson is basically the use of linguistic stylistic analysis as a means of supporting a literary or interpretative thesis. Stylistic analysis as a methodology is an important mean to understand text as well as their contents and how language works within a text. Stylistics therefore makes language explicit and interprets how information has been arranged within a text using various stylistic and rhetorical devices. Stylistic analysis in linguistics refers to the identification of patterns of usage in speech and writing and in literary studies is usually made for the purpose of commenting on quality and meaning in a text.

This paper is conducted with the ambition to depict a picture of the writing style of Flannery O'Connor in " A Good Man is Hard to Find". The major task of the paper is, therefore, to investigate how the artistic effect of the story is achieved, and how the themes of the work is expressed successfully, throughout the writer's choice of language and the stylistic devices. It is aimed to examine the short story by identifying the stylistic devices and to understand how these devices support the main themes of the story. To make a stylistic analysis of " A Good Man is Hard to find ", the researchers utilize Leech and Short (2007: 61-64) model.

### 2. Literature Review

#### 2.1 Style and Stylistics

According to Wales (2001:370) <sup>[9]</sup> style refers to the perceived distinct manner of expression in writing or speaking, just as there is a perceived manner of doing things, no two people will have the same style in writing; style is frequently used in literary criticism and especially in stylistics. Style is the main concern of stylistics. Thus, Carter and Malmkjaer (2002:510) define Stylistics "as the study of style in spoken and written texts". The consistent occurrence of some items and structures used by a writer calls one's attention to the language used by the writer to pass across his/her message to the readers or hearers.

A recent definition is proposed by Leech and Short (2007:11) <sup>[6]</sup> in which stylistics is seen as "the linguistic study of style".

This refers to the way in which language is used in a given text by a given people and for a given purpose. This means that a writer does not write in a vacuum, the style used by the writer will be influenced by the people he/she is writing for. Stylistics mostly uses particular stylistic categories than language categories. Nevertheless, stylistics whose main object of study is language will not be apart from linguistic aspects.

Leech and Short in their book *Style in Fiction* (2007: 61-64)<sup>[6]</sup> list four stylistic categories for the stylistic analysis. The first is lexical categories. Lexical categories are limited to lexical items contained in the text. In the text, lexical items have many types, i.e. nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. The second is the grammatical categories.

## 2.2 About the Author

Flannery O'Connor was born on March 25, 1925, in Savannah, Georgia. Her family was Roman Catholic, and religion played a prominent role in her household. O'Connor was a deep believer, and her faith impacted her writings as religion is a regular theme of her work.

The family moved to rural Milledgeville, Georgia, after O'Connor's father was diagnosed with lupus. The disease took his life when the author was 15 and would eventually cause her death as well at the young age of 39. The Milledgeville location influenced O'Connor's writing many of her stories are set in the rural South.

Diagnosed with lupus in December 1950, O'Connor spent the remaining 14 years of her life residing with her mother on a dairy farm a few miles from Milledgeville. Despite her disability she continued writing. Flannery O'Connor died on August 3, 1964. (web source 1).

## 2.3 About the Story

O'Connor's story is told by a third-person narrator, but the focus is on the Grandmother's perspective of events. The writer presents three major themes grace, prejudice, and family.

For grace, the grandmother believes that she is a socially and morally superior person, looking with scorn upon those who don't measure up to her exacting standards. She takes great care to present herself as a proper lady by dressing the part, but her heart harbors ugly tendencies toward prejudice, selfishness, and deception.

Regarding prejudice, the writer wrote "A Good Man Is Hard to Find" in 1953, and the southern setting adds an important dimension to the story. During this period, Jim Crow laws divided southern society along racial lines, and many whites still clung to an oppressive social structure that was in dire need of change. The grandmother reflects these old, racist attitudes as she looks with amusement upon a Black child standing in the door of a shack, poverty shaping his reality. Instead of feeling compassion for this child, she treats him like a roadside attraction, calling him a "cute little pink ninny" and commenting that the scene is so endearing that she would like to paint a picture of it. (web source 2)

## 3. Methodology

Stylistics has, implicitly or explicitly, the goal of explaining the relation between language and artistic function. The study is confronted with the challenge to present a satisfactory and reliable analysis for the story. Therefore, the researchers adopt Leech and Short (2007:61-64)<sup>[6]</sup> model for that reason. This model is appropriate to analyze prose since it proposes a general classification of features of style as a tool of analysis which can be applied to any text. Leech and Short present a checklist of stylistic categories which enables researchers to collect data on a fairly systematic basis.

