

Charles Schmid: The Pied Piper

By [Katherine Ramsland](#)

Secrets in the Sand

It was Life and Time magazines that turned a local story from Tucson, Arizona, into a national abomination. Reporters came from all over, to be sure, but on March 4, 1966, Life printed an ominous photo of the desert landscape where three girls had disappeared and the story of Charles Howard Schmid, Jr., or "Smitty," became international news. He had been arrested four months earlier on November 11, just after marrying a fifteen-year-old girl whom he'd met on a blind date. The article was published even before the juries in two separate trials had decided his fate.

Dubbed "The Pied Piper of Tucson," for his ability to get girls to fall for him, he stood five feet, four inches tall, but added three more inches by padding his stack-heeled cowboy boots with rags and tin cans. He also dyed his reddish-brown hair black, used pancake make-up, whitened his lips, and applied a fake mole to his left cheek—a "beauty" mark. Arrogant and narcissistic, he came from a wealthy family, so he used the niceties he could buy to impress young high school girls. He adopted the droopy-eyed look associated with Elvis, his idol, and acquired a rock musician's mystique.

His tiny house on his parents' property was the scene of many parties. Tucson society was not merely shaken by the murders of three of their young women but by what the details of those murders revealed about its adolescent population—sex clubs, drinking parties, blackmail, cover-ups for murder, and even connections with the crime underworld. Parents suddenly became more strict, more aware now that their kids weren't safe and maybe weren't even behaving properly. When kids looked to someone like Charles Schmid for answers, there was something terribly wrong.

Smitty hung around the high school, luring girls into his cars. They hung out on Speedway, a main drag, and they were easy prey for a predator—even one who stumbled around in his ridiculous boots. He became something of a folk hero to kids who didn't quite fit in, because he was older and he knew things. He was strange, but he livened things up in a desert town full of retired people where nothing much was happening. Smitty made things interesting. Even so, it was difficult to figure out just what it was that inspired kids to follow his lead. The writer for the Life article, Don Moser, made a telling connection between him and a song that was popular that winter of 1965:

Hey, come on, babe, follow me

I'm the Pied Piper, follow me

I'm the Pied Piper

And I'll show you where it's at.

Many girls went out with him and three never returned. There are a lot of places to bury a body in the desert.



Charles Schmid, Jr.

Inspiration for Joyce Carol Oates

The short story, "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?" written by Joyce Carol Oates and published in 1966, was based on the tale of Charles Schmid. Oates had read part of the article printed in Life magazine and thought this killer was such a strange character, with his stuffed boots and awkward gait. Yet to her mind, he embodied something elusive about adolescent culture and its hidden dangers. That such a man had somehow charmed three teenage girls whom he subsequently killed inspired her to write a short story from the point of view of a potential victim. What would it take, she wondered, for a young girl to be lured by a man who obviously had little going for him? What might he have said and done to win her trust and get her to walk straight into her doom?

The story came to Oates "more or less in a piece" after reading the article and hearing Bob Dylan's song, "It's All Over Now, Baby Blue." She was reminded of folk legends of "Death and the Maiden" and saw within this situation in Tucson an archetypal element. She dedicated her story to Dylan and used some of the words from his song.

Often inspired to flesh out the skeletal form of newspaper articles—to go into the story and work out the horrors suggested between the lines—Oates gave voice to a fifteen-year-old girl, Connie, who gets caught alone in her house by Arnold Friend, a killer based on Schmid who slowly seduces her from outside her flimsy screen door. She feels safe inside at first but ultimately he convinces her that she can only be safe with him. To Oates, Connie was both the prototypical American teenager of her day and the embodiment of the old myths of females being vulnerable to the illusive blend of death and eroticism. The story captures the longing of the teenage heart for someone who promises the moon. It also touches on the limited options of adolescent girls, invasive victimization, and the American obsession with violence. Oates herself described the tale as "Hawthornean, romantic, shading into parable."

The story has been reprinted many times, was selected for The Best American Short Stories in 1967 and The O. Henry Awards in 1968, and became the basis for a critically acclaimed movie, *Smooth Talk* (1986).

"For the writer," Oates commented, "the serial killer is, abstractly, an analogue of the imagination's caprices and amorality; the sense that, no matter the dictates and even the wishes of the conscious social self, the life or will or purpose of the imagination is incomprehensible, unpredictable."

