

Smooth talk

Literature



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“ Smooth Talk” is a film adapted from the short story “ Where are you going? Where have you been?” by the author Joyce Carol Oates. The short story was first published on 1966 while the film was released on 1985. The protagonist “ Connie” in the short story was a fifteen year old young lady who has two sides of herself; one side if for her home and the other is for outside her home or anywhere else aside from home. Connie’s sister named June is the opposite of her. While June is being praised by her mother which is also different from Connie, Connie on the other hand was a young girl who enjoys the company of her girl friends. Together with her girl friends, they enjoy watching movie or have a walk to shopping plaza.

In the short story written by Joyce Carol Oates, Connie’s character was described as a young girl who is concern with the way she looks. Her character was centered in her physical appearances and gestures and not so much of her attitude and feelings. It was evident in the short story when Joyce Oates describes Connie’s “ quick, nervous giggling habit of craning her neck to glance into mirrors or checking other people’s faces to make sure her own was all right” (Joyce Carol Oates. 1966).

The vulnerability of Connie’s character was very present in the story when Arnold Friend’s enters the picture and forces her to come with her. Arnold Friend is described as a “ suspicious stranger” whom she saw once and suddenly knows almost everything about her and herfamily. Connie at a very young age was susceptible to Arnold Friend who wanted her to simply go out and have a ride with him. Her character in the short story define a weak young girl who faces a man she doesn’t even know and mocks her up until

she get loose of everything on her mind. Joyce Oates was precise about Connie's vulnerability when she describes how

Connie helplessly tries to let go of Arnold Friend but vulnerably ends up with his arms. Indeed, the short story was in fact a manifestation of how powerless Connie was in terms of her handling Arnold Friend's attitude towards her. Connie could have had done something but with her vulnerability as a young girl she gives up something of herself.

On the other hand, "Smooth Talk" visually presented the short story to film. Connie's character was evidently showed in the film as a young fifteen year old girl who flirts around with boys and loves to cruise the shopping malls with her friends. Connie's character was expanded in the film, adding up some new things that were not mentioned in the short story. Nonetheless, Connie's being vain and flirt was still evidently in the film. Her suspicious stranger was more powerful in the film seducing her with his smooth-talking way.

In the film, Arnold Friend's character involves sexual desire for Connie and his character was full of aggressiveness to seduce Connie. Connie on the other hand, is a young girl who is silly and flirtatious with other guys but come one Sunday morning when she was left alone at home and was confronted with the suspicious stranger, Connie's vulnerability was evidently showed. Her character as a young girl who has two sides of herself was helplessly alone and afraid, trying to overcome Arnold Friend's seduces. While she was trying to figure out what to do and how to let loose of the

stranger, the smooth-talking man tries to seduce her and consistently tries to win her.

Part of the film was entirely focused on the situation on which Connie was confronted by the stranger just like in the short story. Though there were some minimal changes in the film that wasn't mentioned in the short story, "Smooth Talk" by Tom Cole gave justice to Joyce Oates's "Where are you? Where have you been?". Connie's character in the short story was more innocent than her character in the film. Although it was the same, her character in the film portrayed by Laura Dern was "lavishly and lovingly textured". (Joyce Carol Oates. 2007)

Basically, the mere fact that a short story is being read while the film was being watched evidently showed that Connie's character of vulnerability was formulated both in the short story and in the film. It was clearly defined and translated in the short story how Connie's weak character gave her the risk of giving herself up for Arnold Friend. While in the film, both Connie and Arnold's characters were emerged consistently as described in the short story. The vulnerability of Connie in the film is just somewhat the same in the short story. But Connie's being naïve of the things that happens around her was clearly specified in the short story.

Nevertheless, "Smooth Talk" and "Where are you? Where are you going?" is both a masterpiece in their own rights and abilities. The two is not only about the reality of a teenager growing up in a harsh world outside her home but also it imparted to us the idea of some issues that runs inside a family or inside home that most of us take for granted.

The adaptation was visually presented well from the short story and just the same, both gave the justice on its own. Connie's character provides us the imagination of how innocent and free spirited she was as a young girl that in the end lose herself to a man she doesn't even know but who knows her very well. There lies the mystery or the story by Joyce Carol Oates.

Works Cited

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