

My view of how I think *Heat* works in relation to *FOCUS*

In the *first* place we have a description of the twins “flying on their rusted old bicycles” and then, in opposition to that, the girls dead in the funeral parlour. This is a stark exposition of the tension that exists in the story as written by JCO: the tension, in a way, is between what’s happened and the way what’s happened is told to us and it comes from setting up this conflict between the benign picture of the tearaway girls and the shock of their being dead.

For me the *catalyst* comes in the paragraph:

“I never dreamt about Rhea and Rhoda so strange in their caskets sleeping out in the middle of a room where people could stare at them, shed tears and pray over them. I never dream about actual things, only things I don't know. Places I've never been, people I've never seen. Sometimes the person I am in the dream isn't me. Who it is, I don't know.”

this suggests a kind of detachment from what’s happening because one gets the sense that dreams are really important to the narrator – a powerful experience in which sometimes the person she is in the dream is not her. It’s this detachment that sets the tone of the story reinforced by statements like:

“when death comes for you, you sometimes know and sometimes don't.”

and:

“death was coming for them; it had to happen one way or another.”

And:

“We liked it that Rhea and Rhoda had been killed” even if they didn’t like it they were dead”

And the detachment seems reinforced by the prurience of “a few years later” Roger’s sister saying that he was built like a horse. This detachment isn’t the detachment you might feel reading a report of the murder in a newspaper, this is a detachment that involves us the readers.

The *unexpected* I think is obvious, especially with explosive moments like:

“In his car in his arms I'd feel my mind drift, after we'd made love...” near the end and juxtaposing that with her thinking about Rhoda and Roger.

The *synthesis* is in this idea of the narrator knowing what went on even though she wasn’t there: that the journey of the story is one into a mysterious relationship with fact.