Alleen Rowe

She was fifteen on that ominous night of May 31, 1964. Alleen was only a sophomore at Palo Verde, and she had unfortunately befriended frumpy, nineteen-year-old Mary French, a friend and lover of Charles Schmid. Alleen's mother, freshly divorced, had just moved her children to Tucson the year before. One of Alleen's favorite things to do was walk in the desert, gathering unusual stones. She liked the hot sun because it made her feel alive. Her hope was to become an oceanographer, and with her above-average grades, she had a shot. Blond and blue-eyed, Alleen attracted Schmid's attention.

One afternoon, he told Mary French to persuade Alleen to go out with his friend, John Saunders. Alleen turned down the invitation. But Schmid was not to be refused. He called Mary half a dozen times that day to get her to talk Alleen into the date. Each time, Alleen said that she could not go. She had an exam the next morning at school.

Schmid arrived that evening at Mary's house with Saunders at his side. Earlier he'd been talking about "killing someone"—specifically a girl. He just wanted to find out what it would be like to snuff out a life and to see if he could get away with it, as he seemed to do with everything else. He had made up a list of potential candidates and Alleen Rowe was one of them. His plan was to lure her into a desolate place, hit her with a rock, and bury her in the desert. Rather than try to dissuade him, Mary simply complained that she had tried and failed to get Alleen to come. Schmid instructed her to then find someone else. He was restless. He wanted to kill someone, now, that very night. She tried but found no one, so she went to where Alleen was visiting a friend and talked with her once again. Finally Alleen relented, but said she would have to wait until her mother went to work that night.

When Mary reported her success, John and Smitty got a shovel and put it into the trunk of the car. They drove around until they knew that Alleen's mother was gone, and Mary went over to tap on her bedroom window. She came out barefoot, with curlers in her hair, wearing a bathing suit and a yellow-checked shift, and carrying her shoes.

Mary sat with Smitty in front while Alleen climbed in next to John in back. They drove out to the desert, out by Golf Links Road, where Smitty liked to drink and make out. They walked for awhile into the desert and then found a wash where they could sit and talk. At some point, Smitty asked Mary to go back to the car and get a radio.

He went with her and soon they heard Alleen scream. Smitty told Mary to get into the car while he ran back down to the wash. John was struggling there with Alleen and Smitty told him to put his hand over her mouth. Smitty bound her arms behind her back with a guitar cord while Alleen begged to be told why they were doing this to her. "Mary wants us to do," Smitty told her. "She hates you." Alleen continued to resist, so Smitty led her further into the wash.

He instructed John to take her bathing suit off, but John had trouble getting it over her arms, since they were tied. Smitty untied her, put her shift on the ground and told her to lie on it. She obeyed and Smitty then told John to "go ahead," but she was crying so much that he couldn't kiss her. Smitty told John to take a walk. Then Smitty called for him and he returned to find Alleen putting her bathing suit back on. She walked away, further into the wash. The two young men followed her.\

The Kill

Smitty picked up a rock with a pointed edge and handed it to John. He gave it back, unable to go through with the plan. Smitty insisted that he return to the car and get Mary. Mary refused to go anywhere, so John went back to find Smitty. There he saw Alleen lying on her back on the ground, her face and head covered in blood. Smitty's hands were bloody as well, and blood covered the front of his shirt. He wanted to know where Mary was and when John told him, he went to the car and told her, "We killed her." He also added, "I love you very much." Mary recalled later that he seemed to be very excited.

Then he got the shovel, told Mary that John was the one who had struck Alleen with the rock, and got her to accompany him back to the murder site. She saw Alleen and could not detect any signs that the girl was still alive. Smitty gave John the shovel and used his hands to start digging a grave. Mary joined in. Smitty then took Alleen's hands and instructed Mary to lift her by the feet while they lowered her into the shallow pit they had opened.

They dumped her dress into the grave, covered the body with sand, and tossed sand over the hair curlers. Smitty then took off his shirt and buried it in the sand along with the shovel. After they felt they had secured the scene and covered all the evidence, they went back to the car to wipe it clean of prints. They invented a story that Alleen had agreed to go out with John that evening, but when they drove by to pick her up, she had not been home. Then they dropped Mary off and went their way.

