



Where Are You
Going, Where
Have You Been?

Biography: Joyce Carol Oates

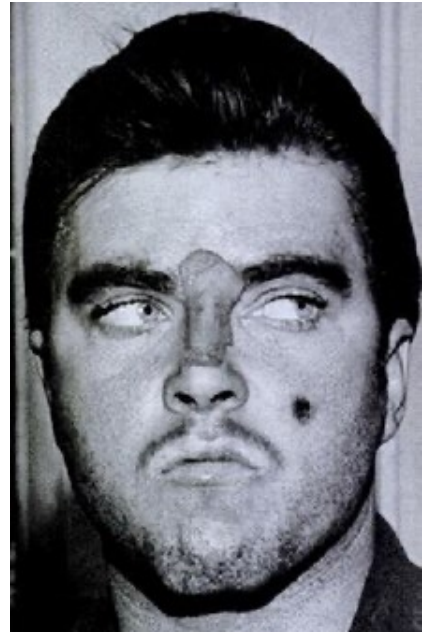


- Born in 1938 and grew up in Millersport, New York
- Was valedictorian at Syracuse, went on to get her MA and PhD
- Published her first collection of short stories in 1963 and her first novel in 1964
- Five of her novels/collections of short stories have been finalists for Pulitzers
- Has won the National Book Award, two O. Henry Awards, and a National Humanities Medal
- Has published 58 novels
- Currently a Professor Emerita at Princeton

Background

“The Pied Piper of Tuscon”/Charles Schmid

- Killed three teenage girls in the early 60s
- The case was widely covered by *Playboy* and *Life* magazines
- He was known for seducing women
- He often pretended to be younger than he was
- He was a short man, and stuffed paper in his shoes to appear taller



“The Charismatic mass murderer drops into the background and his innocent victim, a fifteen-year-old, moves into the foreground. She becomes the true protagonist of the tale, courting and being courted by her fate, a self-styled 1950s pop figure, alternately absurd and winning. There is no suggestion in the published story that “Arnold Friend” has seduced and murdered other young girls, or even that he necessarily intends to murder Connie” (critic Jaclyn Mullins, discussing the story).

“For Bob Dylan”

Inspired in part by the Dylan song, “It’s All Over Now, Baby Blue”



- There is a lot of speculation over who or what “Baby Blue” refers to, with many hypothesizing Joan Baez (who he was in a relationship with) or other folk singers
- Most scholars however tend to believe that “Baby Blue” refers to Dylan’s folk audience and that the song functions as a farewell as he was moving in a more rock and roll direction musically
 - It was infamously the final acoustic song he played at Newport Folk Festival in 1965 where he had controversially played some songs on the electric guitar. It was the last song he played at the festival until he returned 37 years later

“For Bob Dylan”



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bM1TrEYOaNc>

“My sweet little blue-eyed girl,” he said in a half-sung sigh that had nothing to do with her brown eyes....” (273).

“The beauty of the song is that you can never quite comprehend it. We know only that something is over: “The lover who just walked out your door / Has taken all his blankets from the floor / The carpet, too, is moving under you.” A powerful evocation of losing control, of losing everything.

Essentially, the song is about mortality. In my story, which was first published in 1966 and many times reprinted, the life that my teenage character knew is about to end. It seemed fitting to dedicate my story to Bob Dylan.”

-Joyce Carol Oates

“It’s All Over Now, Baby Blue”

You must leave now, take what you need, you
think will last
But whatever you wish to keep, you better grab
it fast
Yonder stands your orphan with his gun
Crying like a fire in the sun
Look out the saints are comin' through
And it's all over now, baby blue

The highway is for gamblers, better use your
sense
Take what you have gathered from coincidence
The empty-handed painter from your streets
Is drawing crazy patterns on your sheets
This sky, too, is folding under you
And it's all over now, baby blue

All your seasick sailors, they are rowing home
All your reindeer armies, are all going home
The lover who just walked out your door
Has taken all his blankets from the floor
The carpet, too, is moving under you
And it's all over now, baby blue

Leave your stepping stones behind, something
calls for you
Forget the dead you've left, they will not follow
you
The vagabond who's rapping at your door
Is standing in the clothes that you once wore
Strike another match, go start anew
And it's all over now, baby blue

Music in the story

“They sat at the counter and crossed their legs at the ankles, their thin shoulders rigid with excitement, and listened to the music that made everything so good: the music was always in the background, like music at a church service; it was something to depend upon” (260).

