

## Semiotic Analysis on Flannery O'Connor's *A Good Man is Hard to Find*

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**Abstract:** *The title of this study is Semiotic Analysis on Flannery O'Connor's A Good Man Is Hard to Find. This study focuses on the analysis of icons, indexes, and symbols in the short story. The data was taken from A Good Man Is Hard to Find short story. This study analyzes the sign based on three of the six sign species in Signs: An Introduction to Semiotics (Sebeok, Second Edition 2001), these three species are Charles Peirce's classification of signs, namely icon, index, and symbol. This study used the documentation method for collecting data. In analyzing the data, this study applied the qualitative method to present the data because the data was collected in the form of words and was analyzed based on the theory applied in this study using words and sentences. In presenting the data, quotes from the short stories are used as the data. The result shows the icons, indexes, and symbols found in the short stories. There are a total of thirteen data in this study, including four data for icons, seven data for indexes, and two data for symbols.*

## INTRODUCTION

The study of signs as part of a code system for communicating information is known as semiotics. As social beings and also as creatures of communication, humans in their lives are covered by various kinds of symbols, namely those made by people and those that occur naturally. Humans are able to create symbols and give meaning to the natural phenomena around them. There will always be messages conveyed in communication, both verbally and nonverbally. Short stories that are included in the realm of mass communication also have verbal and nonverbal messages that are displayed.

A short story is a literary work in written form that tells a fictional story and is packaged in a short, clear, and concise manner. A short story can also be referred to as prose fiction because the stories presented focus on a conflict of problems experienced by the characters, starting with character recognition and ending with the characters' concerns being solved. Short stories are similarly limited to a maximum of 10,000 words. Short stories often use markings in the form of icons, indexes, and symbols in storytelling because in signs there are hidden meanings. Therefore, to capture and understand the hidden meaning in the short story, it can be analyzed using the semiotic method.

Some interesting short stories to analyze are the works of Flannery O'Connor. One of

O'Connor's short stories is *A Good Man is Hard to Find*. *A Good Man is Hard to Find* was published in 1953. This story is about a family of six who are on their way to Florida from Georgia. A misfit, an escaped criminal, makes their journey difficult. The characters in this short story are: The Grandmother, The Misfit (escaped prisoners), Bailey (son of the grandmother), John Wesley (son of Bailey), June Star (daughter of Bailey), The Mother (mother of John Wesley, June Star, and a baby), Red Sammy Butts (owner of Tower restaurant), Bobby Lee (Misfit's henchmen) and Hiram (another Misfit's henchmen).

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### Semiotic

Semiotics is a science that contains its own collection of findings, theories, and techniques for examining everything that creates signs. Semiotics comes from the scientific investigation of physiological symptoms caused by certain diseases or physical conditions. Hippocrates (460-377 B.C.), the founder of Western medical science, who created semiotics as a field of medicine to investigate a symptom or a sign that has a meaning other than itself. Hippocrates said, the main task of doctors is to uncover symptoms. For example, sore throat, skin allergies, or colds. Medical diagnosis is the science of semiotics, because it is based on the principle that the physics of symptoms does not stand for itself but for conditions or mental states.

### Sign

According to Saussure, a sign as a form consisting of something physical (sounds, letters, gestures, etc.) which is called a signifier, and an image or idea that is read by a signifier called a signified. Saussure considers the relationship between the signifier and the signified is something that is arbitrary or with the approval of the surrounding community.

According to Saussure, there is no obvious justification for employing terms like *plant* or *arbre* (French) to denote "an arboreal plant." Any well-formed marker is one that conforms to the orthographic, phonological, or another kind of structure of the corresponding code, which is useable in both languages.

Inherent in the physical technique of the representation itself (the use of voice, hand gestures, and others), Peirce refers to the signifier as a *representamen* (something that does a representation). He described the meaning an *interpretant* gains as requiring some sort of 'negotiation,' so to speak, where the user of the sign or signs is expressing something socially, contextually, or personally.

### Icon

An icon is a symbol that has been designed to resemble, mimic, or reproduce its reference. Because it can be viewed to visually reproduce the reference, a photo can serve as an iconic sign.