The next day, Norma Rowe, Alleen's mother, made every effort to locate her and finally contacted the police. She worked as a night nurse, she said, and when she had left, Alleen had been in her bed. The next morning, she was gone, without taking her purse or any clothing except the bathing suit she had been wearing, and a yellow shift. Norma told them about a sex club at the high school that her daughter had described to her in which young people were involved with drugs, perversions, and organized prostitution. The officer in charge said that this was one of the most far-fetched tales he'd ever heard and did not take it seriously. An investigation failed to disclose any sign of such activities. Mary French was questioned, along with Smitty and John. Smitty took the other two out and made them repeat the story they had concocted, to be sure that no one gave them away by some slip-up.

A week later, Alleen's father called Norma to tell her that he had dreamed that their daughter had been murdered and left in the desert. Norma felt there was truth in the dream and she dogged the police, who insisted on better evidence before they went looking in such a vast area. By March, when nothing had turned up, Norma Rowe went to Arizona's Attorney General and the FBI. She also called in reporters and would not give up, despite official sentiment that Alleen was just another teenage runaway. Norma even consulted a psychic, but nothing came of it, and the case of Alleen Rowe was soon buried by the police under other, more pressing concerns.

A Virgin in the Backseat Smoking Hash: Joyce Carol Oates's "Where are You Going, Where Have You Been?"¹

Copyright ©1999 Michael Carlson Kapper

Since its first publication in the fall of 1966, many critics have undertaken to explain Joyce Carol Oates's short story "Where are You Going, Where Have You Been?" These explanations have each taken one of several approaches to the story's meaning, or, more importantly, its didactic message. Previous critics have endeavored to explain this piece in terms of three major theories; that is, they posit that Oates was trying to personify evil, to denigrate rock'n'roll music, or to lecture on the dangers of teenage sexual promiscuity. These critics, under the impression that the story does not all fit together (because Oates's narrator says so [Oates 68]), tend to take the view that one of these (or perhaps two) is the "correct" reading of Oates's piece, and follow that line of thinking to as logical a conclusion as they are able. It is my contention, however, that—while each of these elements is important in the story—there is another element here that has been overlooked. I believe, contrary to the narrator's assertion, that all these things do come together, and that this coming together calls for a new reading of this piece. All of the elements can be unified through a drug-based reading. This reading, a unified reading, takes into account the sex, evil, and rock'n'roll readings, and even accounts for them in ways that they could not account for themselves, thereby showing these other readings not as incorrect, but as incomplete. The entire story is about Connie using drugs, and on the Sunday afternoon in the story, she is not the victim of a serial rapist/murder, but merely the victim of a drug trip.

Each of the other elements is clearly present and is clearly important. I think it germane to review here the pertinent information from other critics' readings of this story, so that the important elements of their arguments can be incorporated into this new reading.

First the music. Rock'n'roll music is a constant presence in Connie's life. At the drive-in, the background music is "something to depend on" (Oates 61), and on Sunday afternoon, with no drive-in and no boys around, the music itself gives Connie joy (Oates 63). This omnipresence is even noteworthy in the music's absence. Leaving the shopping plaza in her friend's father's car, Connie was, the narrator notes, too far away from the drive-in to hear the music (Oates 62). Further, as is typical of many rebellious teenagers, Connie finds her escape in music: "She went inside the house and turned on the radio to drown out the quiet" (Oates 63), perhaps so as not to be alone with herself, or perhaps to prevent the sadness which might arise from the loneliness and boredom of a summer Sunday afternoon. This seems to be the case, for as Joyce M. Wegs notes, "Throughout the story the music is given an almost mystical climate, for it evokes in Connie a mysterious pleasure" (88).

In addition to its constancy in Connie's life, music is also integral to the character of Arnold Friend; there is the "singsong way he talk[s]" (Oates 68) and the way his words remind Connie of last year's song lyrics (Oates 72). Then, just as music had been ever present in the background at the drive-in, Ellie Oscar's transistor radio provides a soundtrack for Friend's "seduction" of Connie at the house.

Ellie himself represents another musical tie-in. Ellie, according to Alice Hall Petry, is "a character whose appearance, personality and behavior suggest that he is the incarnation of the darker side of the admitted idol of Friend's prototype: Elvis Presley" (155). That is, Oates had a prototype for Arnold Friend; his name was Charles Schmid, a serial rapist and murderer active in the Tucson, Arizona area in 1965. Schmid admitted that his hero was Elvis Presley. Petry goes on to suggest that Oates's aim was to denigrate rock'n'roll: "And what better way to suggest the dangerous illusions and vacuousness generated by the romantic promises and frantic strains of music sung by . . . Elvis Presley than to have an Elvis figure participate in the rape and murder of a 15-year-old girl?" (157). That is, Oates, according to Petry, is trying to show the evil inherent in rock'n'roll music by having a character who looks much like Elvis, and who is closely tied to music like Elvis's, be a part of Connie's rape and murder.