The categories are placed under four general headings: lexical categories, grammatical categories, figures of speech, and cohesion and context, under each smaller-scaled categories are enumerated, placed under further scrutiny; to give a range of data which may be examined in relation to the literary effect of the text the following table shows the categories of the model:

**Table 1:** The Categories According to Leech and Short's Model

A: Lexical Categories	B: Grammatical Categories	C: Figures of Speech	D: Cohesion and Context
General	Sentence types	Grammatical and lexical (anaphora, parallelism)	Cohesion
Nouns	Sentence complexity	Phonological (alliteration, assonance)	Context
Adjectives	Clause types	Tropes (metaphor, irony, etc)	
Verbs	Clause structure		
Adverbs	Noun phrases		
	Verb phrases		
	Other phrases types		
	Word classes		
	General		

The analysis of the present study is limited to the category C that involves:

### 1) Phonological Schemas

**Alliteration:** The repetition of similar sounds, usually consonants, at the beginning of words. Cuddon (2013:22)<sup>[3]</sup>

**Assonance:** The repetition of vowel sounds in a sequence of nearby words. Abrams (1999:9)<sup>[1]</sup>

### 2) Grammatical and lexical levels

**Anaphora:** a particular figure of speech consisting sequence of repeated words at the beginning of neighboring clauses to create emphasis. Cuddon (2013:36)<sup>[3]</sup>

**Parallelism:** a relationship of partial identity between two sections of a text. Leech (1969:62)<sup>[5]</sup>

### 3. Tropes level (figures of speech).

**Metaphor:** the comparison (mapping) of one thing to another without using words like "like" or "as." Simpson (2004:41)<sup>[8]</sup>

**Simile:** the likeness between two things is made explicit by using such words as like, as and as if. The more unlike the two things compared are, the more effective is the simile. Berhanu, (2009:23)<sup>[2]</sup>

**Foreshadowing:** the hints and clues are provided by the write that suggest future events in a story. It is used to create suspense in the story. Cuddon (2013:285)<sup>[3]</sup>

**Irony:** broadly speaking, irony is a device that emphasizes the contrast between the way things are expected to be and the way they actually are. Abrams (1999:134-135)<sup>[1]</sup>

**Hyperbole:** an excessive overstatement or conscious exaggeration of fact. Leech (1969:167)<sup>[5]</sup>

**Paradox:** a statement that seems contradictory on the surface but often expresses a deeper truth. Cuddon (2013:509-510)<sup>[3]</sup>  
**Allusion:** a reference within a literary work to a historical, literary, or biblical character, place, or event. Abrams (1999:9)<sup>[1]</sup>

**Euphemism:** an inoffensive expression used in place of a blunt one that is felt to be disagreeable. Leech (1969:139)<sup>[5]</sup>

**Metonymy:** the substitution of the name of a thing through attribution or association. Kövecses (2010: 175)<sup>[4]</sup>

**Synecdoche:** a figure of speech in which a part refers to the whole of something or vice versa. Kövecses (2010: 179)<sup>[4]</sup>

#### 4. Analysis of the Story

##### Text 1

**"Tennessee is just a hillbilly dumping ground," John Wesley said, "and Georgia is a lousy state too."**

In text 1, O'Connor uses syntactic and semantic parallelism. Syntactic parallelism is manifested by using the structure SVC in successive sentences. Semantic parallelism, on the other hand is clarified throughout using "dumping ground" and "lousy state". The writer uses parallelism to equate between these two places because both are not good places.

##### Text 2

**"She set him on her knee and bounced him and told him about the things they were passing. She rolled her eyes and screwed up her mouth and stuck her leathery thin face into his smooth bland one"**

In text 2, O'Connor makes extensive use of SVO in parallel sequence of coordinated sentences. This is clarified through "She set him on her knee", "she bounced him", "she told him about the things they were passing", "She rolled her eyes", "she screwed up her mouth" and "she stuck her leathery thin face into his smooth bland one". The writer uses parallelism in successive sentences by coordination to avoid repeating the subject "she" and to make a smooth movement from one sentence to the next.

##### Text 3

**"I wouldn't be a bit surprised if he didn't attack this place right here," said the woman. "If he hears about it being here, I wouldn't be none surprised to see him. If he hears it's two cent in the cash register, I wouldn't be at all surprised if he . . ."**

In text 3, O'Connor uses anaphora by repeating the use of conditional construction "I wouldn't be" and "If he hears" at the beginning of three successive sentences. This speech is delivered by Red Sam's wife to indicate that they are safe since the Misfit does not know this place. Therefore, anaphora is used to emphasize the Misfit does not know this place.