A sign is called iconic if the signifier and the denotation have some topological properties. Peirce defined three types of signs (which he called "representations") in his paper "On a New List of Categories" from 1867. The first type included likenesses (a term he quickly dropped in favor of icons), or "relating to the object of the community in some quality," the second, indices, or "pertaining to their object consisting of the actual correspondence," and the third type, symbols (same as common sign), or 'the basis of which objects are qualities taken into account', which he later referred to as "law," which refers to the convention, custom, or natural disposition of the interpretant or the area of its interpreter.

Peirce then divides icons into three subclasses: images, diagrams, and metaphors. Images,

which are still simple with all the icons, or limited to only the visual field. Diagram theory, this appears very large in Peirce's semiotic research, and has been thoroughly examined by Zeman (1964) and Roberts (1973) in some of its wide-ranging consequences, include present graph theory. Peirce had little to do with the old rhetorical devices of metaphor. The icon is a synecdoche rather than a metaphor, according to Todorov (1973: 17).

### **Index**

An index is a sign that refers to someone or something that exists in space, time, or in connection to something or other people. Smoke is a fire index that indicates the presence of fire. This is also can be called a causal relationship. Unlike icons that resemble the reference, these marks indicate where they are.

A sign is shown to be indexes when the signifier is next to the signified. Side by side does not have to mean side by side. The Northern Lights can be considered an index of the Alaskan sky for every human being, regardless of great distance.

According to Peirce, one of the most famous cases is that the footprint Robinson Crusoe discovered in the sand was an index to some species. Overnight, various species of animals left a wide variety of paths around the countryside. Experienced field naturalists like Ennion and Tinbergen (1967: 5) have brilliantly characterized the stories inscribed in this trail code, which allows for a "country detection". Their prints and photos faithfully capture an astounding variety of indexical marks.

### **Symbol**

A symbol is a sign that arbitrarily and conventionally expresses its reference. The majority of semioticians concur that symbolism is what sets human representations apart from those of all other species. A symbol is a sign that lacks resemblance and simply has the usual relationship between the signifier and its denotation as well as a specific class identification.

Symbols can be created from signifiers like objects, sounds, images, and more. Like pigs, which are animals with large bodies, and obese people who are compared to them. The colors red stand for "bravery" and the colors white stand for "holiness and cleanliness."

### **RESEARCH METHOD**

The qualitative method of doing a case study, in which the researcher focuses on one or more cases over time and gathers detailed, in-depth data from a variety of sources (Creswell 2013).

#### **Data Source**

The data of this study was taken from the short story A Good Man Is Hard to Find. The data was selected because in general these short stories contain sign elements such as icons, indexes, and symbols.

#### **Method and Technique of Collecting Data**

The technique of collecting data is the most strategic step in research because the main purpose of research is to obtain data. This study collected the data using the documentation method. Documentation is a method that is used in research to obtain information or data in the form of any written sources such as books, articles, or any other form of a report that can push or support the statements that are going to be in the paper. To get icons, indexes, and symbols in short stories, there are several steps have been taken in data collection; the first was read the short

stories repeatedly, the second was observed the content of the stories, the third was noted the important things, and the final step was used the sign theory to analyse icons, indexes, and symbols.

### Method and Technique of Analysing Data

In most cases, qualitative data analysis techniques are used to discuss a topic conceptually. The qualitative method was the data analysis technique used in this study. It refers to data that was collected in the form of words and was analyzed based on the theory applied in this study using words and sentences. The main theory used is three of the six sign species in *Signs: an Introduction to Semiotics* (Sebeok, 2001). These three species are Charles Peirce's classification of signs, namely icon, index, and symbol.

### Method and Technique of Presenting Data Analysis

According to Sudaryanto in Zaim, M (2014) there are two methods and techniques for presenting data analysis, namely formal and informal methods. The formal method is a method of presentation using statistics in the form of numbers and tables, while the informal method is a method of presentation using strings of ordinary words to make it seem detailed and unraveled. The technique of presenting analysis data used in this study is known as the informal method. There are several steps to presenting the data. First, the data was classified and explained based on icon, index, and symbol by applying Peirce's sign theory. And next, it explained and described the relationship between signs in the form of icons, indexes, and symbols in the short stories.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The main theory used is three of the six sign species in *Signs: an Introduction to Semiotics* (Sebeok, 2001). These three species are Charles Peirce's classification of signs, namely icon, index, and symbol.