This Ellie/Elvis connection can be pursued one level further, though, by stepping away from the musical end of things to the perspective which says that Friend is not a serial rapist and murderer, but evil incarnate: Satan himself. The thought of Ellie, this Elvis figure, as a henchman to the devil would come as no surprise to those who were already the middle-aged adult establishment during the rock'n'roll era. In fact, many of that generation had independently concluded that the real Elvis was leading the youth of America on a "highway to hell" (to borrow a phrase from the rock band AC/DC). From here, it is not too great a stretch to believe that Ellie's part in Connie's own personal dance with the devil was to help draw her in via the music provided by his radio.

¹ Michael Carlson Kapper, University of Akron. Class: Fantasy Literature (for original); Scholarly Writing revised January 1999 <http://www.personal.usfca.edu/~southerr/paper011.html>

This position, though, relies on inferences, rather than on explicit statements in the text. For example, though Friend claims to be eighteen, Connie sees him as "thirty, maybe more" (Oates 68) and the critics believe that Friend represents Satan imply much, much more. Further, Friend twice states that he will not enter the house without permission (Oates 71, 72)—though in one of these instances he defines Connie picking up the telephone as giving him permission to enter the house (Oates 72). This, too, is a demon reference, referring to the ancient belief that a demon cannot enter a house without an invitation. Next, there is the matter of Friend's boots. In reality, the prototype, Schmid, was five feet, three inches tall and stuffed the toes of his boots with tin cans and rags to make himself seem taller (Quirk 82-83), and it seems likely that this was Oates's intention in stating that Friend was somewhat wobbly in his own boots (71). Some have inferred, though, that the reason for his unsurefootedness was that his boots were supporting a cloven hoof, as some traditions hold that a demon would have. Finally it seems that Friend is in some way omniscient: he knows where Connie's parents and sister are, and what her sister is wearing; he knows the same kids Connie knows and a good bit about the dead woman down the road, though not her name.

So, from this brief look at the previous work, it is clear that there is decent evidence for the theory that Oates's intention was to denigrate rock'n'roll music, and that this denigration is closely tied to the demonic nature of Arnold Friend's character. This, though, does not explain elements present in the story such as Connie's perception of the telephone (Oates 74).

Another commonly taken approach—in fact, the most commonly taken approach, perhaps due to the fact that the issues involved in this approach draw more attention to themselves than do other, less emotionally-charged issues—is that Oates's aim in this piece is to comment on the consequences of sexual promiscuity, and there is ample evidence in support of this reading. First and foremost, there is an overtone of sexuality throughout this piece. From Friend's persistent insistence that he is Connie's lover to his description of what their first sexual encounter will be like, this story is laden with overt sexual references. Beyond the overt, though, even the narration in sections not concerned with sexual activity has a sexual tone to it; for example: "breathless with daring" (Oates 60) and "their thin shoulders *rigid with excitement*" (Oates 61, emphasis added) reference sexuality in passages primarily concerned with crossing a road and sitting at the counter in a restaurant.

Many have taken a position as to what Connie's sexual downfall was. Marilyn C. Wesley reports that Oates herself has said that Connie was "an innocent young girl seduced by vanity" (43). The reader can clearly see Connie's vanity in the opening paragraph of this piece, where it is openly stated that Connie "knew she was pretty and that was everything" (Oates 59). The argument here is that Friend himself did not entice Connie out of the house, but rather that he used her vanity: that fact that he confirmed her own notion that she was pretty was what, in the end, led to her downfall.

Most of the sexuality arguments, however, focus on Connie's young age and relative inexperience with sex. Joanne V. Creighton goes so far in this direction as to contend that: Connie's encounter with Arnold Friend is not just a unique instance of how one girl's experimental flirtation propels her too rapidly into the world of experience, not just an account of one girl's perception of the deceptiveness of appearances and the terrible reality of evil, but a particularly vivid instance of a universal experience: the loss of innocence. (118)

Most, however do not go this far. To say that the entire piece is about Connie becoming more experienced (in the ways of the world as well as in the ways of sex) through being raped by Friend is, even among this school of critics, rather far afield. Most critics who favor the experimental sexuality interpretation of this piece simply say that Connie has trouble recognizing—and therefore controlling—her newly developed sexual urges. Wegs says, "That [Connie's] are a kind of generalized sexual desire is made evident by Oates' [sic] description of Connie's Summer dreams" (91), and Greg Johnson seems to continue this thought by saying that "Friend seduces Connie at an early, vulnerable stage of her sexual maturity, ensuring her permanent submission" (44-45).

