

Analysis of abduction by shelagh delaney essay



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Sometimes, it can be very difficult to deal with other people's expectations of who you should be, and what you should do with your life. Yet, something even more challenging is dealing with one's own expectations of who you want to be. This is the challenge the young brother faces in the short story "Abduction" by Shelagh Delaney. In this short story we hear the tragic account of how an older sister in her attempts to give her younger brother a careless life, slowly drives him away from everything he holds dear in life. At first, when she takes her brother with her to live in London, his future seems bright.

He gets an education, a good job and all the money he needs and more from his sister Ann. Yet, when the brother falls in love and tries to break with the protective environment Ann continuously strives to keep him in, he is tragically unsuccessful and as a result loses his desire to live. The story is told through a first person narrator. This is seen at the beginning of the text where he/she introduces us to her/his view on the events leading up to the young brother's death: "I contemplated other means of humiliating her [Ann] and exposing her for what she was - a killer"(9-10).

From this quote, one can see that the narrator has very strong emotions towards the brother, which makes me believe that he/she could be one of his other siblings: "He'd been born late in our parent's marriage"(35). This choice of narrative results in us having a restricted point of view of the events. In the narrator's point of view Ann "kidnapped her sixteen-year-old brother"(34) and thus the whole story is described as "abduction" as the title refers to. This results in us sympathizing with the narrator's feelings for

and depiction of the other characters. This is best emphasized through the portrayal of Ann.

There is no doubt that the narrator has a very negative attitude towards Ann. She is described as a woman who “ uses money and the power of her unwavering self-assurance”(11-12) as weapons. She is a very “ proud”(13) and hard-working woman who expects much of herself and her surroundings, and who has a very clear insight on what “ kind of life she has always wanted”(31). Anything not complying with her idea of life is simply “ not good enough”(25), and she does not hesitate in judging other people’s choices or ways of life: “ She only regretted that most people don’t have the sense to do what she’d done (...) and get themselves sterilised. ”(20-23)

Ann tries to convince her younger brother that she can give him everything he will ever need and a much “ better future than”(47) than their parents could ever give him. At first it is as “ a wonderful life”(59) with Ann’s “ generous allowance”(59) that seems completely harmless and as a helping hand in the beginning. Yet her handling of his money gives her a strong control over everything around him from his choice of education and his job to his clothes. In short, she does everything she can to prevent him from growing up and becoming an independent individual, especially through not allowing him to become responsible for his own money.

To her, he must always remain “ the family baby”(60). In due course, the brother becomes very reluctant to this control. When he first agrees to come with her to London, he is a young naive teenager completely unsure of what he wants in life and thus trusts his older sister rather than his parents: “ Like

most teenagers he hadn't much confidence in his other and father and Ann, his sister, had all the answers"(37-39). When he becomes older, he struggles to obtain his own independence, yet he still tries to live up to his sister's expectations especially concerning his media studies: " He thought he despised it [media studies].

But he knew his sister expected something of him"(50-51). He " ridicules them [his studies] in his heart"(63) but still he continues to strive for his sister's approval. He does manage to break free from some of her control when she starts buying him clothes. He feels " like a fool"(71) when he wears it, and he even dumps his new briefcase as " rubbish"(71). This shows us that the brother does not care about all the things she gives him; they are like rubbish to him. He slowly begins to pull away from his sister and begins to form his own life with his girlfriend Marianne but still Ann tries to keep control of him by trying to interfere when they are deciding on whether to have a baby.

She cannot let go of her brother and cannot accept him living with another woman than her. She becomes so obsessively possessive of him that Marianne begins to question whether she is his mother: " She's more like a possessive mother than a sister"(81). The brother rejects this yet Ann does treat him like her son, her baby. This is where Ann's choice of sterilization becomes an interesting fact. Why did she choose to become sterilized when she " loves children"(19) and specializes in paediatrics?

Well the text does say that she made this decision as " a young woman"(21). Her extreme motherly attitude towards her younger brother could be a sign

that maybe she has regretted this. This is further emphasized through her “doting”(87) relationship towards his brother and Marianne’s daughter, whom they chose to have despite Ann’s wishes. When Ann is reminded that she is merely the girl’s aunt she refuses to acknowledge it: “ Reminded that she was (...) not mother and father combined, Ann simply sneered. She knew what children needed and was more aware than they were of this particular child’s needs”(89-91).

Even though the brother tries his best to be happy with his new family, he finds himself unable to deal with his sister’s extreme control and turns to alcoholism. He returns to Ann’s house where Ann finds herself completely unable to accept her brother’s drinking problem: “ Her little brother couldn’t have turned into a alcoholic without her noticing”(97). She supports his drinking and even buys his booze. She is utterly blind towards her brother’s struggle for his life and ignores the problem. In her perfect illusion, there are no problems, she cannot handle: “ So long as everything was left in her hands everything would be all right”(62).

In the end, the brother finds himself longing for his family and begins to wish he could “ start all over again”(120). When he has lost the people dearest to him, he can finally see how important they are in his life: “ Could he keep the beautiful bits of his life, his daughter and his wife, and dispose of the rest? ”(120-21). When he is about to die, he dreams of the life he could have had with his mother and father, his daughter and wife. He has allowed his sister to decide who he should be and thus rejects his own wish of who he wants to be. The life he wants becomes a lost dream, and as a result he can no longer live with himself.