



A Corpus-Assisted Lexical Analysis of Moral Conflict in O'Connor's "A Good Man is Hard to Find"

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تحليل معجمي بمساعدة أدوات المدونات اللغوية للصراع الأخلاقي في قصة "من الصعب العثور
على رجل صالح" لفلانري أوكونور

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Abstract

This study aims to examine how moral conflict is constructed through lexical choices in Flannery O'Connor's short story "A Good Man is Hard to Find." The study employs an analytical mixed-methods approach. Both qualitative analysis through close reading of the text and quantitative analysis through collecting and visualizing lexical data using Voyant Tools are utilized. The short story has been extensively examined from theological, ethical and stylistic perspectives, mainly for its themes of grace, violence and spiritual conflict. However, it remains one of O'Connor's most notable works in which the moral conflict between the grandmother and the Misfit reveals opposing stances toward collective societal codes and values. Grounded in Leech and Short's (2007) stylistic framework, specifically the lexical category checklist, the study examines the short story's general vocabulary, nouns, adjectives, verbs and adverbs. The study concludes that the moral conflict is embedded in the ordinary and colloquial vocabulary rather than philosophical or specialized language. Through their frequency, distribution and contextual function, nouns, adjectives and verbs collectively contribute to exposing the grandmother's performative morality and the Misfit's unresolved moral questioning and skepticism. Adverbs, however, do not play a significant role in revealing the moral conflict.

Keywords: stylistics, lexical analysis, moral conflict, Flannery O'Connor, Leech and Short, Voyant Tools.

المخلص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى فحص كيفية بناء الصراع الأخلاقي من خلال الاختيارات المعجمية في قصة القصيرة لفلانري أوكونور "من الصعب العثور على رجل صالح". تعتمد الدراسة على منهجية تحليلية تجمع بين الأسلوبين الكمي والنوعي، إذ يُوظف التحليل النوعي Voyant من خلال القراءة المعمّقة للنص، والتحليل الكمي من خلال جمع البيانات المعجمية وتمثيلها بصرياً باستخدام أدوات فاوينت حظيت هذه القصة باهتمام بحثي واسع من منظورات لاهوتية وأخلاقية وأسلوبية، ولا سيما موضوعات تجلّي النعمة الإلهية والعنف والصراع الروحي. بيد أنها تظل من أبرز أعمال أوكونور التي يُفضي فيها الصراع الأخلاقي بين "الجدة" و"المسفت" إلى الكشف عن مواقف متعارضة مع المنظومة القيمية والأعراف الاجتماعية. واستناداً إلى الإطار الأسلوبية الذي أرساه لينتش وشورت (2007)، وتحديداً قائمة الفحص الخاصة بالفئات المعجمية، تتناول الدراسة المفردات العامة والأسماء والصفات والأفعال والظروف. وخلصت الدراسة أن الصراع الأخلاقي كامناً في النسيج المعجمي العادي والمحكي وليس في مصطلحات فلسفية أو لغة متخصصة. فمن خلال تواترها وتوزيعها ووظائفها السياقية، تتضافر الأسماء والصفات والأفعال في تعرية الأخلاق الأدائية لدى "الجدة" والكشف عن تساؤلات "المسفت" الأخلاقية المعلقة وشكوكه التي لا تبرحه. أما الظروف فلا تقوم بدور جوهري في إبراز الصراع الأخلاقي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الأسلوبية، التحليل المعجمي، الصراع الأخلاقي، فلانري أوكونور، لينتش وشورت، أدوات فاوينت.

Introduction

Flannery O'Connor's short stories are regarded as prime examples of Southern American Gothic literature, largely due to their use of grotesque themes, violent scenes and spiritual conflict. After World War II, American society witnessed rapid material prosperity alongside what many writers and critics perceived as growing spiritual dislocation. For this society, O'Connor tries through her stories to awaken the confused minds and cure the empty souls by finding grace; a moment of revelation that cannot be achieved without shocking incidents leading to divine truth.

To examine how this moral conflict is constructed through language, this study employs Leech and Short's model (2007) of stylistic analysis, particularly Category A of their checklist: lexical categories. The analysis focuses on the function of general vocabulary, nouns, adjectives, verbs and adverbs in constructing the short story's moral conflict. This analysis is further supported by Voyant tools, which are used to collect, visualize and explore patterns, frequencies and distributions of these lexical categories.

Research questions:

1. How is moral conflict constructed through lexical choices in Flannery O'Connor's "A Good Man is Hard to Find"?
2. How does the general vocabulary of the short story reflect moral conflict?
3. How do the nouns and adjectives construct the moral conflict between the grandmother and the Misfit?
4. How do the verbs and adverbs reveal and reinforce the moral conflict between the grandmother and the Misfit?

The significance of the study

The importance of this study lies in its innovative approach to analyzing the short story "A Good Man is Hard to Find" through corpus-assisted analysis. While previous studies have relied on interpretive and thematic approaches, this study grounds the analysis in quantifiable lexical data.

Furthermore, the study serves as a foundation for further investigation into the role of lexical features in constructing moral conflict in literary texts.

Scope and limitations

The study's analysis is based only on Leech and Short's Category A: lexical categories. Other categories in their checklist are beyond the scope of this study.

Additionally, the study examines only one of O'Connor's short stories "A Good Man is Hard to Find"; therefore, the findings may not be generalized to O'Connor's other works.

Literature Review

Theoretical framework

This study adopts the stylistic framework developed by Geoffrey Leech and Mick Short in their book "*style in fiction*" (2007). Stylistics, according to them, investigates the relationship between a writer's artistic accomplishment and how it is achieved through language. It examines the connection between a text's significance and the linguistic characteristics through which it is expressed. In essence, stylistics seeks to elucidate how language constructs meaning, facilitates interpretation, and achieves artistic success (Makhloof, 2020, p. 19).

Leech and Short's stylistic framework outlines a detailed checklist for stylistic analysis which includes several categories of linguistic features. This study, however, focuses only on Category A: lexical categories. It looks at how lexical features, which are divided into: general features, nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs contribute to the construction of moral conflict in the short story.

In literary studies, the concept of moral conflict is defined as the tension that arises between the collective societal values and the individual's inner moral choices. Cheng (2025) states that "In literary works, the moral conflicts between collectives and individuals frequently emerges as significant themes for exploring human nature, society, and moral norms. The collectives represent the voices and values of the social collective, while the individuals reflect personal moral choices and inner wrestling" (p. 184). In O'Connor's story, this conflict manifests through two opposing stances. The grandmother appropriates collective societal codes without genuine moral commitment, while the Misfit questions them without finding resolution. His questioning reflects a deeper moral skepticism that cannot accept the grandmother's superficial morality. Therefore, this study follows this understanding of moral conflict as the basis of its analysis.

Related Studies

The short story "A Good Man is Hard to Find" has been extensively dealt with from different angles, including stylistics, theological, and ethical approaches. Although these approaches provide valuable insights, they do not examine the role of lexical features in shaping moral conflict.