Both Wegs and Johnson are arguing here that Connie has too little sexual experience to differentiate and control specific sexual feelings, and that by playing upon this generalized desire to take a lover before the needed experience has actually been gained, Friend can claim Connie as his—and only his—forever. These critics argue this "inexperience" point even though they are among the school of critics who argue that it is precisely Connie's burgeoning promiscuity that gets her into this predicament in the first place.

Opposed to these schools of critical thought which focus solely on a single and therefore not unifying theme, my reading of this piece is not simply a single reading, but an integrative one. I do not intend to present a contending view, but rather a view which incorporates all of the others. While most critics pull one of these elements from this piece and take it to its most logical conclusion, I intend to show that my reading—one of illicit drug use—integrates all of these other elements. The closest reading to my own that I have found is one by Larry Rubin entitled "Oates's 'Where are You Going, Where Have You Been?'" In this essay, Rubin argues that Connie's experience with Friend is nothing but a daydream (a reading borne out by a viewing of the film version of this story). But even this daydream reading is not as wholly integrative as the drug use reading.

To begin, I steal a passage from those critics who see only sexuality in this story. Reference is made to a girl named Nancy Pettinger, and the narrator tells the reader that Connie "always drew thick clear lines between herself and such girls, and her mother was simple and kindly enough to believe her" (Oates 62). If the reader is already leaning toward a sexual reading of this piece, Nancy's unfortunate surname (Pettinger—sort of a comparative form of *petting*, an adult euphemism for the general sexual fooling around of kids: making Nancy a girl who does more petting than most) would lead that reader to believe that the type of girls Connie is trying to distance herself from is the promiscuous type. That is, the reader is apt to believe that Connie has led her mother to believe that she is chaste, when, in fact, she is not. But the more telling line in this passage is Connie's reference to Nancy, in which she says, "Oh, her. That dope" (Oates 62).

What this implies is the use of illicit drugs--the perspective on which this reading is based. Nancy has been caught, and Connie has led her simple-minded mother to believe that she would do nothing of the sort. There is, however, evidence that Connie would, in fact, do exactly that sort of thing. "Connie sat with her eyes closed in the sun *dreaming* and *dazed* with the warmth about her as though it were a kind of love (Oates 63, emphasis added). What is implied here, I believe, is the use of some sort of hallucinogenic drug, the effect of which would be to put its user in a dream-like state, a sort of lucid dream which the dreamer experiences as vividly as, but differently from, her experience of real life. This difference shows up in the piece from the moment Connie's parents and sister leave the house and continues throughout: "she hardly knew where she was" (Oates 63), "the asbestos 'ranch house' . . . startled her--it looked small" (Oates 63), "the kitchen looked like a place she had never seen before" (Oates 71), and "her eyes darted everywhere in the kitchen. She could not remember what it was, this room" (Oates 73).

In addition to not recognizing the features of her own home, Connie also has a surreal experience with the telephone. She perceives what the narrator identifies as the dial tone as "a tiny roaring" (Oates 74). This experience illustrates that Connie's mind was not functioning properly, as any person familiar with the operations of a telephone whose mind was unaltered would have recognized the dial tone for what it was.

Also, just as Connie refers to Nancy Pettinger as a dope, Arnold Friend twice refers to his companion, Ellie, in the same way (Oates 73, 75). This hints that Ellie (as well as Friend) is a manifestation of a drug trip that Connie is on. The word *dope* has been used once to tell the reader that Nancy uses drugs, but as Friend uses this word in reference to Ellie, it is a hint that the drugs themselves are what causes Ellie's presence: he is a dope, because he is from the dope.

Now, what of the other readings of this story? First, there is actually something in the description of the music which argues more strongly for the drug reading than for a strict musical reading. It is odd to me that without being in some altered state, Connie would find herself "bathed in a slow-pulsed joy that seemed to rise out of the music itself and lay languidly about the airless little room, breathed in and out with each gentle rise and fall of her chest" (Oates 63), especially if the records played on the radio were of "hard, fast, shrieking songs" (Oates 63) which would not lend themselves to slow-pulsed anything.