“His words were not angry but only part of an incantation. The incantation was kindly...” (273)

- Rhythm & repetition
- Invocation of music/song
- Use of anaphora—repetition of a word at the beginning of a phrase

“Don’t hem in on me, don’t hog,
don’t crush, don’t bird dog, don’t
trail me”

“I mean, anybody can break through a screen door and glass and wood and iron or anything else if he needs to, anybody at all, and specially Arnold Friend. If the place got lit up with a fire, honey, you’d come runnin’ out into my arms, right into my arms an’ safe at home--like you knew I was your lover and I’d stopped fooling around. I don’t mind a nice shy girl but I don’t like no fooling around.” **Part of these words were spoken with a slight rhythmic lilt, and Connie somehow recognized them -- the echo of a song from last year, about a girl rushing into her boyfriend's arms and coming home again --**”

ARNOLD FRIEND

AN OLD FIEND

An Old Fiend?

- He wears a wig, which could be a way to cover up horns
- It's also implied that he wears makeup, and similarly, his eyes are always blocked by mirrored sunglasses
- He has trouble balancing in his boots, possibly because of hooves
- He doesn't seem able to enter the house
- He can't lie??
- 33, 19, 17
 - Count 33 books back in the Old Testament (cause you know, devil) and you get Judges 19:17
 - ““And when he raised his eyes, he saw the traveler in the open square of the city; and the old man said, “Where are you going, and where do you come from?””
 - Or, it could be John 19:17:
 - “And he bearing his cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull” (Jesus was 33 when he died)
 - Or, an oldie but a goody, add them all up and you get 69
 - Possibly ages, 33 is Arnold, 19 & 17 ages of previous victims implying 15 (Connie's age) is next

A Levite and His Concubine (Judges, 19:17)

A man (the Levite) and “his concubine” are traveling, they end up in the square of a city, looking for somewhere to stay, when they are approached by an old man (19:17).

He takes them to his house, where they spend the night, but some “wicked men” of the city come and pound on the door, demanding that the old man send out the Levite so they “can have sex with him.”

The old man refuses on the basis that the Levite is his guest, but offers to send out his virgin daughter and the man’s concubine.

They send out the concubine and the men rape her. In the morning, the woman collapses onto the threshold, where she dies.

Parallels?

- June the innocent, virginal daughter
- Connie as the concubine
- Sent into the world by a father who doesn't pay attention, doesn't care?

Interpretations:

1. Arnold is a serial killer, Connie is his next victim
 - a. In this interpretation we see a literal loss of innocence
2. Arnold is some representation of the devil
 - a. Since we don't know what actually happens to Connie at the end, this interpretation seems to imply an allegory of loss of innocence: Connie seems to be a martyr in some way, but we don't exactly know what she's losing and what her ultimate fate is
 - Quote from Oates:** "Connie is shallow, vain, silly, hopeful, doomed—but capable nonetheless of an unexpected gesture of heroism at the story's end. Her smooth-talking seducer, who cannot lie, promises her that her family will be unharmed if she gives herself to him; and so she does. The story ends abruptly at the point of her "crossing over." We don't know the nature of her sacrifice, only that she is generous enough to make it."
3. Arnold is a satyr from Greek myth; Connie is a seduced nymph
 - a. Satyrs associated with lechery, bestial qualities, brutal sexuality

More Interpretations

4. It was all a dream.

- After her family leaves for the barbeque, Connie sits out in the sun, begins daydreaming about boys, and gets sleepy.
- Goes inside and lies on the bed listening to the radio for an hour and a half
- She feels disconnected, entering a dreamlike state. As a result, it's argued that the events of her encounter with Arnold Friend are entirely fictional (i.e. dreamed up)
- Larry Rubin: "An encounter in which Connie's intense desire for total sexual experience runs headlong into her innate fear of such experience"
- "The episode with Arnold Friend, then, may be viewed as the vehicle for fulfillment of Connie's deep-rooted desire for ultimate sexual gratification, a fearsome business which, for the uninitiated female, may involve destruction of the person. Unsophisticated as she is, Connie's subconscious is aware of this danger, and her dream conveys this conflict. Thus, Oates's achievement in this story lies in her ability to convey all these subtleties while still creating the illusion of a real-life experience" (Rubin 60).