infinite adjusted yet somehow effortless mechanics of the feathers played idle designs of color, no two alike, designs executed, it seemed, in a controlled rapture, with a joy that hung level in the air above and behind him. Yet these birds bred in the millions and were exterminated as pests. ... He was robes in this certainty: that the God who had lavished such craft upon these worthless birds would not destroy His whole creation by refusing to let David live forever. (149-50)

Obviously, this passage draws directly on Matthew 10:31 ("Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows"), and it is not the only such reference in Updike's work; the poem "Duties and Beasts," in Telephone Poles, for example, also includes a mention of the sparrow's fall. And like the Biblical passage, David's epiphany derives essentially from an intimation of immortality, rather than from any empirical "proof."

It is possible, then, to see David's "moment of truth"—or, for that matter, Ozzie's—as simply an ironic instance of naive self-deception. David and Ozzie are, after all, children, with children's intellectual limitations. Irrespective, however, of whether they are factually correct, their beliefs are sincere and strongly felt. Surrounded by various forms of indecisive accommodation to the communal confusions of our time, these boys are representative men. In another sense, though, they are quite atypical: by virtue of their innocence and idealism, their intuitive vision. Indeed, the two boys embody their authors' mutual implication that spiritual fulfillment may now be achievable only through just such a transcendent, child-like faith.

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CRACKING THE SECRET CODE IN OATES'S "WHERE ARE YOU GOING, WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN?"

Mark Robson's biblical interpretation of the numbers 33, 19, 17 in Oates's "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?" is more ingenious than convincing.\(^1\) Emblazoned on the side of his jalopy, "these numbers," Arnold Friend announces, "are a secret code,"\(^2\) whose meaning, he implies, Connie should readily comprehend. Oates, unfortunately, never explains the code's meaning; and Robson's contention that the numbers refer to passages in Judges and Genesis obscures rather than clarifies the code's significance. But when the sum of the numbers—sixty-nine—is inter-

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Interpreted as yet another indication of Arnold Friend’s sexual deviancy, the secret code underscores Arnold’s intention of raping and murdering Connie whom he allegedly wants to take “just for a ride” (p. 43).

In context, the passage containing Arnold’s secret code reads as follows:

She [Connie] said, “What’s all that stuff painted on your car?”

“Can’tcha read it?” He [Arnold] opened the door very carefully, as if he were afraid it might fall off. He slid out just as carefully, planting his feet firmly on the ground, the tiny metallic world in his glasses slowing down like gelatine hardening, and in the midst of it Connie’s bright green blouse. “This here is my name, to begin with,” he said. ARNOLD FRIEND was written in tarlike black letters on the side, with a drawing of a round, grinning face that reminded Connie of a pumpkin, except it wore sunglasses. “I wanna introduce myself, I’m Arnold Friend and that’s my real name and I’m gonna be your friend, honey, and inside the car’s Ellie Oscar, he’s kinda shy.” Ellie brought his transistor radio up to his shoulder and balanced it there. “Now, these numbers are a secret code, honey,” Arnold Friend explained. He read off the numbers 33, 19, 17 and raised his eyebrows at her to see what she thought of that, but she didn’t think much of it. The left rear fender had been smashed and around it was written, on the gleaming gold background: DONE BY CRAZY WOMAN DRIVER. Connie had to laugh at that. Arnold Friend was pleased at her laughter and looked at her. “Around the other side’s a lot more — you wanna come and see them?” (p. 41)

Contending that the numbers have more than “singular significance,” Professor Robson argues that the secret code derives from the nineteenth chapters of Judges and Genesis. As the thirty-third book from the end of the Old Testament, Judges 19:17, which reads “When he raised his eyes he got to see the man, the traveler, in the public square of the city. So the old man said: ‘Where are you going, and where do you come from?’”3 provides, according to Robson, both the title for Oates’s story and the following analog to its plot: “Judges 19 concerns a man of the tribe of Levi who searches out and returns home with his concubine. Similarly, Connie has been the concubine of the devil (Arnold) in Oates’s story, and he searches for her to embark on a journey.”

