Chapter Five

History as a Story of Power Relations: The International Scenes

The tacky little scandal! Vulgar and shameful set beside headlines of U.S. causalities in Korea, front-page photos of 'atom-bomb spies' Julius and Ethel Rosenberg sentenced to death in the electric chair, reports of hydrogen bomb tests in the Soviet Union. (Oates, Blonde 386)

This chapter is an attempt to explore Oates's representation of history as a story of power relations in the international arena. Such a story is traced in this chapter in terms of twentieth-century American power politics as represented in her work. A word that is worthy of adding to this introduction is that Oates's fiction, in the main, concentrates unfailingly on domestic scenes and issues. And it is this particular cause that accounts for the difference in size between this chapter and the previous chapter. There are, however, frequent allusions to some international events such as World Wars, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Gulf War, not to mention the recurrent Jewish question in a few of her texts. Though external affairs are never her goal or preoccupation, the extent of Oates's shift from the domestic to the international arena can be gauged by examining the recurrent allusions to the international conflicts which, by and large, fashion or contribute to the fashioning of her American protagonists.

A more appropriate beginning to this section is to recall the President's definition of "politics" in Oates's Blonde. "Politics" is defined, in plain language, as "war" (886);
hence, "politics" is overshadowed with a strong sense of militarism. In most of Oates's fiction, there are anecdotes from such wars, each of which narrates a story of power relations. This President's militarism is a part of the ceaseless power politics that characterized much of the history of America's foreign policy. For "military power alone" as Nye rightly observes "cannot produce the outcomes we want on many of the issues that matter to Americans" (The Paradox xv). A common denominator to most of the "wars" in Oates's fiction is the attention paid to the consequences of such wars. Taking some anecdotal details of a few characters with some first-hand, second-hand or even indirect war experiences, Oates's texts draw attention to the diversity (and even the contradictions) of individuals' discourses about war. Several of such anecdotes are, no doubt, taken from the characters' experiences in, for example, World War II, the Cold War, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Gulf War and even the attack on the World Trade Center, the phenomenon that has become known as 9/11; these anecdotes, however, are fragmentary representations of the realities of those wars. In point of fact, the wars in Oates's texts, though mentioned as parts of the individuals' lives and memories, such wars, taken together, are fragmentary representations of or partial contribution to America's role in world history.

A perspicuous reading of several of Oates's texts evokes a crucial question about the frequent recurrence of such wars and why wars, in particular, from the huge bulk of world history. Biographically, Oates is born between the two World Wars (i.e. 1938). This means she has been unaware of either of them till many years later; by and large, however, she has been affected by both. An irresistible question that emerges from this brief speculation is: Why, then, is Oates so concerned with such wars? How does she
manage to weave many of such wars into her own stories in her persistent way? One could possibly think of the most-often harped on accusation of Oates's interest in the question of violence and claim that these wars are, eventually, more likely a substantive part of her interest in the overall scene of violence in the modern history of the United States and by extension in world history. That is just one possibility. Oates, however, apart from wars, has plenty of topics to fill the thousands of pages she writes and many of these may as well serve Oates's representation of violence in American society past and present and even in world history. (An important observation is that with the increasingly political and military interventionism of the United States of America in most world affairs it becomes more difficult to ignore the role of the United States in future histories.) Oates's interest in these wars is indubitably an interest in the question of power, more particularly what Foucault calls the “bio-power” (qtd.in Wilkin 177). That is the power over the issues of life and death. Oates's concern about death tolls makes “wars,” implicitly or explicitly, an unavoidable topic. Oates's persistence of historicizing wars echoes one of Foucault’s death-time wishes: “The last thing that I would like to study would be the problem of war and the institution of war” (Reid 1+). Oates, through her narratives of violence and death, is a ceaseless voice of life. Like Scheherazade's narrative in The Thousand and One Nights, Oates's is an outcry against the haunting face of waiting death which American wars have brought and are still bringing into the lives of thousands of people at home and world wide.

It seems as if it is ordained that each new American era, presidency or decade has to have a kind of war or to make it. Oates's narrator of I Lock raises this possibility. It puts in a nutshell the temporal passage of the twentieth century and America's political
involvement in it "and beyond the locked door of her room the century rushed headlong
as over a series of cataracts into its future of wars, financial collapse, boom times, and
new presidents of the United States, and new wars . . . " (95). Such wars have been
among the ferociously debated issues both in American history in general and in most of
Oates's fiction. Like McCarthyism which has, domestically, claimed the lives of
hundreds and maybe thousands of people and destroyed the career and peace of mind of
many others as one of the consequences of the differences between the political
ideologies of the two, at one time, Superpowers, the other wars, too, have harvested
millions of human lives from different parts of the world. Such massive victimization of
human beings in war time is frequently expressed in a sarcastic remark: "With this
terrible war [World War II] started, and young men joining up to fight, you'd better grab
a husband while there are guys available and still in one piece" (Oates, *Blonde* 136).
Thus, Oates's text demonstrates a more humanistic view that belies any justification of
World War II. For the tolls of deaths in this war are alarmingly high to the point of
unparalleled massive deaths. This is what *Blonde* 's reference to "men's availability" aims
at. An insightful look at the histories of such wars reveals them as stories of struggles and
power relations of many kinds and as illustrative demonstrations of American power
politics that is extending from the Pearl Harbor till the present time. I will attempt to look
at this power politics with reference to a number of the political allusions in Oates's
fiction and their possible connection with the American power politics at the present.

The historical hallmark of "Pearl Harbor," one of the early catalysts for American
involvement in World War II, is one of the recurrently reconstructed histories in a few of
Oates's texts. Oates's focus on this hallmark in America's history is but a small part of
the bigger dramatic effects the Pearl Harbor has on America and its people. The historian Michael Slackman sums up the significance of Pearl Harbor in an insightful remark:

There is little argument, though, that the Pearl Harbor attack was a dramatic event which in the space of a few hours plunged the United States into the most destructive war of the twentieth century and changed forever the way most Americans viewed the world around them. (*Target: Pearl Harbor* xii)

America's fear of the Japanese expansionist policy has led it to interfere in the running war in the international arena despite, what Walter F. Bell calls, a warning by the Japanese Foreign Ministry, in January 1941, to "the United States against interfering in Asian affairs" (*The Philippines in World War II* 4). Immediately after Pearl harbor, steps towards international conflicts become faster and, in some cases, unpredictable as Blonde puts it: "Ever since the shock of the Pearl Harbor. Every day now was like an earthquake day you wake up wondering what's next. Headline news, radio bulletins" (Oates 174). At home, the Japanese-Americans have to struggle with the sudden antagonism. They pay severely for the Pearl Harbor attack. One side of their tragedies is depicted as follows:

