

Where are you going,
where have you been
and paul's case
essay



In "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?" and "Paul's Case," both main characters display similar qualities that lead them to encounters that inevitably destroy their innocence. Due to the ending of both teens lives one is able to come to the conclusion that their death was a result of no parental figure in their lives to instill morals and restrict freedom, there is a desire for romance at a young age, and a great deal of naivety in both teens. The striking similarities in the plot and characters of the two short stories "Where are You Going, Where Have You Been?" and "Paul's Case" show similarities in their negative conclusions.

In "Paul's Case" the main character is living by his own morals. Paul's has decided for himself what is right and what is wrong. Paul was raised by his widowed father his whole life, "I happen to know that he was born in Colorado, only a few months before his mother died out there of a long illness" (Cather 537). Although the reader sees Paul's father as an honest man who is trying to better himself in this world through perseverance and hard work, Paul is trying to move up the echelons of society through stealing and lying.

This is stated to the reader by Cather on page 548, "The firm of Denny & Carson announced that the boy's father had refunded the full amount of the theft," and on page 546 after Paul has taken the bank notes, "here he was, the thing done; and this time there would be no awakening, no (parental) figure at the top of the stairs." These quotes show the differences in the morals that Paul's father had instilled upon him and the evident lack of morals that Paul's father failed to instill in him.

Paul knows that there is nothing his father can do to punish him, and if his father can find a way to adequately punish his son, Paul will definitely deny ever feeling punished. Similarly, in "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?" Connie has a less than perfect family life. Her family consists of a mother that is trusting, and a perfect sister that her mother adores and expects Connie to measure up to. Her father is never around, except to eat dinner, read the newspaper, and sleep. Connie feels that her family cares nothing about her life.

He didn't bother talking much to them" (Oates 694), regarding Connie's family. Connie likes attention and when she does not get it from her family, she tries to get attention from boys. Connie spends weekends at the mall or sneaking over to the restaurant where the older kids can be found. She is able to sneak around because she has a lot of freedom. Like Paul, Connie does not have anyone telling her no, no one to ask questions of repercussion, and if Connie's mom or Paul's dad have decided on punishment the kids are not willing to wear their worries on their sleeves.

Connie lies every time she is going out and manages never to get caught until it is too late. "She always drew thick clear lines between herself and such girls, and her mother was simple and kindly enough to believe her" (Oates 695). Connie's parents never cared enough to interfere in her life or question her outings. At a young age Connie was always daydreaming about boys, relationships, and romantic thoughts. These thoughts demonstrate Connie's immoral behavior at such a young age. It is clear that both characters had poor relationships with their parents.

Their parents were not involved in their child's lives enough, or there to set any boundaries, or arm their kids with the proper morals that may have saved their children. Along with poor morals, the teens strove to find romance at a young age. In Connie's case she is involved with a man whom has more on his agenda than she is willing to be involved in, while in "Paul's Case" his romanticism lies within a social class. Paul's desire is to attain a higher echelon of social status through any means necessary. Paul sees the actors, singers, and other aristocrats as the passion of life.

Paul thinks that these people are the lucky ones whom are living the way he should be, he hates the way that he lives and attempts to subdue those feelings by way of replacing them with dreams and lies he lives out within his mind. "It was at the theatre and Carnegie Hall the Paul really lived; the rest was but a sleep and a forgetting" (Cather 542). Paul had lied to schoolmates about his life, stating that he was about to travel or commence on an exciting journey, only to be making excuses for his presence at school the next day: "...

In Paul's world, the natural nearly always wore the guise of ugliness, that a certain element of artificiality seemed to him necessary in beauty. Perhaps it was because of his experience of life elsewhere was so full of Sabbath-school picnics, petty economies, wholesale advice as to how to succeed in life, and the inescapable odors of cooking, that he found this existence so alluring... so attractive... It would be difficult to put it strongly enough how convincingly the stage theatre entrance of that theatre was for Paul the actual portal of Romance. (Cather 543).