A recent stylistic analysis study by Mukheef and Naser (2025) adopts Leech and Short's stylistic model with a focus on category C: figures of speech. Their findings show the importance of figures of speech in shaping the

story's themes. For example, the use of similes shifts from light beautiful images to darker, more threatening imagery reflecting the progression of the narrative toward tragic and violent ending (Mukheef & Naser, 2025 p. 502). The study's limited focus on figurative language leaves room to further investigation into lexical features. Other studies went on to examine theological themes of grace, redemption and suffering. Hashim (2023) highlights the role of suffering and sickness in showing the inner realities of the characters leading them to moral and spiritual awakening. He underscores O'Connor's use of suffering as a narrative device "forcing them to confront deeper truths about themselves and their relationship with the divine"(Hashim, 2023, p.9). This study remains thematic in focus and does not examine how moral conflict is constructed through lexical features, which is the main focus of this study.

Similarly, Owusu (2025) employs a moral and ethical reading of the story to examine the nuances of the concept "goodness". The study contrasts the grandmother's outward superior morality and her inner superficial understanding of it with the Misfit's utter nihilism. He suggests that the grandmother's understanding of morality is "thus performative, rooted in appearances rather than ethical substance"(Owusu, 2025, p. 3). This tension between the public image and inner moral reality indicates the presence of moral conflict. However, the study relies on interpretive approach and does not examine how linguistic features, particularly lexical choices represent and construct the development of moral conflict.

Therefore, the study attempts to address this gap by examining the contribution of lexical features to the construction of moral conflict in the story, based on Leech and Short's stylistic model. In addition, to ensure more systematic analysis, the study uses corpus-assisted approach, specifically Voyant Tools which will be explained in the methodology section.

Methodology:

This study adopts a mixed-method approach. The qualitative part relies on close reading of O'Connor's "A good Man is Hard to Find"(1953) and the quantitative part depends on Voyant Tools for data collection and visualization. Voyant Tools is "an online-based environment for frequency-based analysis of computer-readable texts."(Alhudithi,2021, p. 49). Voyant Tools retrieves linguistic and statistical features that help researchers discover patterns that close reading alone cannot offer. The researcher uploaded the full text, which contains 6,485 words, to the platform. Character names, function words and speech reporting verbs were filtered to isolate content words.

Four tools were utilized. The Summary tool was used for general vocabulary overview to retrieve total word count, vocabulary density and the most frequent words in the text. The Terms tool was used to identify the frequency of words in the text. The Context tool was used to display each word within its surrounding sentence. When words showed a notable pattern. The Trends tool was used to visualize their distribution across the narrative's segments. This study shifts between close reading and corpus-assisted analysis. Voyant Tools provides the quantitative patterns, while close reading interprets how the same word shifts in function depending on its use and context.

The research's analytical framework is underpinned by Leech and Short's (2007) stylistic checklist, specifically focusing on Category A. This checklist provides systematic questions for examining general vocabulary, nouns, adjectives, verbs and adverbs.

The general vocabulary part examines whether vocabulary is simple or complex, formal or colloquial, descriptive or evaluative and whether the writer relies on emotive associations or referential meaning. It also examines whether notable idioms, collocations, semantic field or specialized vocabulary are present.

For the nouns, the checklist examines whether nouns are abstract or concrete and what types of abstract nouns occur, such as those referring to events, perceptions, processes and moral or social qualities.

As for the adjectives, their frequency, the types of attribute they refer to: physical, psychological, evaluative or emotive are examined. Their grammatical properties are also examined in terms of whether they are gradable or non-gradable and attributive or predicative.

For the verbs, the checklist investigates whether they carry significant meaning and whether they are stative or dynamic. The checklist also examines what the verbs refer to: movements, physical acts, speech acts, psychological states or perceptions. The checklist further distinguishes between transitive, intransitive and linking verbs and between factive and non-factive verbs.

Finally, adverbs are examined through their frequency and their semantic function. That is, whether they indicate manner, place, direction, time or degree. The checklist also examines whether any significant sentence adverbs occur in the text (Leech & Short, 2007, pp. 61-62).

Other categories in Leech and Short's checklist, including grammatical categories, figures of speech, context and cohesion fall outside the scope of this study. The results of the most frequent content words obtained from Voyant Tools were organized into tables. Each table presents the lexical item, its frequency, its context in the narrative with its page reference and its function based on Leech and Short's checklist followed by its interpretive function identified from close reading of the story.

To ensure objectivity, every occurrence of each lexical item was included in the tables. Then through close reading, the occurrences that contribute to the construction of the story's moral conflict were interpreted.

Results and discussion:

The lexical analysis of "A Good Man is Hard to Find" reveals how O'Connor constructs moral conflict through lexical choices. Following Leech and Short's framework for lexical analysis, this study examines general vocabulary, nouns, adjectives, verbs and adverbs that uncover the moral conflict of the story. Using Voyant Tools, the study identifies the most frequent terms in each category; however, the analysis focuses on only those demonstrating significance to the story's moral conflict.

The results are organized by lexical category, beginning with a general vocabulary overview, nouns, adjectives, verbs and adverbs. Each category demonstrates how the moral conflict is constructed through specific lexical choices.

General vocabulary



Figure 1. Before filtering character names and function words (generated using Summary tools, Voyant Tools, Sinclair & Rockwell, 2016).

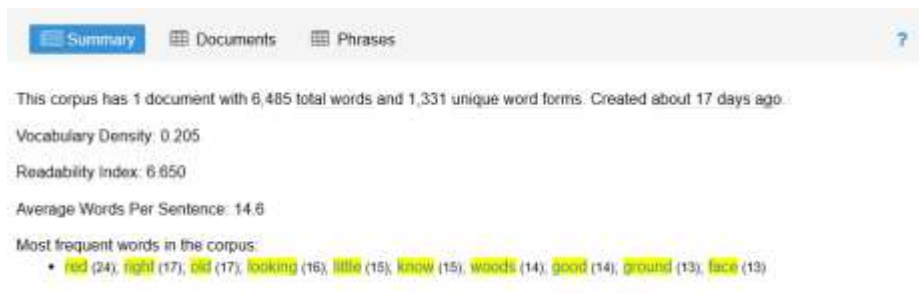


Figure 2. After filtering character names and function words (generated using Summary tools, Voyant Tools, Sinclair & Rockwell, 2016).

As shown in Figure 1, the Summary tool in Voyant Tools shows that the text contains 6,485 words and 1,331 unique word forms, with a vocabulary density of 0.205. This low density suggests that the text relies on a relatively limited set of recurring words rather than varied vocabulary.

In Figure 2, after filtering character names and function words, the most frequent content words are *red* (24), *right* (17), *old* (17), *looking* (16), *little* (15), *know* (15), *woods* (14), *good* (14), *ground* (13), *face* (13). Most of these words are monosyllabic, and they fall into three semantic fields. That is, appearance and physical setting (*red, old, little, woods, ground, face*), morality and judgement (*right, good*) and perception and cognition (*looking, know*).