Within two months, more than 100,000 Japanese-Americans were relocated in America's own version of concentration camps. The victims - 47,000 . . . were forced to leave behind or sell cheaply their possessions, gather together at removal stations, and board trains and buses for the internment centers. (Chafe, *The Unfinished Journey* 23)
Indeed. Oates uses many of the cataclysmic events, like Pearl Harbor, to fashion the broader political map of the United States. As Pearl Harbor takes the hand of the United States into military and political involvement into world affairs this contributes to a spread of domestic fear of the possible devastating consequences of the war on life in American cities. The phantom of war overshadows every sphere of social life: it is likened to “hunger,” “sleep,” a nonstop “radio program” and “dreams” (Oates, *Blonde* 228). These descriptions in Oates’s texts should not be interpreted in isolation from the dramatic scenes of the war and its real impact on Americans. Indeed, the devastating damage the Pearl Harbor attack brings to the public eye is beyond any description and thus some types of horrific images of what wars may bring home have left impressions of uncertain fears and awes. Such fears, however, coincide with hopes that America’s international responsibility will change the face of the world at the end of the war. Oates’s *Blonde* reconstructs such a cultural scene of the mid-forties up to the end of World War II: “Would the U.S. win the war and save the world from Hitler and Tajo? How long would the war last and would bombs ever fall on this country? On California? And if so, what would happen to them? What would be their fate?” (175). Such contemplative questions bespeak the innate anxiety, worry and uncertainty that cloud much of the discourse about war. American responsibility in world conflict is part of its fate as country “number one,” a sort of divine responsibility Oates’s *Blonde* asserts (189). The fear that Japanese-Americans may be disloyal to their new homeland, America, has led to the anti-Japanese attitudes in both public and political levels. Hence, they have been alienated and isolated in separate camps. Slackman sums up this fear in the following statement:
The fixation on the supposed danger posed by Hawaii’s Japanese-American community played a crucial role in shifting the army’s psychological focus away from the danger of overseas attack. The constellation of racial attitudes then predominant in the armed forces, the Territory of Hawaii, and American society as a whole led Hawaii’s defenders to view the islands’ Japanese as an ominous alien presence awaiting the signal to do the emperor’s bidding. American citizenship, shared values, and overt declarations of loyalty meant nothing to those held in thrall by the fifth-column menace. (281)

By analogy, the fear of Communism in Oates’s texts is to be interpreted as a fear of the Communists’ loyalty to an antagonistic ideology of a foreign country; in another word a fear of an enemy’s potential agents. Such an ideology is indubitably a threat to America’s ego as a Superpower. Or worse still, American authorities at the highest levels fear that those Communists at home serve as, to borrow a phrase from Carey McWilliams, “agents of a foreign power” (297). McWilliams discusses the prerequisites needed for the Communist Party to be an American Party in his book *Witch Hunt*. He has the following to offer. He affirms the non-American identity of the Communist Party which he defines in terms of its foreignness of loyalty (that is to ex-Russia) and in terms of its readiness for violence (296-97). The struggles with Communists emerge out of fear of their penetration into different governmental departments as well as the fear of the “violent” line of action these Communists follow. A succinct and concise statement from Harry Truman’s pen sums up what lies behind the fear of Communism: “godless Communism had conspired to take over the world and that the United States was the knight in shining armor who
would fight it everywhere” (qtd. in Wainstock *Truman, MacArthur, and the Korean War*, 30). America’s ambition to be the unrivaled unique world power accounts for its great antagonism for the Communist camp. This is the conviction with which J. F. Kennedy enters the White House: “the whole world, in my opinion, would inevitably begin to move toward the communist bloc” (Chafe, *The Unfinished Journey* 263). What motivates America’s reactions is not the Communist “godlessness” but the fear of Communists’ hegemony and dominating of all sources of power in the different senses of the term. John T. Rourke, Ralph G. Carter and Mark A. Boyer use the Machiavellian perspective in defining “politics”: “Politics is about power. So wrote Florentine statesman Niccolo Machiavelli . . . Machiavelli portrayed power as an end in itself, divorced from morality or justice.” “Acquiring,” “retaining,” and “expanding power” are three Machiavellian prerequisites for “successful” government (*Making American Foreign Policy* 165). Oates’s recurrent allusions to American politicians’ fear of Communism substantiate this Machiavellian view of politics which, in its turn, accounts for the fear of the shifting of power from the hands of American capitalism to Russian or Chinese Communism. In other words, the fear of others’ power has been the pipe dream to accelerate the American lust for power seemingly for the sake of national security. In one of Oates’s texts, the Communists’ “take over the world” is associated with some countries which are considered to be centers of Communism and hence are to be categorized as enemies. Such a discourse serves to justify any political antagonism against these countries. Here lies the touch of reality Oates adds to the conflict of the Superpowers and its impact on civic life. Mr. Carlyle, one of Oates’s anti-Communists, sympathizes with the Detroit police in the racial riots of the 60s blames what he calls “left-wing agitators” for the
police's inability to enforce law and goes on to describe those "agitators" as having "their roots in Russia and China and Cuba," as being "funded by international student committees and outfitted and in some cases trained by professional Communists," and as "causing the breakdown of our society by encouraging lawlessness in the cities" and as "claiming that the act of shooting even an obviously guilty fleeting suspect was an infringement upon constitutional rights" (Do with Me 399). Such a view of anti-Communism furnishes the basic justification for a Machiavellian power to crack down Communism. This response has a resonance in George W. H. Bush's response to the use of force against the rioters in the Civil Rights bill. "I like the part protecting firemen and policemen as they try to quell riots," says George Bush in his autobiography All The Best, By Bush: My Life in Letters and Other Writings (109). Distancing the masses which are subsumed under the umbrella term of "our society," Mr. Carlyle's reiterative "these people" stresses exorcizing the Communists and othering them. Playing upon the Communists' "lawlessness," as he calls it, even in what he calls "obviously guilty fleeting suspect," (Oates, Do with Me 399) Mr. Carlyle's discourse has much to do with some of the most accumulative portraiture of the Communists available in the discourse of the fifties. Such images of Communists are badly affected by what is known as McCarthyism of the time. It is the anti-Communist hysteria of the 1950s which has to a greater extent participated in stereotyping the Communists. The hunt after Communists in this decade makes it worthy of being called "a time of national paranoia" as Fred J. Cook describes it at the beginning of his book The Nightmare Decade: the Life and Times of Senator Joe McCarthy (3). According to Bernard K. Johnpoll, McCarthyism and several other factors have contributed to the failure of this party to make "any serious or
permanent impact on the political, economic, or cultural life of the United States”