Although a slight correspondence exists between the story’s title and Judges 19:17, the shared expression “where are you going?” is insufficient evidence that the title derives from Judges. Had Oates wished to link the secret code with Judges 19:17, she would likely have chosen the numbers 7, 19, 17 rather than 33, 19, 17 since Judges is the seventh book from the beginning of the Old Testament. For Oates to number the books in reverse order, as Robson would have it, while keeping the chapters and verses in proper sequence, would needlessly complicate the code. Furthermore, for Arnold Friend to place an obscure biblical reference on his jalopy alongside

“a drawing of a round grinning face... [with] sunglasses” and expressions like “Done by Crazy Woman Driver” and “Man the Flying Saucers” (p. 41) would be inconsistent with his character and his expressed intentions of being Connie’s lover. And finally, to see Judges 19 as an analog to Oates’s “Where Are You Going?” would be to misread the text of the story. Unlike the “man of the tribe of Levi who searches out and returns home with his concubine,” Arnold desires to drive Connie “out to a nice field, out in the country here where it smells so nice and it’s sunny” and to show her “what love is like, what it does” (p. 53). Professor Robson is misguided in concluding that Oates is indebted to Judges for the title, the plot and the secret code of her story.

Even more unconvincing than the alleged correspondences between the secret code and Judges 19:17 is Robson’s “simple numerical table” linking the code to Genesis 19:17:

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“If each letter is assigned the numerical value above it,” Robson states, “then Genesis is the only book in the Bible which adds up to 33. Genesis 19:17 is a warning to Lot from the angels to escape from Sodom. Arnold’s announcement of his secret code could well have been a warning for Connie to escape while she could.” While Genesis indeed adds up to 33 on Robson’s table, no correspondence at all exists between the specified biblical passage and Oates’s story. Arnold’s “announcement of his secret code as a warning for Connie to escape while she could” is diametrically opposed to the story’s text. Arnold’s warning to Connie that “it’s all over for you here” (p. 51) is not an inducement for her escape but a grim assurance that escape is impossible.

Although misguided in associating the secret code with Judges and Genesis, Professor Robson appropriately perceives Arnold Friend as “some kind of sexual deviant.” Had Robson known that Oates was influenced by the highly publicized account of an actual rapist and murderer in the Southwest, 4 he might have sought and found the key to the secret code, not in scripture, but in Arnold’s sexual deviancy. Arnold, who threatens to kill

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Mike Tiere and John Michael Crafton, in “Connie’s Tambourine Man: A New Reading of Arnold Friend” Studies in Short Fiction, 22 (1985), 223-224, suggest that Oates, in addition to “It’s All Over Now, Baby Blue,” may also have been indebted to Dylan’s “Mister Tambourine Man” and “Like a Rolling Stone.” And Joyce M. Wegs, in “‘Don’t You Know Who I Am?': The Grotesque in Oates’s ‘Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?’” from Critical Essays on Joyce Carol Oates, ed. Linda W. Wagner (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1979) p. 92, sees an analogy between Oates’s story and Dylan’s ballad, “It’s a Hard Rain’s a Gonna Fall.” In relating her story, Oates may have had in mind the opening line of “Hard Rain” which reads “Oh, where have you been, my blue-eyed son?” (italics mine).
Connie’s family if she doesn’t go with him, is modelled after Charles “Smitty” Schmid, charged with the rape and murder of three teenaged girls in the fall of 1965 in Tucson, Arizona. One need only read the account of Schmid in Life’s “The Pied Piper of Tucson” to conclude as did Tom Quirk in “A Source for ‘Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?’” that the parallels between Oates’s story and the published reports of the Schmid case are “too clear-cut to have been accidental.” The twenty-three year old Schmid, short and muscular, cruised Tucson’s Speedway Boulevard in a gold-colored car, wore pancake makeup, dyed his hair raven black, stuffed rags and folded cans into his boots to appear taller, and boasted of being paid by women whom he had taught “100 ways to make love.”