### The Icons in A Good Man is Hard to Find short story

#### Data 1

Bailey didn't look up from his reading so she wheeled around then and faced the children's mother, a young woman in slacks, 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 the statement above, a young woman who is Bailey's wife and mother of children who are never named is said to have a face like a cabbage, which is broad and innocent. Cabbage is an icon and belongs to the image subclass, cabbage is said to be an iconic sign for Bailey's wife because there are similarities between cabbage and Bailey's wife's face. This is because cabbage is a vegetable that has a round, wide, asymmetrical shape and has wrinkled and smooth leaves.

It is considered to have a broad and innocent face, not without reason, as the mother of the children always follows whatever the rest of the family is doing for most of the story. When the grandmother expressed her displeasure with the idea of going to Florida, the children's mother appeared to ignore her and simply remained silent. When the kids whined, with June Star clinging to her shoulders and shouting in her ears because they wanted to go to the old house where Grandmother told them about the secret panels, the mother did nothing. The mother of the children sat silently on the edge of the red ditch, holding her wailing infant, even after her broad face was hurt and she shattered her shoulder in an accident. And so innocently, when The Misfit urged the mother of the children to follow her husband Bailey into the forest, she answered "Yes, thank you" without a word of objection.

**Data 2**

The next morning the grandmother was the first one in the car, ready to go. 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 the statement above, it is stated that when the entire family travels to Florida, the grandmother is the first one in the car. Do not forget that she carried everything with her. One of them is a giant black bag that, interestingly, resembles the head of a hippopotamus. The hippopotamus is an icon. The hippopotamus is said to be iconic and belongs to the image subclass because it has similarities between the bag and the hippopotamus's head. The similarities are that they are both dark in color and large in size. The hippopotamus is the third-largest land animal after elephants and white rhinos, and is dark gray in color.

**Data 3**

The grandmother said she would have done well to marry Mr. Teagarden because 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, a very wealthy man.

In this story, the word Coca-Cola is mentioned several times. The first was when Grandmother told John Wesley and June Star about her past when she was a girl. At that time, she was courted by Mr. Edgar Atkins Teagarden from Jasper, Georgia. Mr. Teagarden was a kind man who had invested in Coca-Cola stock when it first became available. In addition, the word Coca-Cola came up when the Baileys stopped for a toasted sandwich at Red Sammy's The Tower. At that time, Red Sammy told his wife to bring Coca-Cola for the Baileys.

Coca-Cola is an icon of coke product that has been worldwide and very well known. This icon is a recognizable sign for the drinker. This black-brown soda drink has a distinctive taste. Coca-Cola's tangy taste comes from the use of phosphoric acid. Coca-Cola's slightly bitter taste comes from the caffeine. And cola concentrate, the heart of Coca-Cola's secret formula is its natural blend of flavors. One of the characteristics of Coca-Cola is the red color on the packaging. This color became the identity for Coca-Cola and never changed over time.

**Data 4**

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

A horseshoe serves to protect the horse's hooves from damage when rubbing against hard roads. The shape of the horseshoe resembles the letter "U" and is usually made of iron. This horseshoe is an icon of the Bailey character, the son of the grandmother. Bailey's jaws are said to be like horseshoe because they have something in common, namely that they are both stiff.

The quote can be seen as Bailey and his family continue their journey after lunch at Red Sammy's The Tower. On the way, the grandmother said the house had six white columns on the front, an avenue of oaks leading up to it, and two small wooden trellis arbors on each side in front where you could sit down with your suitor after a stroll in the garden. The grandmother knows exactly where they need to go. She knew Bailey did not want to waste time looking at the old house, but the more she talked about it, the more she wanted to return and see whether the twin harbors were there. The grandmother also claimed that the old house had a secret panel. According to the story, all of the family silver was concealed when Sherman arrived, but it was never discovered. John Wesley and June Star wanted to visit the house because the grandmother did not speak the truth, but Bailey simply stared straight ahead. Like a horseshoe, his jaw was squeezed, and he said "no." However, when the kids began to scream, John Wesley kicked the

back of the front seat, and June Star draped over her mother's shoulder, wailing in sorrow because they never had fun on vacation and could never do what they wanted. John Wesley slammed his foot into the back of the chair so strongly that his father felt the impact. Finally, Bailey said, "Okay," pulled over to the side of the road, and turned toward the old house.