(History of the Communist Party of the United States xvii). Blonde elaborates this issue by reconstructing the fifties and the Red-Scare as well as the different institutions that have given rise to McCarthyism. The victims of the investigations led by the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) have come from different social strata, but mostly from the highly educated and skilled Americans. (More examples of victims from the university are mentioned in Cook’s The Nightmare Decade.) Carlyle’s anti-Communist discourse in the 1960s is a part of the impact of the HUAC investigations on broad layers of Americans. “Communists and Communist sympathizers and ‘troublemakers’ in the unions,” goes the denouncement of some witnesses before the Washington House Un-American Activities Committee (Oates, Blonde 402). Indeed, the over reaction to the then called “Communist threat” has brought American politics closer to the Italian Fascism as D. F Fleming writes in his essay which he entitles with the ironic question “Are we Moving Toward Fascism?”:

For seven or eight years we have had our attention fixed upon the Communist threat to our way of life. This danger has assumed such proportions in our minds that few of us have stopped to ask whether in combating the Left we might be veering too far toward the Right. (39)

Such anti-Communist discourse of the fifties continues in the sixties in Oates’s Do with Me:

We’re helpless with the pack of Maoists and left-wing liberals and Jew-lawyers and nigger-lawyers left over from Martin Luther King – it’s a sick
radical coalition of dropouts from the universities and professors fired
from their jobs and . . . “Peace Corps.” (400)

These two extracts reveal the conflict of different cultural forces vis-à-vis the attitudes
towards Communism: a situation that is quite analogous to the attitudes towards the
present war in Iraq. The fear of Communism may also be interpreted in the light of the
Axis-Allies confrontations in the Second World War when hostility of the warring
countries has the power to justify any political atrocities under the guise of the so-called
national security.

Oates’s *Blonde* represents ideological divisions of the two factions of the warring
countries. It portrays the divisive factors by dint of its portraiture of two representative
presidential characters, thus drawing different contrasting pictures of the rival political
systems of Capitalism and Communism. The two presidents, the American President J.F.
Kennedy and the Cuban President Fidel Castro are compared in Oates’s *Blonde*: “The
American President, committed to protect ‘democracy’ globally; the other, the Cuban
dictator, committed to that extreme form of political and economic democracy called
communism, which was in fact totalitarianism” (900). The politically anti-Cuban regime
discourse is integrated in Oates’s literary discourse as it is integrated in the long
journalistic history of the rhetoric of antagonism towards the Cuban leader Fidel Castro.¹

The catchphrase “the Cuban dictator,” not included in double quotes in Oates’s text
which obviously places it in her political jargon, is a case in point. In “a Letter to the
Editor” on the Reader’s Page of the *Syracuse Post-Standard*, Castro is described as “the
Cuban dictator” who is accused of trying to “destroy America by weakening its youth”
and he does so according to the letter by immersing some American states with what the
writer calls a "cocaine epidemic" ("The Cuban dictator" A-II). He is also "the Cuban
dictator" in other periodicals at different intervals of the twentieth century. Examples of
these include: The Yuma Daily Sun ([Yuma, Ariz.] Thurs. Dec. 1, 1961, 20); The Delta
Democrat-Times (Greenville, Miss.) Sun. Feb. 9, 1984, 4); The Modesto Bee ([Modesto,
Sept. 7, 1991, A-6). Thus, I will not be stating the obvious if I conclude that Oates shares
the politically broad American hostility for the regime in Cuba and her comparison of the
two leaders is a part of the anti-Cuban political propaganda. How does this relate to
Oates’s fashioning of the American state? On the one hand, both art and the media are
integrating similar rhetoric in fashioning an outsider "enemy." On the other hand, Oates
herself, while representing the different social and political ills in the United States, falls
prey to the very power of the system she is portraying and participates in the circulation
of the anti-Castro discourse.

American politics always envisions an "enemy" and then directs all diplomatic
and military efforts to compete with, to surpass, or at least, to achieve a balance of power
with that enemy in all possible ways. Such an enemy is a necessity particularly for the
ruler's escape from hard questions in domestic affairs, for the stability or cohesion of the
domestic front. Hence there arises the arms race and the few wars into which America
has been involved. Oates historicizes some of these political events and rewrites her story
(her history) of these decades. Indeed, she foregrounds what many historians would
relegate or even ignore altogether. Among the issues she foregrounds are certain feminist
issues like female exploitation and rape. By doing so, Oates rewrites history so as to
include some forgotten or marginalized aspects as though history presents a one-sided
view of the past and there is a need to consider the other sides too. Thus, Oates brings to
the public attention, for instance, some repressed voices of the American lust for power.

Earlier in the aftermath of the Pearl Harbor, fear of Communism has led to
Truman's "historic Executive Order 9835 requiring loyalty oaths and security programs
for federal employees, and 'loyalty oaths' came to be demanded of employees by private
businesses" (Oates, Blonde 300-01). This anti-Communism preoccupies American
foreign policy for the rest of the 40s and well into the 1980s with the collapse of the
Soviet Union.

At the middle of the 1950s, the harp on the Communist expansion is served well
by the Korean War as the historian Gary A. Donaldson observes:

Americans began to see the spread of communism as a cancer that must be
limited and contained. The fear was played well in the American political
arena—used by politicians as an issue to further their careers and enhance
their opportunities for election (America at War since 1945 xiv)