Moreover, specialized, archaic or technical vocabulary is not identified. Morphological patterns are also not observed. Before filtering, the most frequent word in the corpus was *said* (124) which confirms that dialogue dominates the narrative.

Based on close reading, both the grandmother and the Misfit speak colloquially. The grandmother uses informal expressions such as "I wouldn't take my children in any direction with a criminal like that alose in it." (O'Connor, 1953, p. 2) and the Misfit uses nonstandard forms such as "Nome, I ain't a good man," (O'Connor, 1953, p. 10).

The short story's vocabulary is mostly descriptive. Words like *woods, ground, red, old* and *little* are used to establish the physical setting and to describe characters and surroundings. However, the same words shift between descriptive and evaluative functions depending on context, as will be shown in the following sections.

Furthermore, the most notable collocation is "a good man" which carries moral weight beyond its literal meaning. The short story's underlying moral conflict is constructed through ordinary words rather than philosophical abstractions or specialized vocabulary.

Nouns

Using the Terms tool, the most frequent nouns are character names such as the grandmother, the Misfit, Bailey, June Star and John Wesley which dominate the frequency list for their structural necessity in the narrative. Beyond character names, the nouns *Jesus*, *ground* and *woods* show a pattern that reveals the moral conflict between the grandmother and the Misfit. The following table presents their frequency, function and context.

Table 1. Function, Frequency and Context of the nouns (*Jesus*, *ground* and *woods*)

Noun	Function	Frequency	Context
Jesus	Proper noun, concrete and abstract reference (religious appeal)	6	"If you would pray, the old lady said, 'Jesus' would help you" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 11). "'Jesus!' the old lady cried. 'You've got good blood! I know you wouldn't shoot a lady! I know you come from nice! Pray! Jesus, you ought not to shoot a lady'" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 10). "'Jesus. Jesus,' meaning, Jesus will help you, but the way she was saying it, it sounded as if she might be cursing". (O'Connor, 1953, p. 12)
	Proper noun, concrete and abstract reference (theological questioning)	2	"'Yes'm,' The Misfit said as if he agreed. Jesus shown everything off balance"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 12) "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" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 12).
Ground	Concrete, common noun (descriptive)	4	"the various crops that made rows of green lace-work on the ground"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 3). "'Tennessee is just a hillbilly dumping ground,' John Wesley said" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 3). "That was the old family burying ground."(O'Connor, 1953, p. 4). "Red Sammy was lying on the bare ground outside"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 4)
	Concrete, common noun (linked to violence and moral exposure)	9	"The children were thrown to the floor and their mother, . . . thrown out the door onto the ground"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 7) "The Misfit pointed the toe of his shoe into the ground and made a little hole and"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 9) "The Misfit squatted down on the ground". (O'Connor, 1953, p. 9) "The Misfit said and drew a little circle in the ground with the butt of his gun" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 9). "The grandmother reached up to adjust her hat brim . . . and after a second she let it fall on the ground"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 10). "she was looking at The Misfit squatting on the ground in front of her"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 10). "The Misfit kept scratching in the ground with the butt of his gun"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 10). "I wisht I had of been there,' he said, hitting the ground with his fist"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 13). "Then he put his gun down on the ground"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 13)
	Concrete, common noun (ominous setting)	1	"Behind them the line of woods gaped like a dark open mouth" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 10).
	Concrete, common noun (descriptive)	1	"Behind the ditch they were sitting in there were more woods" (O'Connor, 1953, p.8).
Woods	Concrete, common noun (linked to violence)	10	"'Come back this instant!' his mother shrilled but they all disappeared into the woods" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 10). "There was a pistol shot from the woods, followed closely by another"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 11). "Bobby Lee and Hiram came ambling back from the woods" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 11). "There was nothing around her but woods"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 12). "Would you mind stepping back in them woods there with them?" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 10). "There was a piercing scream from the woods"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 12).

Noun	Function	Frequency	Context
			"The grandmother reached up to adjust her hat brim as if she were going to the woods with him"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 10). "They went off toward the woods and just as they reached the dark edge"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 10). "The fat boy blushed and laughed and caught her by the arm and pulled her off into the woods"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 12). "Hiram and Bobby Lee returned from the woods and stood over the ditch"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 12)
	Concrete, common noun (linked to moral questioning)	2	"'Lady,' The Misfit said, looking beyond her far into the woods"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 12). "He put on his black hat... and then away deep into the woods as if he were embarrassed again"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 10).

Rather than relying on abstract nouns, O'Connor grounds the grandmother and the Misfit's confrontation in religious and physical words. The lexical choices of proper and concrete nouns make the moral conflict tangible and experienced through physical reality rather than philosophical abstractions. Furthermore, their concentrated distribution at the climax of the story functions as both a catalyst intensifying the tragic end and an exposure of the grandmother's superficial morality and the Misfit's skepticism.

The following figure illustrates the distribution of the nouns: *Jesus*, *woods* and *ground*

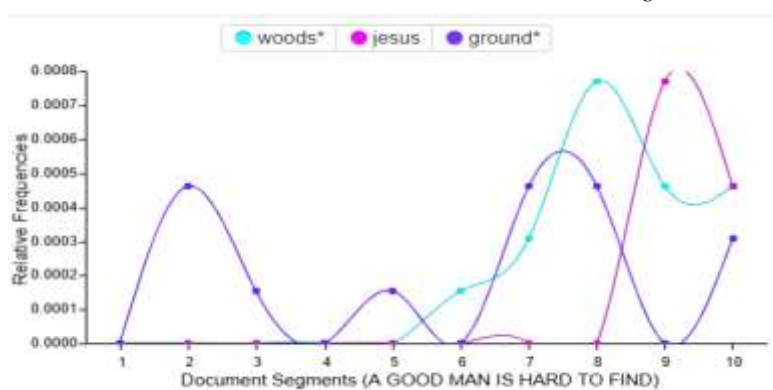


Figure 3. Distribution of *Jesus*, *ground* and *wood* (generated using the Trends tool, Voyant Tools, Sinclair & Rockwell, 2016).

As shown in Figure 3, the x-axis represents the story's segments from 1 to 10, which tracks the story's progression from the beginning to end and the y-axis represents the relative frequency.

Jesus

Jesus peaks dramatically in the final segments (8-9) and shows limited presence in the early and middle section of the story. *Jesus* clusters at the confrontation between the grandmother and the Misfit.

Jesus is a proper noun that functions as both concrete reference to religious figure and an abstract invocation of moral authority. Initially, the grandmother uses *Jesus* as a redemptive tool to restore order by advising the Misfit that "Jesus would help you"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 11) if he prays. However, as the confrontation escalates, her unstable morality becomes exposed. She starts crying for divine help "'Jesus. Jesus,'" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 12), yet the narrator comments that it sounds as "if she might be cursing" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 12).

