

A novel perspective

[Literature](#), [Novel](#)



When we hear crimes of murder, rape or abduction of women, we usually judge the case relying on the credibility of those involved. In accordance to evidence law, we try to establish credibility of the personalities involved such as the offender, the victim, and the witnesses to see who is telling the truth. However, as trial prevails, relying on credibility sometimes acquits the offender, after presenting enough evidence to destroy the credibility of the victim. In Oates' short story, "Where Are You Going and Where Have You Been?" the author presents an example of a crime where the criminal could be easily acquitted based on evidence of the victim's willful submission to the desires of the offender. However, revealing the hypnotism behind the crime, the author implies a way to judge crimes using a novel perspective. Similar to the process of providing evidence in a trial, the author builds foundation of the case through characterization. She establishes the personality of the main character named Connie. In the introduction, Connie is strongly contrasted with her stereotypical sister, June.

She is described as far more independent than the latter, making her a strong and willful character. Based on this, it is easy to think that Connie is partly responsible for whatever she experiences from her abductor, Arnold Friend. In addition, her strolling activities with her friends, not to mention her acquaintances with men, add to the denigration of her character. Her choice to be on her own while her friends go different ways suggests her adventurous nature. Also, her beauty makes it easy for her to attract attention especially from boys.

Furthermore, occasions where she displays split personality, "Everything about her had two sides to it" (408), could emphasize Connie's inclination to

hang out with guys like Arnold Friend. While most aspects of the characterization could lead one to believe that Connie is to be blamed for her fate, the plot of the story, supported by the dialogues, reveals the truth about the crime. The development of the action shows Connie's resistance to the will of the criminal. During the time Arnold tries to convince Connie to get out of the house, Connie repeatedly dismisses him, telling him that she does not recognize him at all.

She even tries to use the phone to ask for help. As employed, the dialogues support the fact that Connie is taken against her will, and that she should not be blamed for the events that follow. Some points leading to the abduction can be established against Arnold Friend. Specifically, Arnold Friend's age, which is twice that of Connie, shows the man's sole accountability for the crime. Moreover, considering the fact that they are not of the same age confirms Connie's dissociation from the man. Other evidences confirm that the crime was perfectly planned by a hard criminal.

Specifically, the car, which bears Arnold's name, is used to show outward identification, thus convincing Connie of his honest intention. Conversely, this could be used by Arnold as evidence of his innocence. It is easy to believe that if he really plans to abduct Connie, Arnold will not put his identification on his car. However, the judge should see the real motives behind the eager display of identity, which are to convince the victim of the abductor's "honest intention," and even to deny later allegations of abduction.

Considering the car as evidence, it can be considered that the crime is carefully planned, thus adding degree to the sentence if Arnold gets convicted. Further to the evidences provided, analyzing the crime in view of hypnosis could provide a different angle to the story. The way Connie behaves at the end, as she deliberately follows orders from Arnold, illustrates the latter's use of hypnosis. Just before her complete submission, Connie attempts to call the police, shut the door, scream out loud, but feels too weak to do so. This weakness can be attributed to the hypnosis that Arnold uses upon her.

Particularly, Connie's cold feeling, and her sudden weakness to even touch the phone's dial are signs of being under hypnosis. The narrator of the story recounts instances when Connie feels " a wave of dizziness rise in her ..." when she realizes how old Arnold and Ellie are, when she stares at the " x" sign that Arnold makes, and when she looks at Arnold's face as Ellie mumbles words from the backgroundmusicin the car. The final part, where Connie submits to Arnold's embrace and closes the door of their house shows her fully hypnotized condition.

Under hypnosis, Arnold easily convinces her to head into the car and elope with him, as if they two have a special relationship. Thus, to a bystander, this scene would make it look as if Connie really knows the guy, and that she intends to come with him in his car. This evidence, when presented later in court, could convince anyone of Connie's willful consent, and could thus free the criminal. Revealing the element of hypnosis, the author suggests a novel

perspective in judging crimes especially those related to Connie's case, where the abductor is much older, and is a complete stranger.

Showing symptoms of hypnotism, the author provides some insights one may use seeing a similar scenario in real life. There are times when one sees some couples who look strange, for instance, the woman is too young for the man, or the girl looks too submissive or too innocent. Although this thought does not apply to all appearing in this guise, it may be wise to observe if hypnotism is present in such cases. This way, one may help solve the problem of heinous crimes committed against women and children.

Further to the symptoms of hypnosis that the author presents, tracing the ways by which hypnosis is employed provides readers some ideas on how one can be placed under hypnosis, and consequently, how one can rid of it. In the story, Arnold employs different means to put Connie under hypnosis. One is through the music he and Ellie play in the car. Notably, the mention of music in the scenes where Arnold sees Connie for the first time and when he is in front of Connie's house suggests the offender's use of music to induce hypnosis.

As Connie listens to the music, it makes her feel so good, "like music at a church service" (408) which she could depend upon. Tapping to the tune of music from Ellie's radio Arnold makes Connie feel disoriented to the things around her. She suddenly diverts attention to different things, like asking Arnold's age, and becomes more aware of space than before. These behaviors show a significant change in her, thus implying abnormality of her state. In addition to the music, the "x" sign which Arnold makes in the air is

likewise used to hypnotize her. “ After his hand fell back to his side the X was still in the air, almost visible” (415).

This illustrates Arnold’s use of hand sign similar to a pendulum during process of hypnosis to intensify Connie’s submission. Afterwards, “ all ... things did not come together” (415) for Connie, and she finds it difficult to make sense of things, including the way Arnold talks and taps his finger to the beat of the music. The final part which implies Connie’s hypnotism implies the use of a novel perspective in dealing with crimes in the modern society. As the story shows, putting subjects under hypnosis allows the offender to conduct the crime without force, thus avoiding accountability for it later on.

Applying this to reality, people who serve as witnesses to the closeness between the offender and the victim at the time of hypnosis will not shed light to the case because what they see is a mere facade, which happens under the control of the offender. Therefore, only the victims’ recall of what actually happened can help to convict a criminal. Until then, statutory evidence establishing credibility of the accused and the victims will not serve to bring justice. Instead, the use of a novel perspective such as uncovering occurrence of hypnotism proves to be the best way in dealing with crimes.