This, in turn, allows for more international intervention and further wars under the pretext
of national security or containing the Communist expansion. Similarly, five years after
World War II ends, America is again involved once more in a long-term war in Vietnam
under the same pretext. Here, the intervention, as Donaldson rightly remarks, is more
tinged by the wide spread anti-Communism zest of the 1950s (xiv). Several of Oates's
texts represent the Korean and the Vietnam Wars in terms of their devastating impact on
increasing death-rates as well as their impact on the lives of her characters. The anti-Communist discourse in Oates’s *Blonde*, for instance, is grounded on the potential danger of the Soviet Union as a rival Superpower. This is represented in the case of Russia’s spying for information about America’s nuclear bomb which becomes the talk of the media: “‘Atom bomb spies’ Julius and Ethel Rosenberg sentenced to death in the electric chair, reports of hydrogen bomb tests in the Soviet Union” (386). More pathetic is Oates’s of the destructive power of the American nuclear war waged against the two Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki: “Did you ever see those photos . . . of Hiroshima, Nagasaki? Piles of corpses like lumber? Little children and babies too” (390). The “corpses” of over 200,000 people in these two cities, as Valentin Falin, a Russian historian of the nuclear power, puts it, “were not as much the last casualties of the Second World War as they were the first victims of the United States’ new-born ‘atomic diplomacy’ and ‘atomic military strategy’” (*The Last Nuclear Explosion: A Historical Survey* 20). Thus, Oates’s *Blonde*, in a few passing sarcastic remarks, touches upon one of the vital prerequisites for America’s becoming an unrivaled Superpower: i.e. the possession of nuclear power. It is no wonder then why the United States, every now and then, harps on the issue of the “nuclear” to disallow the emergence of any “real” rival nuclear power. It is in line with this competence for nuclear power that comes to the fore the question of the “Cuban Missiles.” This “crisis” (so it was frequently called) during the Presidency of J. F. Kennedy aims to create one more incentive for a ceaseless military cracking down of Communism. And it is some secret regarding this crisis, as Oates’s *Blonde* seems to suggest (935), that pulls the curtains down on the short life of Marilyn Monroe.
Oates's *Blonde* blends the domestic and the international scenes as it reconstructs the history of Marilyn Monroe's life. One of the struggles Monroe has with the ironic role of the media is also used to highlight the drastic consequences of wars on the lives of Americans. Another kind of battle in the political arena is fought against the role of the media and how readers digest the irony a piece of news may carry. The scandalous news of Monroe's "NUDE CALENDAR PIX" (*Blonde* 383) is juxtaposed with "headlines of US casualties in Korea" and the "atom bomb spies" (*Blonde* 386). What emerges out of such juxtaposition is the implicit equating of the three events. What is more important in Oates's representations of all wars is the question of "casualties" and long and short term-devastating consequences as is the case in the Korean War mentioned above. Similarly, the Vietnam War, which is waged by the American President of Oates's *Blonde* (886), has its "casualties." By the end of the sixties, Lyndon Johnson expands the anti-Communist confrontation in the devastating War of Vietnam as a part of his two-objective project. Barone has devoted one full chapter for Johnson's project which has two goals: victory in the international sphere and prosperity at home or as tersely summed up in Barone's "Guns and Butter" (*Our Country* Part Four, Chapter 40).

"Guns," however, have aggravated and soured the whole domestic life. This aggravation was a natural result of the news coverage of the war which brought to the American masses "American patrols burning Vietnamese villages . . . refugees fleeing the smoke of battle . . . horribly burned and wounded women and children . . . mutilated American soldiers" (Paterson 418). From this come the antiwar protests and the call to stop the war. Oates had her share in those protests. Besides her sympathy "with student protests against the Vietnam War" (Johnson, *Invisible* 170) Oates "attended a benefit cocktail party . . . to
finance newspaper advertisements protesting the Vietnam War” (Johnson, *Invisible* 152). Oates’s *The Mulvaneys* is, partially though, a part of the history of the role of media in fashioning the masses’ responses to the war. The unlearned lessons of the past war experiences is a critique that is common both in history and in Oates’s fiction. “The road into Vietnam,” Donaldson asserts “was paved with many of the lessons from Korea” but “in Vietnam those lessons went unlearned” (70). A similar argument is posed by Corinne Mulvaney who juxtaposes the Vietnam War and the American Civil War and states:

The war in Vietnam had to stop, the killing had to stop on both sides, what a terrible thing, what a tragedy. Tearing the country apart! Turning fathers against sons! It was like the 1850s when the Fugitive Slave Act tore the country apart and led to the Civil War and almost four hundred thousand deaths, such a cruel, inhuman, ignorant piece of legislation, and now in enlightened times wouldn’t you think our leaders would have learned from the past? “First Kennedy, then Johnson, and now Nixon!” Mom cried. What we need to save us is a Christian leader before it’s too late.” (Oates, *The Mulvaneys* 51)

Such a juxtaposition of these two wars, along with several other wars, has been also a concern for several American cartoonists whose political humor stresses the last part of Corinne Mulvaney’s statement. An illuminating example is Pat Bagley’s “Dress Up George in his Favorite Iraq Metaphor!” (Bagley n.pag.).
In this cartoon, the artist, just like Corinne Mulvaney, juxtaposes almost all the previous wars America has undergone, including the Civil War, WWII, the Korean War, the Vietnam War and the Cold War. The focal point in Bagley’s cartoon is that politicians are careless about the death tolls of wars. The concerns about the Vietnam War in particular has focalized the devastating consequences of the war. “Nearly 10,000 Americans,” Chafe, for instance, observes, “had been killed in action in 1967 alone” (The Unfinished Journey 297). The devastating face of such a war gives rise to large-scale antiwar protests: “More than 200,000 protesters to march against the war in October. And in November, a Gallup Poll revealed that 57 percent of the American people now disappointed of Johnson’s handling of the war” (Chafe, The Unfinished Journey 297).
The concerns about the grave consequences of that war were highly voiced by some leading figures in the civil rights movement such as Martin Luther King. "We are," King, commenting on the war, has plainly said, "committing atrocities equal to any perpetrated by the Vietcong" (Wofford Of Kennedys and Kings, 222). King's concerns are given parallel voices in some of Oates's characters like Chandler who had "demonstrated against the Vietnam War" (Oates, The Falls 343). As the war drags on certain protest spots have become a part of the antiwar cultural scene as Oates depicts in her novel The Tattooed Girl:

In an earlier incarnation dating back to the somber years of 1968-1969, The Café had been a coffee shop and gathering place for anti-Vietnam war poems to be chanted and amateur musicians to perform. . . . (31)

Similarly, the Korean War brought up shocking statistics which make the discourse of war in general more than petrifying: "The price had been exorbitant – more than 23,000 Americans killed, over 100,000 wounded, and bitter division at home by the war's end" (Chafe, The Unfinished Journey 255). This war has been but one of the stages in America's anti-Communist wars. Oates's persistent fictional analysis of the question of Communism is a part of Oates's reconstruction of the overall twentieth-century political scene of the United States. It is a part of portraying collective-security strategies that have evoked the sympathy of many a Western country but have torn the world asunder: Capitalists, Communist, and other political ideologies. It also highlights the roots of today's uncompromising dogmatism of American foreign policy and its adamant rigidity of tackling, supposedly, America's enemies. It overshadows much of the late twentieth-
century American foreign policy as belligerent and ruinous both to Americans and non-
Americans. The so-called Red Scare had harvested thousands of souls inside and outside
the American boundaries.