Worth noting, too, is the fact that Ellie's transistor radio is tuned to the XYZ (which sounds remarkably like LSD) Sunday Jamboree with Bobby King (Oates 64), as is Connie's radio in the house (Oates 63). I would argue here that the reason that both radios are tuned to the same program is because, in fact, all of the music is coming from Connie's radio in her room; the soundtrack for the Connie's experience is provided by her own radio.

Also of interest here is the fact that Friend's voice seems continually to change. "He had the voice of the man on the radio now. It was the same voice" (Oates 69), and "and this last was in a different voice" (Oates 69). Friend says "It's Sunday" (Oates 69) in the voice of Bobby King. This "voice-over" can be viewed as Connie's real senses intruding on her trip: on a radio program called XYZ Sunday Jamboree, the phrase "It's Sunday" is sure to be shouted at least once.

Also, sometime during the thirty-odd-year life of this piece, it has acquired a dedication to Bob Dylan. I say acquired, because in its original publication in the fall of 1966, it had no dedication, but in several other versions, it does. This dedication informs a drug reading because by 1966, Elvis Presley and others of his musical genre with their emphasis on teen love and the like were giving way to Dylan and his "cryptic, atonal folk music" (Petry 157), and as Dylan might have said, the times they were a-changin'. Changing from guys cruising around the drive-in to guys being packed off to Vietnam wholesale, and changing the primary vice of youth from sex to drugs. Granted, promiscuous sex was raised to an art form in the drug culture of the late 1960s, but by 1966, even those who still preferred the music of the Beatles and the Beach Boys to protest music were being introduced to the wonders of drug use. So it would come as no surprise to me if Connie and Eddie were not having sex that night in the alley, but smoking dope instead. It would also not surprise me if Connie's entire Sunday afternoon experience with Friend and Ellie were nothing more than a girl's acid trip, rather than her kidnaping, rape, and murder.

In the Friend-as-demon reading, it is interesting to note that his demonic nature does not begin to manifest itself until Connie asserts that she will not go with him. He first shows up at the back door like some kind of James Dean, a dream lover for any fifteen-year-old girl, and tells her she's cute. What girl wouldn't be flattered by that in

Connie's situation? Even though Friend appears to be omniscient, he only proves this by knowing things that Connie knows, but he does not even know everything that Connie knows: Connie must provide him with Mrs. Hornsby's name (Oates 70). The fact that Friend only knows what Connie knows points out that he is, in fact, a figment of her drug stimulated imagination, based on a boy she glimpsed briefly at the drive-in, and in seeing this vision, "Connie discovers that her dream love-god also wears the face of lust, evil and death" (Wegs 87).

I would also submit that for all of her rebelliousness, lust is one area of this equation that Connie has little experience with. The fact that, as stated, above, the dream-demon Friend knows what Connie knows provides the key evidence for Connie's virginity: he speaks of "the first time" (Oates 70). So I postulate that Connie is a virgin, and that this has been her choice, because the reader has both been told that she is pretty (Oates 59) and been shown that she has had plenty of opportunity to experience sex. If, then, she has chosen to remain a virgin, the only way she would lose her virginity at this point in her life is if she were raped. This fact begins, under the influence of the drugs, to interact with Connie's growing desire for sex, and the two together conspire to give Connie the sex she wants, and in the only way she would be willing to receive it—unwillingly. When this happens, Friend changes from the flattering love-god to the forceful, if duty-bound, demon.

Even one of the most sexually suggestive lines in the piece, "how sweet it always was, not the way someone like June would suppose but sweet, gentle, the way it was in movies and promised in songs" (Oates 63), coming as it does after vague references to love and boys, can be integrated with this drug reading. By 1966, most teenagers had heard some of the music glorifying the use of drugs, and in the teen film of the 1950s and 1960s it is rare that a movie goes by—especially a James Dean-type film—without someone firing up an "illicit" cigarette, really no more or less illegal for the teen crowd than the "harder, more illicit" drugs. Sermons by parents and teachers about the evils of drug use probably left many of those who had not experienced drug use with the impression that these substances were quite harsh, which may or may not have been true. This is all to say that everything said in this piece that has been construed sexually in the past can also be read as consistent with the drug reading, adding to the sexual tension which is still prominent in this drug reading.