The quote above is a quote that states that Bailey's character is a character who speaks a little. This is in accordance with the word stiff horseshoe where Bailey also has a stiff jaw which means one who speaks less.

### **The Indexes in A Good Man is Hard to Find**

#### **Data 5**

**"A good man is hard to find,"** Red Sammy said.

The title of this short story, A Good Man is Hard to Find, is an index. It is not like the icon resembles the reference, but it does have a reason why the title of this short story is categorized in the index. In this short story, it is difficult to find a good and trustworthy person.

You do not know who to believe these days, said Red Sammy, the owner of the Tower restaurant. He also claims that in the past, you could leave your screen door unlocked, but that is no longer the case. The grandmother speculated that people are not as pleasant as they once were. And Red Sammy said that a good man is hard to find.

#### **Data 6**

**"She wouldn't stay at home** to be queen for a day," **"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."

This word is an index. It is called an index because it is a causal relationship. The grandmother went wherever her family went because she did not want to miss anything with her family, which made the grandmother not want to stay at home.

Grandmother will not stay at her house for various reasons, she will follow her family everywhere they go, even if it is to a place she had not expected. If grandmother does not want to go to Florida, John Wesley urges her to stay at home. But the grandmother seems bound to miss everything, so she goes with her family wherever they go. In fact, mentioned in the story, she was the first in her family to be ready to leave.

#### **Data 7**

The grandmother had on a navy blue straw sailor hat with a bunch of white violets on the brim and a navy blue dress with a small white dot in the print. Her collars and cuffs were white organdy trimmed with lace and at her neckline she had pinned a purple spray of cloth violets containing a sachet. In case of an accident, anyone seeing her dead on the highway would know at once that **she was a lady**.

The grandmother was properly prepared in a non-comfortable look while the rest of the family was dressed informally on her way to Florida from Georgia. This is a causal relationship. The grandmother did this because it had an effect.

Because the grandmother who looks like the one mentioned above has a consequence. The result is that if there is an accident on the way, someone who finds the grandmother can immediately know that the grandmother is a woman.



**Data 8**

I call myself The **Misfit**,” he said, “because I can’t make what all I done wrong fit what all I gone through in punishment.”

The word misfit means incompatibility. This word is an index of the Misfit, villain character in the short story, A Good Man is Hard to Find. Feeling that his punishment was not in accordance with the crime he had committed, Misfit changed his name to Misfit.

The Misfit claims that he was never a nasty kid, but that he committed a mistake and ended up in prison. Turning right and left showed a wall, looking up showed a ceiling, and looking down showed a floor. The Misfit had completely forgotten what he was doing. He sat there for a long time, trying to remember what he had done, but he could not really remember anything to this day. He had to get the feeling it was on its way to him now and again, but it never arrived. No one had anything the Misfit wanted, he added. He was jailed because the penitentiary's head doctor said he had murdered his father, but he knew it was all a lie. His father died of the epidemic illness and he had nothing to do with it. His father was laid to rest in Mount Hopewell Baptist Church's cemetery.

**Data 9**

TRY RED SAMMY’S FAMOUS BARBECUE. NONE LIKE FAMOUS RED SAMMY’S! RED SAM! THE **FAT** BOY WITH THE HAPPY LAUGH. A VETERAN! RED SAMMY’S YOUR MAN!

The signs attached to the building claiming Red Sammy was a fat person were not without reason. This is because Red Sammy has a big stomach, like a sack of food.

In the short story it is explained that Red Sammy wears khaki-colored trousers, where the trousers are too small, only reaching his hipbones. He also has a large stomach like a food sack that hides and moves under his shirt. This is what causes Red Sammy to be said to be fat.