Paul thinks of this romance all the time. His days are spent suppressing his own unromantic life and replacing those memories with those of the fake romanticism of his own imagination. In “Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?” Connie spends her days and nights dreaming of boys and romantic scenes: “Dreaming and dazed with the warmth about her as if this were a kind of love, the caress of love, and her mind slipped over onto thoughts of the boy she had been with the night before and how nice he had been, how sweet it always was” (Oates 696).

Connie thinks about romance most of the time, this is how Connie gets in a compromising situation. If Connie were not sneaking around Arnold Friend would not have noticed her. Whenever Connie is mentioned, there is music in the air – it is a romantic escape for her – that is how Arnold lures Connie out of her house with his portable radio and into his domain. “Ellie’s got a radio, see. And now Connie began to hear the music, it was the same program that was playing inside the house” (Oates 697). After they discuss music for a while, forcing Connie to dawdle in the doorway rather than get into the protection of her house.

Connie cannot figure out whether she likes Arnold, but her desire for romance overpowers her logical thinking in this situation. At this point Connie is already a victim, but she is so naive that she cannot see it. The two main characters are similarly seen as naive about what the future is about to bring them. Paul is naive because he sees the actors, singers, aristocrats, all living in a city of wealth, a place in society in which he wants to take up space. His social space is obviously different from that of his inheritance.

Paul realizes that he might never pass as a person whom was born in wealth, but he believes that he can carry on his life amongst them without them ever knowing. “ He doubted the reality of his past... He was not in the least abashed or lonely. He had no special desire to meet or know any of these people; all he demanded was the right to look on and conjecture, to watch the pageant” (Cather 547). Paul fails to realize these people had to work hard to get where they are, they had to endure hard times, care for families, and persevere.

Paul’s naivety shows true when he reaches New York, a city full of wealthy people. The wealthy socialites Paul wants to become a part of will never admit a man of no moral such as Paul. They did not steal their way to New York City, they did not have their father cover for their thefts, and they did not have to lie of their upbringing or achievements. The very people Paul wants to become are the most likely people to disapprove of Paul’s actions. “ He had only to glance down at his attire to reassure himself that here it would be impossible for anyone to humiliate him” (Cather 547).

This quote clearly demonstrates Paul’s naivety; he believes that his clothes are making the man. In “ Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been? ” it is clear that Arnold had planned what he was going to do to Connie, but to Connie this wasn’t obvious. Arnold was able to lure Connie over a threshold that admits her into danger. Connie is exceptionally naive when it comes to boys, to the point where she believes everything that they tell her. When Arnold Friend arrives at Connie’s house unexpectedly she is not astonished by the fact that he knows where she lives and that she has no idea who he is.

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He begins by being a shady character, telling her that she is cute. Connie should have locked the door and called police at this point, but she was too immersed in being flattered by Arnold. “ Connie blushed a little, because the glasses made it impossible for her to see just what this boy was looking at” (Oates 697). He continues to call her “ honey” and insist that she go for a ride with him. At this point in the story Arnold knows her name, all about her family and friends, and still she has a chance to run and save herself.

Once Connie has realized that Arnold is not a kid and he has bad intentions, she has carried on too far to turn back, she has no idea where she is about to go. She is about to die due to her own naive mind. The two characters in these short stories inevitably become victims, not by choice, but by situations that could have been prevented. The two teens face many challenges of growing up lacking a father or mother figure to help guide them along the way. This is very difficult when trying to mold oneself as a person. The teens are unable to decipher the difference between right and wrong when put in romantic situations.

The teens are enamored by the thought of romance in their youth. When the teens should be worrying about school and pimples these two teens are daydreaming of boys or operas. Lastly, these teens are very naive, even though they are young and inexperienced, they should have better sense than to steal money from your employer or to trust a strange man whom is twice her age. The prominent similarities in the characters traits prove their loss of innocence. One must assume that both of the teen’s deaths could have been prevented.