The possibility of having several interpretations for some texts bespeaks the
inexhaustibility of Oates’s texts. It is at this juncture, Oates’s renarrating the death
moment of Marilyn Monroe is insightful. Insightful here stands for the inexhaustibility of
that historical moment in the history of this famous American actor of the fifties as well
as for the possibility of approaching that moment from a myriad of perspectives. Let us
have a look at this brief summary of that moment taken from the Wikipedia: the Free
Encyclopedia: “Monroe was found dead in the bedroom of her Brentwood, California
home... Her death was apparently caused by an overdose of sleeping pills, although as
with the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, several theories have sprung up
around the circumstances” (“Marilyn Monroe” n.pag.). Such a claim has its official roots
in the very history of Monroe’s death. “Our investigation so far,” said one of the
investigators of Monroe’s death, “shows that she did not die of natural death, and we can
make a presumptive opinion that death was due to an overdose of a drug” (Bacon E 11).
This “presumptive opinion” is also taken for granted by the Vatican which indirectly
accuses Monroe of committing suicide. In the same newspaper and on the same page, a part
of the Vatican’s paper is published. It says: “a person ‘should have the courage’ to face the tests
of life without turning to suicide” (Bacon E 11). Unlike this common view of the possible
cause of Monroe’s death, Oates’s fictional reconstructing of that moment offers a
different theory. Indeed, what makes this issue fit in this chapter is the fact that Oates’s
fictional version of this death (in her Blonde) brings to the fore the question of
Communism as well as the currency of the term “evil,” a recurrent term in today’s American political discourse. Monroe’s “long involvement with subversive organizations in America & abroad” and her “marriage to a Jew subversive” (935) who is also a “cadre of New York-born left-leaning intellectuals” (686) along with her “public defense of such Communist dictators as Castro” and above all her threat to the President himself and by extension to the “national security” (935)—all these factors convince the sharpshooter who kills Monroe that she is “evil” and, hence, has to be eradicated. His personal contention of carrying out his task is summed up in two points that are, strictly speaking, related to the modern panorama of American foreign policy: “Evil is what we mean by our target” (935) and “Never is the target personal” (937). Such a discourse of threatening and formidable enemies is occasionally used by American politicians to aggrandize the potential danger of America’s enemies and to mobilize the masses at home. These have become the two pillars of the post-9/11 American foreign policy. It is with these two consumable objects of the political discourse, that is “national security” and “evil,” we will move onto the next set of conflicts in Oates’s fiction.

Oates’s texts provide a basis for Greenblatt’s connection of the present with the past. With the masses-constant-fear of an enemy or as the Psychiatrist and Congressman, Jim McDermott puts it “an aura of endless threat” (Fahrenheit 9/11) the policy of striking fear into the heart of the masses, American politics creates pretexts to convince the masses of the “justification” and probably the “legitimacy” of America’s further involvement in more wars. This is what the American government did (a) to justify its arms race with the ex-USSR, (b) to occupy Afghanistan and keep an eye on the potential Superpower of China, and (c) to occupy Iraq, to exploit this country’s economic and
natural resources, and to cause the death of tens of thousands of Iraqis. The 2003 Gulf War, for instance, has been based on persistent claims of Iraq’s possession of weapons of mass destruction. The threats are aggrandized to make a case for waging the war. George W. Bush has repeatedly sung the song of “national threat” and “mass destruction.” Most of his speeches in connection with Iraq before the 2003 war had played on the nerve of the public fear of mass destruction. All one needs is to look at the many Presidential speeches Bush delivered in prewar time. Analogically, a similar pretext is expected to be used in the future to confront those anti-American governments or states like Iran, Syria, Venezuela or even Cuba. Some of these countries have been called “Evil Axis,” recalling the “Evil Empire,” the term President Ronald Reagan attributes to the ex-Soviet Union.

Reading the political map at the present time one may conclude that Iran will more likely be one of the possible victims of uni-polar American militarism in the near future and the scenarios will not differ from those used in attacking Iraq: the same old/new story of state terrorism, the old song of weapons of mass destruction of which America is indubitably the richest of all countries and threat to international security. Certain political events that have brought Iran into American political discourse are historicized in more than one text in Oates’s fiction. Indeed, Oates’s representation of Iran substantiates the equivocal nature of both American politics and the “freedom” propaganda in American political discourse. The following discussion of two Oatesian representations of Iran will make this point clear.

In *The Mulvaneyes*, Michael Mulvaney, the father, and his oldest son, Mike, hold a vigorous debate about the taking of the American diplomats as hostages in Iran during
Jimmy Carter's administration in 1979-80. What Oates's text has to say in this connection is worthy of citing in detail:

Those Iranians had a right to be sore as hell, in my opinion. They'd had a revolution and overthrew a dictator... the “Shah.” And this character skips the country with millions of dollars and winds up in the United States and we protect him, of course — we're the saps! Exactly like in Vietnam we're the saps! All the Iranians want is this ‘Shah’ crook returned to them, for a trial and an execution, may be some torture... plus the money he and his glamour-gal wife stole, in exchange for the hostages, right? I'd say they’d a valid point, wouldn’t you? Mike said...

“Dad, the Iranians are our enemies... They committed an enemy action, an act of international terrorism, kidnapping American citizens out of our embassy! You don’t give in to terrorist blackmail, Dad.”... “Your enemy is your ally a few years later — look at Japan and Germany. Your ally is your enemy — that’s Iran!”

This latter question of the enemy/ally dichotomy is part and parcel a nature of the shifting sands of American foreign policy from the early years of the twentieth century. Ironically, the enemy/ally discourse is inseparable from the political discourse that has made the very history of American-Iranian relations in the forties. Not to dwell on this complex subject, I find one of Bagby’s historical remarks quite mesmerizing in this context. Commenting on the international conflict over Iran, Bagby describes it as: “a nation on Russia's border passed into the West's economic and political orbit, a stinging
defeat for the Soviets" (147). The American-Russian relations have undergone this political shift of enemy/ally. *Blonde* narrates a part of that shift as it portrays the status of Stalin who, "now a monster," was America's "ally at the time; Russia and the United States were not yet ideological enemies" (Oates 302). The Mulvaney's' discussion of the question of Iran presents an unusual fictional shift of interest on the part of the author. The causes, and not the consequences, provide the main backdrop to the debate over the American hostage crisis in Iran. Oates's text here represents the "causes" of the hostage crisis and of course after initiating the consequences in the previous page: "dumb innocent American kid in uniform dies a horrible death in a flaming helicopter" (*The Mulvaneys* 392). The cause in Oates's text is just in line with some parallel rhetoric about the straw that will break the camel's back in the hostage crisis. Mehdi Noorbaksh, the Director of the Institute for Research and Islamic Studies in Houston, Texas, offers a parallel reading for the root of the crisis:

Aware of the pressure of radicalism within Iran at the time the shah was permitted to enter the United States in 1979, Yazdi said, "Washington is playing with fire." A few weeks later the embassy was taken over by the radical students, who were able this time to command the support of both public opinion and the revolutionary leadership. (94)