Her conflicted morality becomes more evident when she mixes *Jesus* with social respectability. In her desperate plea, she begs "'Jesus! ... You've got good blood! I know you wouldn't shoot a lady! I know you come from nice! Pray! Jesus, you ought not to shoot a lady'"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 12). This quote reveals her superficial morality, she manipulates *Jesus* not to invoke moral awakening, but to appeal to social codes of 'good blood', 'a lady' and 'nice people'

By contrast, when the Misfit speaks about *Jesus*, he opposes the collective belief that *Jesus* provides balance and justice. He emphasizes twice, "*Jesus* thrown everything off balance" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 12). The Misfit's morality is driven by questioning *Jesus'* existence. That is, if *Jesus* exists, then there is no compromise and "it's nothing for you to do but throw away everything and follow Him" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 12). If He does not exist, then "it's nothing for you to do but enjoy the few minutes you got left the best way you can-by killing somebody or burning down his house or doing some other meanness to him. No pleasure but meanness" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 13). The Misfit argues that any uncertainties about *Jesus'* moral order should be faced by authentic actions, even if these actions are destructive or immoral according to the societal belief system. This does not make him morally right, but shows the distinction between his utter skepticism and the grandmother's hypocrisy.

Ground

"Ground" is a concrete common noun that appears 13 times in the text. As shown in Figure 3, the noun appears with moderate frequency early in the narrative (segments 2–3), then increases significantly at the climax of the story (segments 6–9). Early in the story, "ground" is limited to descriptive landscape functions: the grandmother notices "the green lace-work on the *ground*," Tennessee is described as "just a hillbilly dumping ground" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 3), the family discusses an "old family burying ground," and Red Sammy is depicted as "lying on the ground" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 4). However, as the narrative progresses, this purely descriptive function shifts.

At the climax, ground becomes associated with physical danger. Abruptly, the children and their mother are "thrown out the door onto the ground", "the Misfit pointed the toe of his shoes into the ground", he "squatted down on the ground" and the grandmother let her hat "fall on the ground" and she "was looking at the Misfit squatting on the ground"(O'Connor, 1953, pp. 7-10).

O'Connor foregrounds *ground* at the climax to signify the collapse of the decorative illusions through which the grandmother performs social respectability. The grandmother only performs what society might applaud her for. However, when she confronts the Misfit, *ground* becomes the real world in which moral choices demand realistic responses rather than social performance.

To the Misfit, on the other hand, *ground* is consistently related to his physical positioning: he points, squats down, draws, scratches and hits the ground (O'Connor, 1953, pp. 9-10). His restless contact with the ground reflects a man physically present but morally unsettled.

Woods

Finally, the word "*woods*" is also a concrete common noun that appears 14 times throughout the story. Its frequency increases from segment 5 to 9, with the highest peak in segment 9. This concentration at the end of the story underpins the moral conflict, and the setting functions differently when it is associated with the grandmother versus the Misfit. Throughout its recurrences, the woods become more than a mere setting; it is the space where the social order collapses. When associated with the grandmother, the woods carry a sense of threat. Early in the story, the landscape is ominous: "behind them the line of woods gaped like a dark open mouth" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 9). Then it closes in; Bailey and John Wesley are taken into the woods and disappear. Screams and gunshots are heard from the woods, and later, the mother and June Star are taken into them as well. Eventually, the grandmother is left with "nothing around her but the woods" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 12).

For the Misfit, the woods function differently. His gaze keeps moving toward them, as he "look[s] up suddenly and then away deep into the *woods*" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 10). The grandmother is trapped by the *woods*, while the Misfit looks into them. In other words, the woods serve as the setting where the grandmother's illusions are stripped away through physical actions, and it is the space where the Misfit's moral questioning reaches toward but never settles. The woods, therefore, encode the moral conflict from both sides: the collapse of the grandmother's illusions and the depth of the Misfit's unresolved questioning.

Adjectives

According to Leech and Short's lexical category checklist, adjectives should be examined through their frequency, the type of attribute they refer to, their gradability and their syntactic position (Leech & Short, 2007, p. 61). The following table presents the most frequent adjectives with their function, frequency and context.

Table 2. The frequency, function and context of the adjectives (right, old, good, red, white and little)

Adjective	Function	Frequency	context
Right	Non-gradable, predicative, conversational (discourse marker)	6	"All right, Miss, the grandmother said" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 2) "but it was a good ... boys looked all right to me" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 5). "All right!" he shouted" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 6). "All right,' Bailey said"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 7). "That's perfectly all right," the grandmother said." (O'Connor, 1953, p. 10). "I'm doing all right by myself". (O'Connor, 1953, p. 11)
	Non-gradable, predicative, evaluative (moral judgement)	6	"People did right then." (O'Connor, 1953, p. 3). "Red Sam said it was no use talking about it, she was exactly right" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 6). "If you would pray, ... Jesus would help you 'That's right' The Misfit said"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 11). "Then you'll know what you done and you can hold up the crime ... and in the end you'll have something to prove you ain't been treated right"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 12)

Adjective	Function	Frequency	context
			"Does it seem right to you, lady, that one is punished a heap and another ain't punished at all?"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 12). "It ain't right I wasn't there because if I had of been there I would of known"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 13)
	Non-gradable, attributive/adverbial, physical (directional)	5	"I wouldn't be a bit surprised if he didn't attack this place right here"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 5). "The car turned over once and landed right-side-up" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 7). "He moved around on the right side of them and stood staring"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 8) "I want all you all to sit down right together there where you're at"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 9) "Turn to the right, it was a wall,' The Misfit said."(O'Connor, 1953, p. 11)
<i>Old</i>	Non-gradable, attributive, physical (age)	17	Mostly Modifying lady to refer to the grandmother's age. " The old lady"(10 times) "the eight-year-old boy"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 2). "That was the old family burying ground"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 4) "It was a old beat-up car" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 5) "would not be willing to lose any time looking at an old house" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 6). "she woke up and recalled an old plantation"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 6) "older man than the other two."(O'Connor, 1953, p. 8). "her head like a parched old turkey hen"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 12)
<i>Good</i>	Non-gradable, attributive and predicative, evaluative (moral judgement)	9	"This story tickled John Wesley's funny ... but June Star didn't think it was any good"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 4) "'Because you're a good man!' the grandmother said"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 5) "'A good man is hard to find,' Red Sammy said"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 6)) "Listen,' the grandmother almost screamed, 'I know you're a good man.'"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 9). "you shouldn't call yourself The Misfit because I know you're a good man at heart" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 9). "I just know you're a good man,' she said desperately" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 10). "'Nome, I ain't a good man,' The Misfit said"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 10) "You've got good blood! I know you wouldn't shoot a lady!"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 12). "'She would of been a good woman,' The Misfit said" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 13).
	Non-gradable, attributive (descriptive)	3	"she thought it was going to be a good day for driving" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 3). "he was a very good-looking man" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 4). "old beat-up car but it was a good one" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 5).
	Non-gradable, attributive, conversational (discourse marker)	1	"'Good afternoon,' he said" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 8)
<i>Red</i>	Non-gradable, attributive, colour (nickname)	15	Modifying the character "Red Sammy" and Red Sam's wife
	Non-gradable, attributive, colour (describing landscapes)	3	"the brilliant red clay banks" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 3) "they would be in a red depression with the dust-coated trees"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 7). "the side of the red gutted ditch" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 7)
	Non-gradable, attributive, colour (describing clothes)	2	"fat boy in black trousers and a red sweat shirt"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 8). "The boy with the red sweat shirt"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 9)
	Non-gradable, attributive and predicative, colour (describing appearances)	4	"'You can't win,' and he wiped his sweating red face off" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 5). "she turned red in the face and her eyes dilated and her feet jumped up" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 7). "and his ankles were red and thin" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 8).