Finally, just as Friend and the house seem to evolve around Connie throughout this piece, the landscape itself begins evolving at the end, seeming to explode in brightness and vastness. This either represents a shift in the trip toward deeper left field or the end of the trip with the vastness representing the vestiges of the drug experience and the brightness representing the kicking in of Connie's normal senses and sensibilities.

So, if the bulk of this story is viewed as a drug trip, the other readings of this piece are relatively easy to integrate, and they make sense, if only in that they need not make sense. That is to say, that contrary to the assertion of Oates's narrator, these things do all come together. Under the influence of drugs, the dream-lover, to whom Connie is tied by music, turns rapist and demon. The dream-lover's goal is to possess Connie's body, just as Connie's unconscious goal is to have her body possessed; he becomes first a rapist and then a demon when these goals come into conflict with Connie's overt goal: the maintenance of her virginity, at least for the moment. The music throughout the story is the same radio program, a program of fast, hard, shrieking songs, which, contrary to that description, emit a slow-pulsed joy. All of these things point to the fact that Connie's mind is not functioning properly and is surely under the influence of something; something more natural than a demon, more sinister than rock'n'roll music, and more addictive than sex: drugs. The evidence for a virgin in the backseat doing drugs—and not much else—is throughout the story, but one must look behind the more obvious, more sensational, more emotionally-charged issues in order to see it.

i

ⁱ Works Cited

Creighton, Joanne V. *Joyce Carol Oates*. Boston: Twayne, 1979.

Johnson, Greg. *Joyce Carol Oates: A Study of the Short Fiction*. New York: Twayne, 1994.

Oates, Joyce Carol. "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?" *Epoch* 17 (1966): 59-76.

Petry, Alice Hall. "Who Is Ellie? Oates' 'Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?'" *Studies in Short Fiction* 25 (1988): 155-158.

Quirk, Tom. "A Source for 'Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?'" *Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?* Ed. Elaine Showalter. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 1994. 81-90.

Rubin, Larry. "Oates's 'Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?'" *Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?* Ed. Elaine Showalter. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 1994. 109-112.

Wegs, Joyce M. "'Don't You Know Who I Am?': The Grotesque in Oates's 'Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?'" *Critical Essays on Joyce Carol Oates*. Ed. Linda W. Wagner. Boston: Hall, 1979. 87-92.

Wesley, Marilyn C. *Refusal and Transgression in Joyce Carol Oates' Fiction*. Westport, CT: Greenwood P, 1993.

J.Oates, WAYGWHYB - Four Critical Interpretations¹

I. Greg Johnson interprets the story as a "feminist allegory."

When the ironically named Arnold Friend first arrives at Connie's house, driving his sleazy gold jalopy and accompanied by a strange, ominously silent male sidekick, Connie deflects him with her usual pert sarcasms and practiced indifference. Throughout the long scene that follows, Connie's terror slowly builds. The fast-talking Arnold Friend insinuates himself into her thinking, attempting to persuade her that he's her "lover," his smoothtalking seductiveness finally giving way to threats of violence against Connie's family if she doesn't surrender to his desires. Oates places Connie inside the kitchen and Arnold Friend outside with only a locked screen door between them. While Friend could enter by force at any time, Oates emphasizes the seduction, the sinister singsong of Friend's voice: a demonic outsider, he has arrived to wrest Connie from the protective confines of her family, her home, and her own innocence. Oates makes clear that Friend represents Connie's initiation not into sex itself--she is already sexually experienced--but into sexual bondage: "I promise it won't last long," he tells her, "and you will like me the way you get to like people you're close to. You will. It's all over for you here." As feminist allegory; then, the story describes the beginning of a young and sexually attractive girl's enslavement within a conventional, male-dominated sexual relationship...

While in realistic terms, especially considering the story's source, Connie may, be approaching her actual death, in allegorical terms she is dying spiritually, surrendering her autonomous selfhood to male desire and domination. Her characterization as a typical girl reaching sexual maturity suggests that her fate represents that suffered by most young women-unwillingly and in secret terror--even in America in the 1960s. As a feminist allegory, then, "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?" is a cautionary tale, suggesting that young women are "going" exactly, where their mothers and grandmothers have already "been": into sexual bondage at the hands of a male "Friend."

Understanding Joyce Carol Oates, 1987: 101-02

II. Larry Rubin argues that Connie has fallen asleep in the sun and has a dream about a composite figure that symbolizes her fear of the adult world.