The second Oatesian representation of Iran is more accusative and in line with Bush's "Axis of Evil." In another text, Iran is overshadowed with such adamant accusations such as the Mulvaney's "international terrorism" but the text this time offers no defensive argument. Long ago, Iran was the long-term political target of American
foreign policy: "If we are tough enough," Truman said, "if we stand up to [the communists] like we did in Greece . . . they won't take any next steps. But if we just stand by they will move into Iran, and they'll take over the whole Middle East. There is no telling what they will do if we don't put up a fight now" (qtd. in Chafe, The Unfinished Journey 249). Oates's "Iran" is one of the sites of American struggles against the so-called state terrorism. At the outset of this short story we encounter an American Cultural attaché to Amsterdam who "has been definitely targeted by an Iranian terrorist team" (Adams 335). This short story illustrates Oates's view of "politics" as a "threat" or "uncertainty" in Rosenberg's sense. This is what Inge's sarcastic remarks on America's Foreign Service try to represent. Talking about the devotion her parents show for their country, Inge says:

But they're both good people, they're ready to die, just about, doing their duty, representing the United States fucking foreign policy, my daddy was almost killed two times I know about and other times I'm not supposed to know about. (Adams 346)

Reading the threads of connection between art and culture, one may induce that Oates's rhetoric about Iran in the 1990s is a part of its equivalent American political rhetoric about Iran in the same period. Warren P. Strobel's 1996 article in Washington Times exemplifies this alleged link between Iran and terrorism in the political discourse: "Mr. Clinton, at a White House signing ceremony, called Iran and Libya 'two of the most dangerous supporters of terrorism in the world'" ("Clinton to Punish Nations" 1). In a similar way, in another 1996 article Magnus Ranstorp painstakingly tries, among other
things, to show the link between the formation of Hizb’allah (which he takes as an example of religion-based “terrorist organization”) and the Islamic revolution in Iran (41+). Such adamantly jaundiced views are taken as pretexts for one-sided economic sanctions against Iran by the Clinton presidency and are, recently, used to deprive Iran of its nuclear ambitions. The question is why Iran? Looked at from the power perspective, Iran is perceived as a rival regional power to the Super Power of America. A fear of regional domination by an anti-American government justifies American political scenarios in the area. Expressing such fears David E. Long states:

Given Iran's undiminished desire to gain political hegemony over the entire Gulf, and its becoming the strongest military power in the Gulf following the Iraqi defeat in Desert Storm . . . Iran is potentially the strongest militarily and politically, having the largest population . . . and greatest potential for economic development outside its oil sector.

(118-19)

Hence, Iran is perceived as a rival power in the Gulf. Besides, its “potential for economic development” may make it self-sufficient and thus becomes independent of any help from the United States which also closes one of the big markets in the region on the face of the American economy. Noam Chomsky, who admits of “U.S. concerns over Iranian power” (*Fateful Triangle: The United States, Israel, and the Palestinians* x), locates such concerns in:

A more general reason was the threat to "stability" that a successful popular revolution might pose . . . the threat that it might inspire
democratizing tendencies that would undermine the array of dictatorships that the U.S. relies on to control the people of the region. (x)

Such a concern for Iran's ostensible "threat," more to America's "costly ally" as Charley Reese describes it ("Israel is a Very Costly Ally" 49), than to its neighboring nations, has its echoes in the Israeli press. In a very recent article, the Haaretz Correspondent Yossi Melman sums up the Israeli concern with Iran's power in reducing the IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency) chair's statement "three to eight years" for Iran nuclear capabilities to only "three years" in his title (n.pag.). Let us end this part about Iran by an insightful claim that the hostages' crisis has been a turning point in the history of American foreign policy: "American hostages were seized, and the Carter administration, virtually paralyzed by that, stopped functioning normally on the international arena" (Solovyov and Klepikova 3). Could this be the cause why Oates's fiction emphasizes this particular aspect of the history of the relationship between Iran and the United States? Or is it that Oates's political discourse about Iran cannot get rid of the grip of the main stream political discourse of the so-called international terrorism?

From the question of Iran let us now move onto another topic that is in more than one way pertinent to Iran: the Gulf war(s). Gulf War I is represented as a TV war at the beginning of Oates's Black Water (4). This text, identifies, in passing though, a space in Oates's fiction for the conflicting views about that war. Video game and business are by-products of the very representation of the Gulf War in American media. Berger describes tersely this connection between that war and video games and business:
Some of the visual images shown on television encouraged some persons to describe the crisis and war as a video game. We saw "smart bombs" being aimed at the doorways or ventilating shafts of bunkers and planes zapping Iraqi targets with incredible precision. Because we saw little in the way of Iraqi casualties, the war took on the appearance of a somewhat surrealistic video game. The war also led to a spurt in the popularity of video games which simulated war in the Mideast.

As in the other wars, the focus is given to the impact of this war on American lives in the 1990s. The Democrat Senator (The Senator in Black Water) addresses Kelly Kelleher, one of the guest of Ray Annick, as if concluding something undesirable about the new generation and tells her: "The Gulf War has given your generation a tragic idea of war and of diplomacy." This view is debated back with a cogent counterargument. Kelleher tells him "There is no such thing as 'my' generation, Senator. We're divided by race, class, education, politics - even sexual self-definition. The only thing that links us is our - separateness" (Oates, Black Water 100). Here, the text offers two ways of interpretation for the divisions within the American community. The Senator, being a politician, finds it easier to attribute any change in the social order to an external factor, as if seeking an enemy who is to blame for the domestic problems if one is to take the reproachful tone with which he brings up the topic of social division. Kelly Kelleher, an educated woman, traces the roots of the Senator's division to the multiculturalism in America. One more point to consider here is that international conflicts like the Gulf War provides a fertile soil for claims of depicting America's enemies as the cause(s) of some
misshaping of certain conceptual structures: like war and diplomacy. This is not very
different from the accusative rhetoric used in depicting the Cuban leader Fidel Castro
who has been, and may continue to be, a frequent target of American polemic political
discourse.

Once more and like any other wars, the Gulf War has its uncompromised victims:
victims whose losses go beyond any compensation or repair. Previously “a marine
sniper” during the Gulf War and presently a worker in a service station, Rick, one of the
characters in Oates’s Middle Age, substantiates such a view. From his home town
Damascus County, Rick luckily enough is the only casualty in the war. However, he “was
mysteriously crippled, with a pronounced limp and alarming scalded-scarred skin”
(Oates, Middle Age 218). Such injuries turn out to be identifying signs of the soldier for
the rest of his life. Thus, the destructive power of war leaves its irremovable and
incurable scars not only in the lives of the victims “designated as enemies” (Oates, Rape:
A Love Story 10), but simultaneously in the lives of American soldiers. The
destructiveness of the power of militarism cannot be confined to what America
designates as enemies or the enemy. The consequence of any war highlights the
destructive nature of military power. A “TV” war is easier to control and to win. But
when it comes to reality the situation is different.