Adjective	Function	Frequency	context
			"Without his glasses, The Misfit's eyes were red-rimmed and pale and defenseless looking"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 13)
White	Physical Non-gradable, attributive (Describing the grandmother's clothing)	4	"removing her white cotton gloves and putting them up" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 3). "the grandmother had on a navy blue straw sailor hat with a bunch of white violets" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 3). "a navy blue dress with a small white dot in the print" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 3). "Her collars and cuffs were white organdy"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 3).
	Physical, non-gradable, attributive (Describing the setting)	3	"The trees were full of silver-white sunlight"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 3) "The children ran outside into the white sunlight"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 6). "the house had six white columns" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 6).
White	Non-gradable, attributive and predicative, colour (describing appearances)	4	"the cat-gray-striped with a broad white face"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 7). "He had on tan and white shoes and no socks"(O'Connor, 1953, p.8). "he showed a row of strong white teeth"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 9). ("their faces white and their eyes glassy"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 11).
Little	Physical, non-gradable, attributive (describing children)	6	"He and the little girl, June Star" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 2). "If I were a little boy,' said the grandmother"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 3). "Would you like to come be my little girl?"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 5) "Bobby Lee get him and that little boy to step over yonder"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 10). "The children's mother and the little girl"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 11). "And Bobby Lee, you hold onto that little girl's hand" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 12).
	Evaluative, non-gradable, attributive (patronizing)	3	"Oh, look at the cute little pickaninny!"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 3) "the little Negro out of the back window"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 3). "Little niggers in the country don't have things like we do"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 3)
	Physical, non-gradable, attributive (describing buildings)	2	"And two little wooden trellis arbors"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 6). "the little twin arbors were still standing"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 6)
	Evaluative, non-gradable, attributive (minimizing danger)	3	"I see you all had you a little spill"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 8). "The Misfit pointed the toe of his shoe into the ground and made a little hole and then covered it up again" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 9) "The Misfit said and drew a little circle in the ground with the butt of his gun" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 9)

Right

Right has a high frequency of 17 times total; however, 6 of these carry evaluative and moral weight. It also operates as non-gradable and its syntactic position is predicative.

Right is morally laden; it shifts from casual agreement between Red Sam and the grandmother "Red Sam said it was no use talking about it, she was exactly right." (O'Connor, 1953, p. 6), into a questioning of the collective moral framework.

At the climax of the story, *right* is predominantly used by the Misfit in a non-gradable, predicative form. This linguistic choice creates a tone of directness when he interrogates the grandmother "'Does it seem right to you, lady, that one is punished a heap and another ain't punished at all?'" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 12). His question is a cry against an unjust world; a world he believes "ain't treated [him] right"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 12). He further complains "'It ain't right I wasn't there because if I ... 'if I had of been there I would of known and I wouldn't be like I am now'"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 13).

The Misfit's use of *right* shifts from interrogation to a complaint about the uncertainty. His use of *right* reveals a man trapped in a moral struggle; a man who demands certainty to align with the morals that society expects, yet he cannot find that certainty.

Good

While *right* exposes the Misfit's moral conflict as he starves for certainty and justice, the adjective *good* reveals the grandmother's different moral framework. *Good* has a total frequency of 14 times, excluding its occurrence in the story's title. Nine of the fourteen recurrences are used in an evaluative context. Moreover, out of these nine uses, six are used by the grandmother.

Similar to *right*, the adjective *good* is morally charged and its significance intensifies during the confrontation with the Misfit at the end of the narrative. However, unlike *right* which is mostly predicative, *good* is predominantly attributive. It functions as non-gradable and attributive. The grandmother presents goodness as an absolute category, one is either good or not good. This use of good leaves no room for complexity of gradation and reflects her binary moral framework.

The grandmother repeatedly relates goodness to social class: "I know you're a good man ... I know you must come from nice people!" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 9), to appearances, "I know you're a good man at heart. I can just look at you and tell" (O'Connor, 1953, p.9) and to gender respectability "You've got good blood! I know you wouldn't shoot a lady!" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 12).

To her superficial morality, the Misfit responds "Nome, I ain't a good man" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 10). Yet ironically, after he shoots her, he acknowledges "She would of been a good woman, ... if it had been somebody there to shoot her every minute of her life" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 13). The Misfit suggests that only through violence could the grandmother be stripped of her performative goodness.

Notably, the Misfit uses *good* in predicative form. This transition shows their opposing morality; the grandmother's *good* is a fixed label while the Misfit's *good* is evaluative.

O'Connor thus utilizes *right* and *good* in a way that exposes the grandmother's performative goodness and the Misfit's demand for certainty that the collective values fail to provide.

Red and white

Unlike *good* and *right*, the adjectives *red* and *white* are not morally charged, but their frequency and distribution carry symbolic weight that indirectly reveals the story's moral conflict.

As Table 2 shows, *red* recurs 24 times, 15 of which function as part of the proper noun 'Red Sammy' while *white* recurs 11 times.

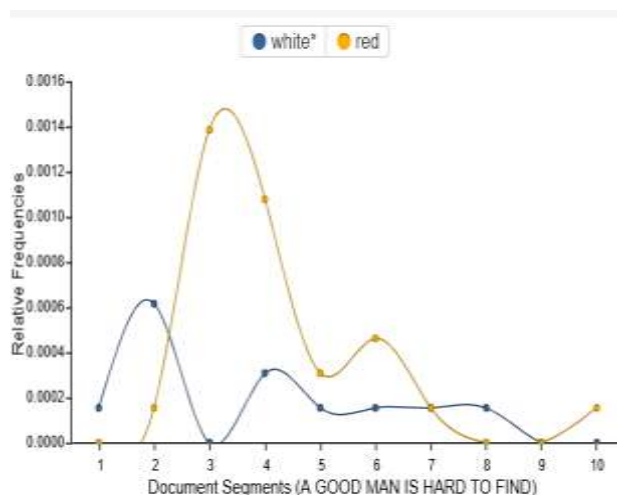


Figure 4 Distribution of White and Red (Trends tool, Voyant Tools)

According to Figure 2, *white* peaks at the beginning of the story where it is predominantly associated with the grandmother's looks. In these instances, *white* is non-gradable and attributive. It functions as a fixed quality attached to nouns: "white cotton gloves", "white violets," "white dot in the print" (O'Connor, 1953, p.3), then *white* moves to the grandmother's surrounding environment "the silver-white sunlight" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 3) and buildings "the house had six white columns" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 6).