He discusses the references to sleep that frame the Arnold Friend episode and the nightmare quality of her inability to control the situation:

The fact that Connie recognizes the sensual music being broadcast on Arnold's car radio as being the same as that emanating from her own in the house provides another strong clue to his real nature--that of a dream-like projection of her erotic fantasies. His music and hers, Oates tells us, blend perfectly and indeed Arnold's voice is perceived by Connie as being the same as that of the disc jockey on the radio. Thus the protagonist's inner state of consciousness is being given physical form by her imagination.... Connie's initial response to her first view of Arnold tire night before., in the shopping center, was one of intense sexual excitement; now she discovers how dangerous that excitement can be to her survival as a person. Instinctively, she recoils; but the conflict between excitement and desire, on the one hand, and fear, on the other, leaves her will paralyzed, and she cannot even dial the phone for help. Such physical paralysis in the face of oncoming danger is a phenomenon familiar to all dreamers, like being unable to run from the monster because your legs won't respond to your will.

Finally, the rather un-devil-like tribute that Arnold pays Connie as she finally succumbs to his threats against her family and goes out of the house to him-"you're better than them [her family] because not a one of there would have done this for you" is exactly what poor, unappreciated Connie wants to hear. She is making a noble sacrifice, and in her dream she gives herself full credit for it.

Explicator 42 (1984): 57-59

¹ CASEBOOK Joyce Carol Oates's "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been"
From McMahan, Day and Funk's *Literature and the Writing Process 7th edition* Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice, 2005: 152, 164-168
http://www.bergen.edu/las/oates_questions.htm

J.Oates, WAYGWHYB - Four Critical Interpretations¹

III. Joyce M. Wegs contends that "Arnold is clearly a symbolic Satan.

As is usual with Satan, he is in disguise; the distortions in his appearance and behavior suggest not only that his identity is faked but also hint at his real self... When he introduces himself, his name too hints at his identity. For "friend" is uncomfortably close to "fiend"; his initials could well stand for Arch Fiend. The frightened Connie sees Arnold as "only half real": he "had driven up the driveway all right but had come from nowhere before that and belonged nowhere." Especially supernatural is his mysterious knowledge about her, her family, and her friends. At one point, he even seems to be able to see all the way to the barbecue which Connie's family is attending and to get a clear vision of what all the guests are doing.

Journal of Narrative Technique 5 (1975):69-70.

IV. But Mike Tierce and John Michael Crafton argue for Arnold as a savior or messiah figure. (and base their case on identifying Arnold with Bob Dylan, the popular singer to whom Oates dedicated the story.)

In the mid-sixties Bob Dylan's followers perceived him to be a messiah. According to his biographer [Anthony Scaduto], Dylan was a "rock-and-roll king." It is no wonder then that Arnold speaks with "the voice of the man on the radio," the disc jockey whose name, Bobby King, is a reference to "Bobby" Dylan, the "king" of rock-and-roll. Dylan was more than a "friend" to his listeners; he was "Christ revisited," "the prophet leading [his followers] into [a new] Consciousness." In fact, "people were making him an idol; . . . thousands of men and women, young and old, felt their lives entwined with his because they saw him as a mystic, a messiah who would lead them to salvation."

That Oates consciously associates Arnold Friend with Bob Dylan is clearly suggested by the similarities of their physical descriptions. Arnold's "shaggy, shabby black hair that looked crazy as a wig," his "long and hawklike" nose, his unshaven face, his "big and white" teeth, his lashes, "thick and black as if painted with a black tarlike material," and his size ("only an inch or so taller than Connie") are all characteristic of Bob Dylan....

Arnold is the personification of popular music, particularly Bob Dylan's music; and as such, Connie's interaction with him is a musically induced fantasy, a kind of "magic carpet ride" in a "convertible jalopy painted gold." Rising out of Connie's radio, Arnold Friend/Bob Dylan is a magical, musical messiah; he persuades Connie to abandon her father's house. As a manifestation of her own desires, he frees her from the limitations of a fifteen-year-old girl, assisting her maturation by stripping her of her childlike vision.

Studies in Short Fiction 22 (1985):220, 223

¹ CASEBOOK Joyce Carol Oates's "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been"
From McMahan, Day and Funk's *Literature and the Writing Process* 7th edition Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice, 2005: 152, 164-168
http://www.bergen.edu/las/oates_questions.htm