Rape: A Love Story tackles the issue of the consequences of the war such as the
change of the soldiers’ complexion and their dehumanization. This text sarcastically
represents the duties of American soldiers in the Iraqi War or what has been known as
“Operation Desert Storm.” Dromoor, the police officer who saves Teena Maguire,
participates "in killing an indeterminate number of human beings designated as enemies, targets." is "surprised" by the difference between his new job in the "civilian police" where, unlike his mission in the army where firing at targets and killing are the norms, weapons are not aimed "at any human targets." Despite the power he enjoys in both, the use of the gun seems to be rather restricted at home as the other civilians are not "designated as enemies." The struggle in this text is multi-layered and complex. It is sufficient to point out some illustrations. On the one hand, there is Teena’s struggle with the unqualified laws to do her any justice. Indeed, not only is there a possibility, the text suggests, of escaping the punishing hands of court laws but even the prison laws are not tough enough to make the rapists regret their shameful and brutal deed. On the other hand, in the ceaseless power of the patriarchal discourse, even the social discourse does not admit of the criminal acts of the rapists. Instead, it concedes that public attention should be diverted from such an evil deed and that the public sympathy should be with the rapists. Two of the convicted rapists, Marvin Pick and Llyod Pick, are not perceived as such in their residential area:

In their neighborhood it wasn’t said of the Picks they’d raped, almost killed a woman and terrorized the woman’s daughter, it was said Those two! Their old man has hired a hot-shit Buffalo lawyer. (Oates, Rape: A Love Story 106)

Another struggle is that of the Iraqis who have become victims of the brutal faces of the American power politics. One of the most striking remarks in Oates’s Rape: A Love
Story is her allusion to "an indeterminate number" of the higher rates of death in Iraq (10).

Though Oates's Rape portrays the impact of the Gulf War on American soldiers, it has skipped another important consequence of such an event. Death tolls from American soldiers are much relegated as if Oates speaks from the military perspective in which only deaths on the "enemy's front" is foregrounded and publicized. I really wonder why that Oates is misleadingly classified as an apolitical novelist! It is probably worth noting here that as these pages are written the former Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein has been executed for, according to the Press, being found "guilty of crimes against humanity" (Santora n.pag.). Such a historical event is expected to be textualized in one of Oates's prospective political allusions to the Bush administration's blundering political approach to the Iraqi issue as a whole and the long term impact on many American soldiers and their families.

In line with Oates's concern with the war consequences, "The Mutants" depicts an eye-witness's narrative of the attack against the twin towers in New York, focusing more on the psychological shock of that historical moment (I Am No One 282). The struggle here is with the people not believing their own vision and relying on their imagination to understand the magnanimity of the attack. Oates's text tries to portray a fragmentary picture of one of the most shocking moments in America's modern history, if not the most shocking of all. For living that moment's peculiarity can be expounded only through a process of fragmentation. It is a moment of a special kind of struggle. The struggle to recall that moment in its entirety is in the likelihood of impossibility. For the
“raging inferno” [Oates describes the term as a product of the media (284)] makes the protagonist lose her memory and she forgets her fiancé’s cell phone number and even his name (I Am No One 284). She wins the struggle by not giving in to the desperation of such a horrific moment and by clinging to rays of hope of being discovered and seen by her fiancé (I Am No One 287). Unlike the inwardness that characterize most of Oates’s other characters, the protagonist’s social and communal self is very much a natural product of this historic moment in the life of America. Oates’s rhetoric about 9/11 in “The Mutants” is, indeed, a part of the prevailing rhetoric. Like mainstream politicians, reporters and journalists of that time, she focuses on the consequences of the event and not on its causes. What has led to it? This is what has been repressed in Oates’s text. Given below some quoted illustrations of such rhetoric:

It’s one of the most heinous acts, certainly in world history.
—New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani, September 11, 2001

We’re at war. We’re absolutely at war.

Horrific. Extraordinary. Unprecedented. These are words that government officials, journalists, and eyewitnesses used frequently to describe the events of September 11, 2001, during breaking live coverage. (Reynolds and Barnett 85)

This type of rhetoric is a part of the official rhetoric about “terrorism” in The 9/11 Commission Report. A close look at some of the causes for the attack, by what The 9/11 Commission Report designates as “the enemy,” is reminiscent of what was designated as
the "enemy" in the middle of the twentieth century, "Godless Communism," as well as of the Iraq War rhetoric. The enemy's "purpose," according to The 9/11 Commission Report, is "to rid the world of religious and political pluralism, the plebiscite, and equal rights for women" (United States The 9/11 Commission Report, xvi). In all cases, the threat to national security is coupled with the threat to what lies beyond the American territories. Rejection of "religious and political pluralism, the plebiscite, and equal rights for women" the report seems to suggest is a rejection of the common characteristics of Western democracies. Hence, the "threat" is made to have a "global" appeal. Besides, those Americans who have suspected or rejected the whole official narratives about September 11 have been reprimanded and many of them are classified as conspiracy theorists.

In all of these few anecdotes from the Korean War through the cataclysmic 9/11 one can obviously infer that Oates's texts are themselves parts of the recorded history of these events and are parts of the prevailing political rhetoric as well. Her texts tend to give a touch of the real through the use of detailed and meticulous description of the senselessness of war as well as through the sarcastic discourse which characterizes much of the antiwar agenda in the United States. Recently, there has been grave, mounting and widespread concern over the power politics of American foreign policy. Oates's anti-Bushism is but a part of a wider intellectual movement that expresses grave concerns over the misadministration of President Bush's foreign policy. One of the mesmerizing comments of this wide-ranging critique of the Bush administration's foreign policy is summed up in the introductory paragraph of Jonathan Fox's essay "United States Foreign Policy in the Twenty-First Century: The Crisis and Renewal of the Republican Empire":

Attempting to exercise global power in an ethical manner, the United States in the latter part of the 1990’s has usually accomplished neither. A decade of tentative approaches to global affairs has resulted in the general degradation of America’s reputation and power, and a broad spectrum of weakened but still dangerous adversaries are forming new alliances to challenge US military, political and economic primacy. The failure to formulate a realistic intellectual framework clearly declaring US foreign policy values and priorities has far-reaching and potentially devastating consequences for this country. (194)

A parallel concern with those “devastating consequences” of American foreign policy at the end of the twentieth century is given voice in a number of Oates’s text. Among these are Black Water and Rape: A Love Story.

Linking the past to the present and using the issue of capital punishment, I feel as if American foreign policy at the present time has transplanted the discriminatory system used against the African Americans in capital punishment into the international arena where the discrimination has fallen on Arabs and Muslims world wide and the capital punishment used here is manifested in the series of wars waged in the past few years as well as in the forthcoming wars in a few years. Even the 1950s Red Scare, at the present time, has become the 2000s Muslim Scare. In both cases, America’s national security is the pretext for further violence and ceaseless killing. Oates’s I Lock predicts new wars and new presidents and this is simply the modern history of American foreign policy. Similarly, the short story “Imperial Presidency” refers to “a monument honoring area
soldiers who had sacrificed their lives in our most recent war" (Oates, Where Is Here? 7).