This clustering forms the grandmother's outward social performance and it is made explicit by the narrator: "in case of an accident, anyone seeing her dead on the highway would know at once that she was a lady" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 3).

After Segment 5, the frequency of *white* declines and it is no longer attached to the grandmother's performative looks. Instead, *white* appears in the strong white teeth "he smiled he showed a row of strong white teeth" and shoes of the Misfit (O'Connor, 1953, p. 9), and in the terrified faces of the mother and her children. While *white* initially constructs the grandmother's pretense of social respectability, this pretense ultimately collapses and white becomes a marker of fear and death when confronted by the Misfit.

As for the adjective *red*, it peaks in segments 3 and 4, largely due to the 15 instances of the proper noun 'Red Sam'. The grammatical function of *red* is attributive; it gives nouns a fixed quality: "red clay" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 3), "red-rimmed eyes" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 13). However, in one instance, *red* has a predicative function "she turned red in the face" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 7). Here, *red* describes a temporary state rather than a fixed quality.

The clustering of *red* in the middle of the story, around the character 'Red Sam' who reinforces, the grandmother's values, creates an association between redness and moral framework. Red Sam and the grandmother lament the

decline of social integrity, and he endorses her moral stance (O'Connor, 1953, pp. 5–6). As the narrative progresses, the frequency of *red* declines but its meaning shifts. It goes beyond Red Sam and into the landscape such as "red-gutted ditch" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 7) and in bodily expressions such as the grandmother "turned red in the face" (O'Connor, 1953 p. 7) and "his ankles were red"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 8). In these cases, it becomes predicative. O'Connor utilizes the predicative function to build moral tension. *Red* is no longer fixed to characters but involuntarily appears in physical reactions that the body cannot control

Notably, *white* and *red* follow a similar trajectory. Both begin as attributive markers. *White* is attached to the grandmother's performative looks and *red* is attached to Red Sam who shares the moral stance of the grandmother. But as the narrative moves towards the climax, both colours leave these characters behind and they show up in physical reactions. *White appears* in the terrified faces of the mother and her children and on the teeth and shoes of the Misfit and *red* appears on the grandmother's flushed face and the Misfit's 'red-rimmed eyes'. Therefore, they shift from marking the collective social performance to marking the physical reality of the story's violent climax.

Old and little

The adjectives *old* and *little* are with high-frequency, recurring 17 and 14 times respectively. Unlike *good*, *right*, *white* and *red*, they do not encode the same moral weight, but their use still reveals aspects of the grandmother's performative morality and the Misfit's actions. Both adjectives function as non-gradable and attributive which assign stable qualities to the nouns they modify.

The narrator consistently refers to the grandmother as "the old lady". A term, beyond describing her age, foregrounds her embodiment of outdated values.

The pattern of the adjective *little* is also revealing, particularly when it appears in the grandmother's speech about the little "pickaninny". Phrases such as "the cute little pickaninny," and "little niggers in the country don't have things like we do."(O'Connor, 1953, p. 3) show how the grandmother utilizes *little* to diminish the child and to assert her position of moral and racial superiority.

Furthermore, *little* also repeated in an ironic way in the Misfit's actions. He calls the family's car accident "a little spill"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 8), minimizing its danger. then he makes "a little hole and then covered it up again" and draws"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 9). In each case, *little* contrasts with the violence taking place because of him.

Verbs

Based on Leech and Short's lexical category checklist, verbs should be examined through whether they are stative or dynamic. Consider what they refer to: speech acts, psychological states or perceptions. Their transitivity and whether they are factive or non-factive are also considered. (Leech & Short, 2007, p. 62). The following table presents the most frequent verbs along with their function, frequency and context.

Table 3. The frequency, function and context of the verbs (*pray*, *know*, *think*, *look*)

Verb	function	Frequency	Context
<i>Pray</i>	Dynamic, speech act, intransitive (religious appeal)	10	"Do you ever pray?" she asked" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 11). "If you would pray," the old lady said,' Jesus would help you"(O'Connor, 1953, p.11). "That's when you should have started to pray"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 11) "If you would pray"(O'Connor,1953, p. 12). "She wanted to tell him that he must pray"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 12). "Pray, pray,' the grandmother began, 'pray, pray"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 12). "Pray! Jesus, you ought not to shoot a lady"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 12).
<i>Know</i>	Stative, psychological state, transitive, factive (claiming certainty)	7	"It's not far from here, I know,'the grandmother said"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 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" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 9). "I know you're a good man at heart. I can just look at you and tell"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 9). "I just know you're a good man," she said desperately"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 10). "I know you wouldn't shoot a lady! I know you come from nice!"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 12).
	Stative psychological state, transitive, Factive (rejection)	1	"It was a head-doctor at the penitentiary I had done was kill my daddy but I known that for a lie"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 11).

Verb	function	Frequency	Context
	Stative, psychological, transitive, non-factive (conditional)	2	"It ain't right I wasn't there because if I had of been there I would of known 'if I had of been there I would of known and I wouldn't be like I am now.'"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 13)
	Stative, psychological state, transitive, non-factive (loss of control)	1	"the old lady mumbled, not knowing what she was saying and feeling so dizzy"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 13).
	Stative, psychological state, transitive, non-factive (demanding certainty)	2	"it's some that can live their whole life others has to know why it is"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 10). "Then you'll know what you done and you can hold up the crime to the punishment"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 12).
	Stative, psychological state, transitive, non-factive (absence of certainty)	2	"These days you don't know who to trust"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 5). "You don't know who lives there"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 7).
	Stative, psychological state, transitive, factive (recognition)	3	"In case of an accident, anyone seeing her dead would know at once that she was a lady"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 3). "as if he were pleased in spite of himself to be known"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 9). "His face was as familiar to her as if she had known him au her life"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 8).
<i>Know</i>	Stative, psychological state, transitive, factive (conversational)	3	"they worked at the mill and you know I let them fellers charge the gas they bought?" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 5) "You know they make me nervous"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 9). ". "You know,' Daddy said"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 10)"
	Stative, mental process, intransitive, non-factive (unresolved thought)	2	"He looked at the six of them huddled ... as if he couldn't think of anything to say"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 9). "The Misfit kept ... as if he were thinking about it"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 10).
	Stative, mental process, transitive, non-factive (failed certainty)	1	"Oncet in a while, I would think it was coming to me, but it never come"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 11).
	Stative, mental process, transitive, non-factive (directive)	2	"Think how wonderful it would be to settle down ... and not have to think about somebody chasing you all the time"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 10).
	Stative, mental process, transitive, non-factive (conversational)	1	"She said the way Europe acted you would think we were made of money"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 6).
<i>Think</i>	Stative, mental process, transitive, non-factive (personal judgement)	1	"he giggled and giggled but June Star didn't think it was any good"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 4)
	Dynamic, perception, intransitive (directive)	2	"Oh look at the cute little pickaninny!' she said"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 3). "Look at the graveyard!' the grandmother said"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 4).
	Dynamic, perception, intransitive (discourse marker)	2	"Now look here, Bailey,' she said"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 2). "Look here now,' Bailey began suddenly"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 9).
<i>Look</i>	Dynamic and stative, perception, intransitive (judgement based on appearance)	2	Dynamic: "I can just look at you and tell"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 9). Stative: "You don't look a bit like you have common blood"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 9).
	Dynamic, perception,	2	"She found she was looking at The Misfit squatting on the ground in front of her"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 10).