Although Oates’s story can be understood independently of its source, knowledge of Schmid’s deviant personality enables us to interpret with increased confidence the sexual implications of Arnold’s secret code. The simple sum of the numbers 33, 19, and 17 equals 69, a common sexual expression derived from the older French “six-a-neuf.” Seen as a sexual statement rather than a scriptural reference, the secret code is consistent with the other slang expressions on Arnold’s car, with his expressed interest in being Connie’s lover, and with several of Arnold’s other sexually laden statements such as “don’t squeeze in my chipmunk hole” and “don’t suck my popsicle” (p. 51).

Connie, in fact, may well have understood the code’s intended meaning. When asked “What’s all that stuff painted on your car?” Arnold responds with “Can’tcha read it?” Then, after reading off the numbers of the secret code, Arnold “raised his eyebrows at her to see what she thought of that,” but Connie “didn’t think much of it” (p. 51). Arnold, it is implied, expects Connie to understand the messages scrawled on his jalopy; and Connie, who “recognized most things about him [Arnold]” (p. 45), may indeed have interpreted the secret code as something akin to “that sleepy dreamy smile boys used to get across ideas they didn’t want to put into words” (p. 45).

With the sudden realization that Arnold “wasn’t a kid,” that “he was much older — thirty, maybe more” (p. 45), Connie is struck with a wave of dizziness and fear. Discerning at last Arnold’s evil intentions, Connie faintly whispers “maybe you two better go away” (p. 46). No longer resorting to signs and secret codes to express his dark designs, Arnold threatens “We ain’t leaving until you come with us” (p. 46). . . . and then states more softly, “I’m your lover. . . . I’m always nice at first, the first time. I’ll hold you so tight you won’t think you have to try to get away or pretend anything

9. Tierce and Crafton, p. 220, misinterpret the first number of Arnold’s secret code, 33, and his sign, an “x” that seems to hover in the air, as symbols for Christ. Their interpretation of the number, however, does not account for the rest of the code; and in context, the “x,” more likely than representing Christ, stands for “an unknown person, especially one who wishes to conceal his identity; a criminal,” Dictionary of American Slang with Supplement, p. 589.
because you’ll know you can’t. And I’ll come inside you where it’s all secret and you’ll give in to me and you’ll love me —” (p. 47).

Sick with the fear of not seeing her mother nor sleeping in her own bed again, Connie, as though standing in the safety of the other doorway, slowly opens the screen door and moves into the sunlight where Arnold Friend waits. Warned that “the place where you came from ain’t there anymore, and where you had in mind to go is cancelled out” (p. 52), Connie, too late, comes to the realization that her future has been inexorably shaped by her past. Having never been asked the crucial parental questions “Where are you going?” and “Where have you been?” Connie, frightened and alone, finds herself drawn by the crazed Arnold Friend into “the vast sunlit reaches of the land behind” (p. 54) him, where, though it is not dramatized, she will surely be raped, murdered, and buried.

In summation, the numbers 33, 19, 17 that comprise Arnold Friend’s secret code make perfect sense when interpreted, not as obscure scriptural references that neither Connie nor Arnold would understand, but as a not-so-subtle reference to a sexual expression consistent with the other slang statements on Arnold’s jalopy, his expressed interest in being Connie’s lover, and with Arnold’s sexually deviant personality.

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"TANDY": AT THE CORE OF WINESBURG

All of the stories Sherwood Anderson wrote for Winesburg, Ohio are illustrations of his theory of the grotesque. "Tandy" was the third such illustration he wrote, preceded only by "The Book of the Grotesque" itself, "Hands," and "Paper Pills."¹ He had originally intended to write a trilogy about a woman named Tandy Hard,² but instead used the character in Winesburg. Though "Tandy" was written early, it is placed very nearly at the center of the book, and is the shortest story of the collection. In this short central story, Anderson presents a statement of one of his most deeply held principles, and in doing so creates a unique variation on Winesburg's primary form. That primary form is defined in "The Book of the Grotesque," the framework Anderson built around his stories of the town and people of Winesburg. In it, "the old man" dreams and writes of "the beginning when the world was young," and poses his "elaborate theory" about the creation of truth from thought, and the subsequent twisting of truth. "It was his notion that the moment one of the people took one of the truths to himself, called it his truth, and tried to live his life by it,

². Luedtke, p. 532.