##### Text 4

**"But the more she talked about it, the more she wanted to see it"**

In text 4, the writer uses parallelism by using proportional clause. This clause conveys the grandmother's eagerness to see the house. Her eagerness will lead to their death.

##### Text 5

**"Will you all shut up? Will you all just shut up for one second? If you don't shut up, we won't go anywhere."**

In text 5, the writer uses anaphora by repeating "Will you all shut up" in successive sentences. The repetition is used for emphasizing that Baily is very angry and his willingness to stoop his mother and children speech.

##### Text 6

**"I know you're a good man. You don't look a bit like you have common blood. I know you must come from nice people!"**

In text 6, the writer uses anaphora through the repetition of "I know you" in successive sentence. It is used to emphasize the grandmother attempt to convince the Misfit that he is a good man and this emphasis shows the grandmother will to stay a life.

##### Text 7

**"I know you wouldn't shoot a lady! I know you come from nice!"**

In text 7, the writer uses anaphora by repeating "I know you" in successive sentences for emphasis. Anaphora emphasizes the grandmother attempts to save her life by keeping saying "you come from nice".

##### Text 8

**"if I had of been there I would of known. Listen lady," he said in a high voice, "if I had of been there I would of known and I wouldn't be like I am now."**

In text 8, the writer uses anaphora through repeating if conditional clause "if I had of been there I would of known" in successive sentences. Anaphora is used to emphasize the Misfit inexistence with at that time "with Jesus" and if he had been there, he would not be a criminal.

##### Text 9

**"I wouldn't take my children in any direction with a criminal like that a loose in it"**

In text 9, the writer uses foreshadowing by mentioning something about their direction. The grandmother's speech gives hints to the readers about the family destiny since they are deriving toward a criminal. The grandmother warns her son but he did not care.

##### Text 10

**"She cautioned Bailey that the speed limit was fifty-five miles an hour and that the patrolmen hid themselves behind billboards and small clumps of trees and sped out after you before you had a chance to slow down."**

In text 10, the writer uses foreshadowing in which the grandmother gives her second warning to her son. The grandmother advices her son to slow down because he exceeds the speed limits. He drives speedily as if he is driving to his death.

##### Text 11

**"Oh, look at the cute little pickaninny!" she said and pointed to a Negro child standing in the door of a shack. "Wouldn't that make a picture, now?" she asked and they all turned and looked at the little Negro out of the back window. He waved."**

In text 11, the writer uses foreshadowing which represented by the little child's wave. The child waves to the family as if it is the last time to see them, thus, his waves is a symbol to their death.

##### Text 12

**"They passed a large cotton field with five or six graves fenced in the middle of it, like a small island. "Look at the graveyard!" the grandmother said, pointing it out. "That was the old family burying ground. That belonged to the plantation."**

In text 12, the writer uses foreshadowing by referring to "six graves" the number of the graves equals the family number.

Thus, the reference to the graves tells the reader something about the destiny of the family.

### Text 13

**"The Misfit pointed the toe of his shoe into the ground and made a little hole and then covered it up again. "I would hate to have to," he said"**

In text 13, the writer uses foreshadowing through the action of making and covering a hole by the Misfit. This action is similar to the process of burial; thus, the reader can guess the end of this family after reading this line.

### Text 14

**"Lady," he asked, "would you and that little girl like to step off yonder with Bobby Lee and Hiram and join your husband?"**

In text 14, the writer uses foreshadowing by which reader can predict the fate of the woman. Here, join comes with meaning of death; therefore, the woman will join her husband.

### Text 15

**"whose face was as broad and innocent as a cabbage and was tied around with a green head-kerchief that had two points on the top like rabbit's ears."**

In text 15, the writer makes use of simile by describing the woman face as "cabbage" and "rabbit". Both "cabbage" and "rabbit" are innocent, therefore, the woman is described in terms of these two beautiful things to express the woman appearances.

### Text 16

**"She had her big black valise that looked like the head of a hippopotamus in one corner, and underneath it she was hiding a basket with Pitty Sing, the cat, in it."**

In text 16, the writer uses simile to compare the grandmother's bag with "hippopotamus". According to this comparison, readers can make a conclusion that the grandmother's appearance is not innocent.

### Text 17

**"His khaki trousers reached just to his hip bones and his stomach hung over them like a sack of meal swaying under his shirt."**

In text 17, the writer uses simile by comparing the Red Sam's stomach with a meal swaying under his shirt. This comparison gives readers an idea about the appearances and description of the character.

### Text 18

**"Bailey was looking straight ahead. His jaw was as rigid as a horseshoe. "No," he said."**

In text 18, the writer uses simile by describing Bailey's jaw as if it is a "horseshoe". This description indicates to the readers the extent to which Bailey is angry because of his mother.