Verb	function	Frequency	Context
	intransitive (forced looking)		"The grandmother noticed how thin his shoulder ... she was standing up looking down on him"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 11).
	Dynamic, perception, intransitive (observing)	16	"she repeated, looking at Red Sammy"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 5). "Then he got out of the car and started looking for the children's mother"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 7). "Looking down over the blue tops of trees for miles around"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 7) "the dust-coated trees looking down on them"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 7) "the driver looked down with a steady expressionless gaze"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 8). "The driver got out of the car and stood by the side of it, looking down at them"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 8). "He looked at the six of them huddled together in front of him"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 9). "Hiram called, looking over the raised hood of it."(O'Connor, 1953, p. 9). "'Ain't a cloud in the sky,' he remarked, looking up at it"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 9) "'I'll look and see terrectly,' The Misfit said"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 10). "he looked up at the children's mother and the little girl"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 11). "Look up it was a ceiling, look down it was a floor"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 11). "and he looked up at the children's mother and the little girl who were sitting close together"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 11). "I was buried alive, and he looked up and held her attention to him by a steady stare"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 11). "stood over the ditch, looking down at the grandmother"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 13).
<i>Look</i>	Dynamic, perception, intransitive (looking beyond the visible)	3	"He put on his black hat and looked up suddenly and then away deep into the woods"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 10). "looking up again at the cloudless sky"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 11). "looking beyond her far into the woods"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 12).
	Dynamic, perception, intransitive (avoiding looking)	4	"Bailey didn't look up from his reading"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 2). "'Let's go through Georgia fast so we won't have to look at it much,' John Wesley said"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 3). "She knew that Bailey would not be willing to lose any time looking at an old house"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 6) "Bailey was looking straight ahead. His jaw was as rigid as a horseshoe." (O'Connor, 1953, p. 6)
	Dynamic, perception, intransitive (descriptive)	3	"they all turned and looked at the little Negro"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 3) "it was a good one and these boys looked all right to me"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 5) "The children ... looked at the monkey in the lacy chinaberry tree"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 6)
	Stative, perception, intransitive (descriptive)	4	"She had her big black valise that looked like the head of a hippopotamus"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 2). "The road looked as if no one had traveled on it in months"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 7). "he was a very good-looking man" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 4): functions as noun. "The Misfit's eyes were red-rimmed and pale and defenseless looking"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 13): functions as noun.

Pray

The verb *pray* recurs 10 times and only used by the grandmother. As Figure 5 presents, like the noun *Jesus*, *pray* occurs only at the end of the narrative. They cluster around the confrontation with the Misfit.

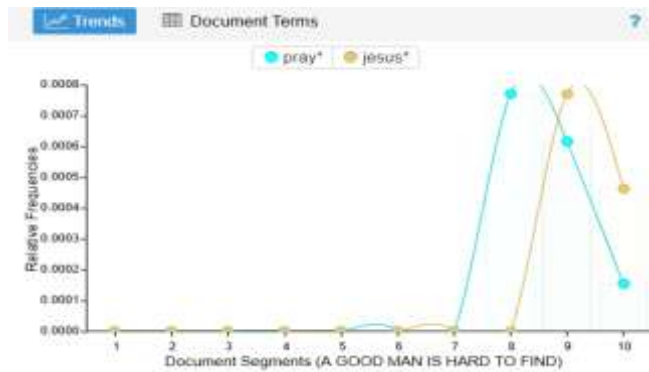


Figure 5 Distribution of *pray* and *Jesus* (generated using the Trends tool, Voyant Tools, Sinclair & Rockwell, 2016).

According to Leech and Short's lexical category checklist, *pray* is dynamic, intransitive and functions as speech act. The grandmother uses *pray* and *Jesus* as a religious appeal in a desperate attempt to awaken the Misfit's religious conscience. During the confrontation she asks him "Do you ever pray?" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 11) when he says he does not pray, she urges him "If you would pray,' the old lady said, 'Jesus would help you'" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 11). when her attempts to touch his moral stance fail, she resorts to social codes of gender respect "Pray! Jesus, you ought not to shoot a lady. I'll give you all the money I've got!" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 12). Once again, the grandmother reaches for moral language to survive, a performative act rather than genuine belief. The Misfit, however, remains untouched by her appeals. Playing a similar role to the previous nouns and adjectives, *pray* shows the conflict between the grandmother's performative collective values and the Misfit's rejection of them.

Know

Know recurs 21 times across its forms (*know*, *knowing*, *known*). It is stative, transitive and shifts between factive and non-factive depending on context. *Know* claims certainty over something. Strikingly, 7 out of 14 factive uses are said by the grandmother "I know you wouldn't shoot a lady! I know you come from nice!" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 12), "I know you're a good man at heart. I can just look at you and tell" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 9). She claims certainty about the Misfit's goodness, yet none of these claims are based on evidence. Her claims are based on appearance, class and feminine decorum. This pattern is consistent with the performative morality already established throughout the previous analysis.

The Misfit's use of *know* works differently. His single factive use: "it was a head-doctor at the penitentiary said what I had done was kill my daddy but I know that for a lie" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 11). The Misfit claims certainty only in rejection of what the doctor has told him.

His remaining uses are conditional: "if I had been there I would have known" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 13). He is imagining the unreachable. That is, if he had known for certain that Jesus raises the dead, he would be a different person.

This pattern uncovers the oppositions between performative collective morality and unresolved moral questioning where the grandmother claims facts based on fragile evidence, while the Misfit reaches for certainty he cannot have.

Think

The verb *think* recurs 7 times. It is stative, mental and non-factive. Unlike *know*, it presents information as uncertain or imagined. It also shifts between transitive and intransitive. When the grandmother uses *think* it is transitive. She gives *think* a specific object to direct the Misfit toward her vision "Think how wonderful it would be to settle down and live a comfortable life and not have to think about somebody chasing you all the time" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 10). She imposes her values on a man who has lived beyond their reach. When *think* is associated with the Misfit, however, it is mostly intransitive. His thinking has no object and reaches no resolution. The narrator reinforces this: "as if he couldn't think of anything to say" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 9) and "as if he was thinking about it" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 10). Even when *think* is transitive in his own speech, it fails to reach resolution "Oncet in a while, I would think it was coming to me, but it never come" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 11).