**Data 10**

“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.

This is an index where Red Sammy's tower, which is mostly made of stucco, is the cause, leading June Star to say the place is a run-down place and she does not want to live there.

They had stopped at Red Sammy's The Tower for a toasted sandwich by the time they arrived. June Star is teased by Red Sammy's wife, who invites her to live with him there, but she refuses. June Star claims it is because Red Sammy's property is partly made of stucco and has a lot of signs plastered all over it.

**Data 11**

As soon as the children saw they could move their arms and legs, they scrambled out of the car, shouting, “We’ve had an **ACCIDENT!**” The grandmother was curled up under the dashboard, hoping she was injured so that Bailey’s wrath would not come down on her all at once.

Accidents that occur in this short story are cause-and-effect relationships. The cause of this accident was the grandmother's selfishness. She wanted to see the old house that she remembered. After an argument over the whining of the children wanting to see the old house that had the panels, Bailey finally decided to drive towards the old house. When Bailey had driven quite a distance to find the old house, finally in the middle of the journey, the grandmother

remembered that the old house was in Tennessee, not in Georgia. The grandmother was embarrassed, her face red, her eyes wide, and her legs jumping, messing with her suitcase. And at that moment, Pitty Sing, the cat, jumped on Bailey's shoulder, and there was an accident.

From the short story, it is explained that the result of the accident was that the children were thrown to the floor, their mother suffered injuries to her face, her shoulder was broken, and she was thrown out the door while carrying the baby. The grandmother was thrown into the front seat. And Bailey remained in the driver's seat with the grandmother's cat, Pitty Sing, clinging to his neck. No family members died.

### The Symbols in A Good Man is Hard to Find

#### Data 12

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. "He didn't have any britches on," June Star said. "He probably didn't have any," the grandmother explained. "Little niggers in the country don't have things like we do. If I could paint, I'd paint that picture," she said.

Negro is a symbol of dark skin and curly hair. The word Negro comes from the Spanish language and refers to the color black. The word Negro is derived from the Latin word *Niger*, which signifies black. The Negro is a representation of the African continent's original people. The word Negro appears several times in this short story.

On their journey to Florida, the grandmother and the rest of the family saw a little Negro. June Star stated that the child was not dressed properly. Then the grandmother explained that the niggers in her country did not have things like they had. The author also describes the Negro seen by the grandmother and family standing at the door of a shack. Not only that, but the grandmother also told stories about when she was a maiden lady. At that time she had been courted by Mr. Edgar Atkins Teagarden from Jasper, Georgia. The grandmother said that he was a very handsome man and he always brought watermelon to the grandmother every Saturday afternoon with the words E.A.T. One Saturday Mr. Teagarden brought the grandmother a watermelon but no one was home and the man left it on the front porch, the grandmother never got the watermelon because a nigger boy ate it when he saw the words E.A.T.

#### Data 13

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

The quote above explains that June Star does not want to be partnered with Bobby Lee, because Bobby Lee reminds him of a pig. This is because Bobby Lee has a fat body. Many people think that people who have a fat body are said to be like pigs. This is due to the fact that pigs have a large body.

In the short story, it is told that Bobby Lee is one of The Misfit's henchmen who has a fat body. He was wearing black trousers and a red shirt.

### CONCLUSIONS

Semiotics is a science that contains its own collection of findings, theories, and techniques for examining everything that creates signs. According to Saussure, a sign as a form consisting of something physical (sounds, letters, gestures, etc.) which is called a signifier, and an image or idea that is read by a signifier called a signified. Saussure considers the relationship between the



signifier and the signified is something that is arbitrary or with the approval of the surrounding community.

According to the discussion above, it may be concluded that a semiotic analysis can reveal the meaning of a short story. The study of semiotics in the form of icons, indexes, and symbols from the two short stories above is revealed with the aim of understanding literary works as a phenomenon of signs in life. The icon in the short stories above displays the relationship of the sign with its reference, which is related to resemblance. The index in the short stories above shows the relationship between the sign and its reference in the form of a causal relationship. The symbol in the short stories above shows the relationship between the sign and its conventional reference.

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