### Text 19

**"He had on a yellow sport shirt with bright blue parrots designed in it and his face was as yellow as the shirt."**

In text 19, the writer uses simile throughout describing Bailey's face with the "yellow color" to indicate the extent to which Bailey is afraid after the accident. This description tells readers about the Bailey's state after the accident.

### Text 20

**"It was a big black battered hearse-like automobile."**

In text 20, the writer uses simile by describing the Misfit's car

as if it similar to the wagon or vehicle that is used to carry the coffin. This similarity gives readers an indication about the family' destiny.

### Text 21

**"Behind them the line of woods gaped like a dark open mouth"**

In text 21, the writer uses simile through comparing the wood with a "dark open mouth", therefore, the wood is similar to a monster that will eat the family. This description guides the readers to the family's destiny which death.

### Text 22

**"Hiram pulled Bailey up by the arm as if he were assisting an old man."**

In text 22, the writer uses simile in which Bailey is described as if he is an "old man". The writer describes Bailey as an old man who is weak and unable to move as if he is ready to die.

### Text 23

**"There was a pistol shot from the woods, followed closely by another. Then silence. The old lady's head jerked around. She could hear the wind move through the tree tops like a long satisfied insuck of breath. "Bailey Boy!" she called."**

In text 23, the writer compares the movement of the wind with a "breath" as if this the last breath of Bailey. This is clarified through the grandmother's call "Bailey Boy". Thus, the wind is sign of the last breath of Bailey.

### Text 24

**"There were two more pistol reports and the grandmother raised her head like a parched old turkey hen crying for water and called, "Bailey Boy, Bailey Boy!" as if her heart would break."**

In text 24, the writer uses simile, throughout comparing the grandmother with "parched old turkey hen", to give the readers description about the grandmother's state. Therefore, this description indicates to the readers the inability of the grandmother to defend her family.

### Text 25

**"You're one of my own children!" She reached out and touched him on the shoulder. The Misfit sprang back as if a snake had bitten him and shot her three times through the chest. Then he put his gun down on the ground and took off his glasses and began to clean them"**

In text 25, the writer uses simile by comparing the grandmother with a "snake". The writer describes the grandmother as snake at the moment of touching the Misfit as a result she gets a three shot. This comparison indicates to the readers the features of the character of the grandmother.

### Text 26

**"Hiram and Bobby Lee returned from the woods and stood over the ditch, looking down at the grandmother who half sat and half lay in a puddle of blood with her legs crossed under her like a child's and her face smiling up at the cloudless sky."**

In text 26, the writer uses simile by comparing the grandmother with "child with a smiling face". This description conveys to the readers that she is now happy after joining her family. It represents the first and only time in which the writer compares the character of the grandmother with beautiful and innocent thing which is "child".

**Text 27**

**"Oh, look at the cute little pickaninny!" she said and pointed to a Negro child standing in the door of a shack. "Wouldn't that make a picture, now?" she asked and they all turned and looked at the little Negro out of the back window. He waved"**

In text 27, the writer uses metaphor by comparing the little Negro child with small "pickaninny" which means "rat". This sentence is produced by the grandmother to indicate her disrespect or humiliation of the black race. Such sentences convey to the readers important information about the characters.

**Text 28**

**"Yes mam," he said, "finest people in the world." When he smiled, he showed a row of strong white teeth. "God never made a finer woman than my mother and my daddy's heart was pure gold," he said."**

In text 28, the writer uses metaphor through the Misfit's speech about his father. The Misfit compares his father's heart with the pure gold as if that he comes from a pure and nice people. This metaphor indicates to the readers that the Misfit's father is completely different from him.

**Text 29**

**"Hush! Bailey yelled. "Hush! Everybody shut up and let me handle this!" He was squatting in the position of a runner about to sprint forward but he didn't move."**

In text 29, the writer compares the state of Bailey with a runner who is ready to run but he is not able. Bailey tries to do something to help his family but he does nothing similar to a runner who is ready to run but he cannot. This metaphor describes to the readers the situation of Bailey.

**Text 30**

**"My daddy said I was a different breed of dog from my brothers and sisters"**

In text 30, the writer uses metaphor by comparing the Misfit to "dog". The Misfit's father compares him with dog as if the father knows that his son is going to be a bad man. This description clarifies the features of the Misfit.

**Text 31**

**"I don't want to hold hands with him," June Star said. "He reminds me of a pig."**

In text 31, the writer uses metaphor throughout comparing Bobby Lee with a "pig". June star refuses holding hand with Bobby Lee because he remembers her with a pig. Therefore, metaphor is used to give the features of the character of the Bobby Lee which is similar to a pig.