While the grandmother claims to *know* and tells others to *think*, the Misfit arrives at neither. The lexical choice of the verbs *know* and *think* reinforces the moral conflict that drives the narrative.

Look

The verb *look* recurs 38 times, distributed as *look* (12), *looking* (16) and *looked* (10). It has the highest frequency among the verbs previously analyzed. *Look* is predominantly dynamic and intransitive. Despite its high overall frequency, the verb *look* functions as a key lexical marker of moral conflict primarily at the confrontation between the grandmother and the Misfit.

When the grandmother uses *look*, it is directive and controlling. She tells others where to look "Oh look at the cute little pickaninny!" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 3), "Look at the graveyard!" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 4). *look* is also used in contexts where the grandmother draws false conclusions "I know you're a good man at heart. I can just look at you and tell, you don't look a bit like you have common blood" (O'Connor, 1953, p.9). The grandmother's looking rests on surfaces; she looks at appearances and takes them as proof. This is a pattern consistent with her use of *know*.

Further, the narrator uses *look* in an uncontrolled manner. *looking* is no longer directed but involuntary. The grandmother "found [herself] was looking at The Misfit squatting on the ground in front of her" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 10) and "she was standing up looking down on him" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 11). She is now forced to look at the reality of her situation.

However, when *look* is associated with the Misfit, it shifts from simply observing what is in front of him "He looked at the six of them huddled together in front of him" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 9), "he looked up at the children's mother and the little girl who were sitting close together" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 11) to reaching beyond the visible "looked up suddenly and then away deep into the woods" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 10), "looking beyond her far into the woods" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 12) and "looking up again at the cloudless sky" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 11).

The intransitive nature of *look* gives a glimpse into both the grandmother and the Misfit's morality, neither character's looking conforms to the collective societal codes. The grandmother's morality is built on surfaces and she often attempts to force others to adopt her perception, to look at the "cute little pickaninny" who does not "have things like [they] do" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 3) but soon she is forced to look at the harsh reality represented in the Misfit. The Misfit's morality, on the other hand, passes beyond surfaces but the truth he searches for cannot be found in the visible world.

Adverbs

Table 4 presents the adverbs identified through Terms tool. As the table shows, the adverbs identified are few in number and low in frequency. However, to ensure consistency with Leech and Short's checklist (2007), the adverbs in the narrative must be presented.

Table 4. Frequency, function and context of the short story's adverbs.

adverb	Function	Frequency	context
Carefully	Manner	3	"He was busy catching fleas on himself and biting each one carefully between his teeth as if it were a delicacy" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 6). "placing his feet carefully so that he wouldn't slip" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 8) "'Nome, I ain't a good man,' The Misfit said after a second as if he had considered her statement carefully" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 10)
Desperately	Manner	2	"I just know you're a good man,' she said desperately. 'You're not a bit common!'" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 10). "June Star hung over her mother's shoulder and whined desperately into her ear" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 6).
Politely	Manner	1	"'Ain't she cute?' the woman repeated, stretching her mouth politely" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 5)
Sharply	Manner	1	"Bailey turned his head sharply and said something to his mother that shocked even the children" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 9).
Vividly	Manner	1	"She had remembered so vividly was not in Georgia but in Tennessee" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 7).
Vaguely	Manner	1	"'Maybe they put you in by mistake,' the old lady said vaguely" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 11)
Dramatically	Manner	1	"The grandmother stood up and waved both arms dramatically to attract their attention" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 8)
Comfortably	Manner	1	"The old lady settled herself comfortably, removing her white cotton gloves" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 2)
Naturally	Manner	2	"June Star said her hair was naturally curly" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 2).

adverb	Function	Frequency	context
			"He didn't have a naturally sunny disposition like she did and trips made him nervous"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 5)
Nearby	Place	2	"He came over and sat down at a table nearby and let out a combination sigh and yodel"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 5) "chained to a small chinaberry tree, chattered nearby"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 4)
Away	Place	4	"In a few minutes they saw a car some distance away on top of a hill" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 8). "If He did what He said, then it's nothing for you to do but throw away everything and follow Him"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 12) "He moved away from the car and began to come down the embankment"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 8). "He put on his black hat and looked up suddenly and then away deep into the woods"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 10).
Suddenly	Time	1	"'Look here now,' Bailey began suddenly, 'we're in a predicament!'"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 9)
Adverb	Function	Frequency	context
Finally	Time	1	" Finally she found herself saying, 'Jesus. Jesus,'"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 12)
Occasionally	Time	1	"Occasionally he gave her a faraway smile"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 4)
Ago	Time	2	"he was a gentleman and had bought Coca-Cola stock when it first came out and that he had died only a few years ago"(O'Connor,1953, p. 4). "they never shown me my papers. That's why I sign myself now. I said long ago"(O'Connor,1953, p. 12).
Perfectly	Degree	2	"His eyes were as blue and intense as the parrots in his shirt and he remained perfectly still"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 10) "'That's perfectly all right,' the grandmother said. 'Maybe Bailey has an extra shirt in his suitcase'"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 10)
Exactly	Degree	2	"Red Sam said it was no use talking about it, she was exactly right"(O'Connor,1953, p. 6). "She recalled exactly which road to turn off to get to it"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 6).
Certainly	Degree	2	"'No I certainly wouldn't,' June Star said"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 5). "'People are certainly not nice like they used to be,' said the grandmother"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 5).
Closely	Degree	2	"There was a pistol shot from the woods, followed closely by another" (O'Connor, 1953, p. 11). "There was a piercing scream from the woods, followed closely by a pistol report"(O'Connor, 1953, p. 12)

According to Leech and Short's checklist, adverbs should be examined for their frequency, function and whether they occur as sentence adverbs. The adverbs in the narrative are varied across manner, place, time and degree without density in any single category. The most frequent adverb is *away*, which appears only four times. The majority occur once or twice. When examined in context, all the adverbs lack the frequency and consistency needed to contribute to the construction of the story's moral conflict. Unlike the nouns, adjectives and verbs previously analyzed, adverbs do not carry significant moral weight.

Conclusion

The dichotomy between the grandmother's performative morality and the Misfit's moral questioning is evident through O'Connor's lexical choices. These nouns shift from descriptive functions to markers of moral conflict at the climax. The religious and physical words ground this conflict in tangible reality rather than mere abstraction. The adjectives further expose this dichotomy. Some adjectives are morally charged and directly reveal the opposing moral stance, while others carry symbolic weight and indirectly contributes to the moral conflict. Moving to the verbs, they deepen the opposition. They reveal the grandmother's claimed certainty, her directive

attitudes and her manipulation of religion to survive, against the Misfit's questioning of morality and justice that searches but never reaches. In contrast, the adverbs lack the frequency and consistency to contribute to the construction of the moral conflict. O'Connor constructs two opposing stances toward collective societal codes and values through ordinary and colloquial vocabulary rather than philosophical abstraction. The short story's moral conflict is therefore embedded in its lexical choices which reveal that it is as much a linguistic construction as it is a thematic one.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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