**Text 32**

**"We've had an ACCIDENT!" the children screamed in a frenzy of delight.**

**"But nobody's killed," June Star said with disappointment as the grandmother"**

In text 32, the two sentences are ironical ones. The first sentence is ironical in the sense that the children are happy because they have an accident. While, the second sentence is very ironical since the children are disappointed because no one was killed. This ironical sentence shows to the readers the relationship among the family members.

**Text 33**

**"Bailey turned and supporting himself against a gray naked pine trunk, he shouted, "I'll be back in a minute, Mamma, wait on me!"**

In text 33, Bailey's sentence " I'll be back in a minute, Mamma, wait on me!" is ironical since the readers know from the beginning his fate and he will not come back at all. But Bailey tries to give hope to his family that he will be back soon. This, sentence gives readers the impression to know what will happen next.

**Text 34**

**"the old lady cried. "You've got good blood! I know you wouldn't shoot a lady!"**

In text 34, the writer uses ironical sentence because the grandmother is finally got shot from the Misfit himself. It makes no difference whether a man or a lady they will have the same end which is death.

**Text 35**

**"She wouldn't stay at home for a million bucks," June Star said. "Afraid she'd miss something. She has to go everywhere we go."**

In text 35, the writer uses hyperbole this is clarified through June Star's speech about her grandmother. Here, June Star exaggerates in her speech about her grandmother because the grandmother is afraid to miss something. Therefore, the grandmother wouldn't stay home even if she will get million bucks.

**Text 36**

**"No, I certainly wouldn't," June Star said. "I wouldn't live in a broken-down place like this for a million bucks!" and she ran back to the table."**

In text 36, the writer uses hyperbole through repeating June Star's speech but in different context. June Star refuses Sam's wife invitation to live with them even if she will get a million Bucks.

**Text 37**

**"If you would pray," the old lady said, "Jesus would help you."**

**"That's right," The Misfit said."**

**Text 38**

**"She opened and closed her mouth several times before anything came out. Finally, she found herself saying, "Jesus. Jesus," meaning, Jesus will help you, but the way she was saying it, it sounded as if she might be cursing."**

**Text 39**

**"Yes'm," The Misfit said as if he agreed. "Jesus shown everything off balance. It was the same case with Him as with me except He hadn't committed any crime and they could prove I had committed one because they had the papers on me. Of course," he said, "they never shown me my papers."**

**Text 40**

**"Jesus was the only One that ever raised the dead," The Misfit continued, "and He shouldn't have done it. He shown everything off balance. If He did what He said, then it's nothing for you to do but throw away everything and follow Him"**

In text 37, 38, 39, and 40, the writer makes a Biblical allusion by referring to "Jesus". In 37, the Misfit agrees with the grandmother in her speech regarding Jesus help for people if they pray as if he is a religious. In 38, the grandmother says Jesus repeatedly as if she is calling him but no answer, therefore, she says Jesus as if she is cursing him. In 39, the Misfit speaks about Jesus's sacrifice to save people and

he compares himself with Jesus. He confesses that he makes crimes, thus, they are chasing him while the Jesus is not. In 40, the Misfit talks about the ability of Jesus to raise the dead

people as if he is blaming Jesus of doing so and what people must do is following him and that is.

**Table 2:** The Types of the Figures of Speech in the Story

Type of figures of speech	Frequency	Percentage %
Parallelism	3	7.5%
Anaphora	5	12.5%
Simile	12	30%
Metaphor	5	12.5%
Foreshadowing	6	16%
Irony	3	7.5%
Allusion	4	10%
Hyperbole	2	5%
Total	40	100%

## 5. Conclusions

The study concludes that:

O'Connor makes extensive use of figures of speech to achieve the aesthetic effect. She uses simile heavily (30%) with a descriptive function in most cases similes are used to describe the characteristics of the character. At the beginning the writer uses similes to describe beautiful and innocent things, whereas, with the development of event similes are used to describe fearful or bad things or appearances. Metaphor, also, is used to fulfil a descriptive function i.e. metaphors are used to describe the character in the story. In most cases, the writer uses foreshadowing to refer to the family destiny which is death. O'Connor makes use of Biblical allusion to refer to her religion which is Christianity. This is clarified throughout her story in which the grandmother tries to convince or affect the Misfit fillings by referring to Jesus and the grandmother tries to make him repent so she keeps saying the word "pray". O'Connor, also, uses anaphora extensively for emphasis. O'Connor uses other figures of speech like irony, hyperbole, and parallelism.

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