"Most recent" impregnates this short story with a long list of war possibilities that goes back many years in the distant past and moves ahead many years in the coming future. Jeffrey Record, for instance, lists the following as America's post-Gulf-War wars: “Since the Gulf War, the United States has launched military interventions in Somalia (1992-94), Haiti (1994), Bosnia (1995), Kosovo (1999), and, most recently, in Afghanistan (2001)” (4+). Unlike the earlier presidencies of, for example, the father founders of the United States—George Washington and Thomas Jefferson—who, based their foreign policies on eschewing “entanglement outside” the American borders and “entangling alliances with” no other state (Lake 48), the Republican presidencies since the eighties till this moment have taken the entanglement with the outside world to its extremes. Moreover, they have betrayed two of what Lake calls Jeffersonian political principles of American foreign policy, namely: “honest friendship with all nations” and “entangling alliances with none” (48). Besides, there is another implication here. In terms of wars, American politics seems to be self-destructing. Indeed, this is also a part of the struggle against the (expansion of American) involvement in world affairs by many protesters in different parts of the world as are frequently shown on the media.

Before we close this discussion of Oates's representation of American politics as manifested in the ceaseless American wars that are imposing a new world disorder it is important to note the following points: On the one hand, Oates’s texts, a part of wider national and global rejection of wars, give voice to the inconsolable grief most Americans feel for their dead and injured soldiers in those wars. To drive this point home, let us briefly contrast Oates's with Stephen Crane's representation of the war theme. Unlike
Oates, Crane celebrates the bravery, courage and sacrifice of the soldiers and invites his country fellows to share with him those feelings:

> It is the habit of humanity to forget her heroes, her well-doers, until they have passed on beyond the sound of earthly voices; then when the loud, praising cries are raised, there comes a regret and a sorrow that those ears are forever deaf to plaudits. The boy in blue will have grown to heroic size, and painters, sculptors and writers will have been finally impressed, and strive to royally celebrate the deeds of the brave, simple, quiet men who crowded upon the opposing bayonets of their country's enemies.

(Crane 187-88)

Unlike Crane's "The Gratitude of a Nation" which celebrates the physical endurance and strength, Oates's representation of war takes a completely different direction. Ever infatuated with the construction of personality, Oates represents those parts of wars that go in the very process of fashioning the individual. The cop Dromoor, who out of his experience of killing in the Desert Storm has developed a bad-temper that he tries to evade fighting, is the one who is destined to be the late savior of the gang-raped Teena Maguire. It is this incident that awakens the sleeping avenging soldier inside him. Thus, Oates's texts focalize the potential power certain social and historical events have on one's character.
The Jewish Question

The Jewish presence in Oates's texts casts some lights on Oates's indisputable predilections for rewriting history and politics. The Jews in Oates's fiction are represented as either instigators of the struggles (i.e., they cause others to struggle against the Jewish domination of certain aspects of American life as is the case with Alma Bausch and her boyfriend Dimitri in Oates's *The Tattooed Girl* or as Marilyn Monroe's struggle against Otto Ose's exploitation of her in *Blonde*) or strugglers against a higher repressive power like the Nazis and what they call anti-Semitism. Domestically, *The Tattooed Girl* confirms the hegemonic and dominating role of the Jewish community of the backbone of American economic life. As a money-oriented race, the Jews are depicted as a self-enclosed community: "It's politicians. It's the Jew banker-owners" (Oates, *The Tattooed Girl* 143). Another illustration of the Jewish wealth in this text is the Jewish professor Joshua Seigl. Otto Ose is another wealthy Jew in *Blonde*. Besides this attribute of wealth, Oates's fashioning of the "Jew" is more in line with the secular line of thought she has been adopting in most of her fiction. The Playwright in her novel *Blonde* is an exemplary Jewish character:

He wasn't a Jew who believed that the Holocaust was the end of history or the beginning of history, even that the Holocaust 'defined' Jews. He was a liberal, a socialist, a rationalist. He wasn't a Zionist. In private he did believe that Jews were the most enlightened, the most generally gifted, the best-educated and best-intentioned people among the world's quarrelsome multitudes, but he attached no special sentiment or piety to this belief; it
was only just common sense. 'I'm not, not inclined to mysticism. Hebrew isn't, to my ears, the voice of 'God.' (656)

Oates here demarcates Jews (a) as basically a Holocaust-defined people, (b) as self-conscious of their racial and religious superiority and (c) and this is a rare case, as Zionists. Distancing the Playwright from Zionism is a remarkable case in Oates's treatment of the whole Jewish question. It is here that Oates draws demarcating lines between the Jews and the Zionists. Eric Joseph Epstein and Philip Rosen define "Zionism" as "the political and cultural movement among Jews to establish a Jewish homeland in Palestine" (Dictionary of Holocaust: Biography, Geography, and Terminology 352). Thus, it is not Jewishness that is hated or antagonized but Zionism. For there are some Jews who are themselves anti-Zionists such as the members of The American Council for Judaism which, as Thomas A. Kolsky writes in his preface to Jews against Zionism: The American Council for Judaism, 1942-1948, was:

the only American Jewish organization ever formed for the specific purpose of fighting Zionism and opposing the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine. In the 1940s, when the Zionists were engaged in a decisive struggle to create a Jewish state, the Council stood as their most formidable opponent within the Jewish community. (ix)

Along a similar line to this demarcation between Jews and Zionists I find it important to note that much of the confusion between the two arises from the fact that Israel proclaims itself a "Jewish" state. Being so, more people hold the Jews as collectively responsible for their state's brutality and aggression against innocent
civilians in Palestine or Lebanon. These people’s reactions to Israeli policy in the region (or anywhere in the world for that matter) should not be equated with anti-Semitism. They have a valid point in criticizing the state of Israel and they have been anger-blinded to see non-Israeli Jews as discrete from and innocent of the violent Zionist ideology. On this basis, one has to differentiate between what is known as anti-Semitism (which is, linguistically at least, synonymous with anti-Jewishness and which is almost fading away nowadays) and serious hatred for the brutal and aggressive occupation of Palestine by Israelis, which I prefer to call “anti-Zionism.” For Israel, the critiques of both amount to the same thing: anti-Semitism. As a general rule, Zionism refrains from separating these two notions out of necessity. For the Zionists, the two are one and the same thing and this is their passport to evade formal blame for and interrogations into the aggressive policies in the region and to rouse widespread sympathy. Indeed, in the face of the devastating reality created by the Zionist state of Israel, anti-Zionism has taken the place of anti-Semitism; the former is a political reaction against the atrocities of the Israeli armed forces in and outside the occupied territories of Palestine. A Jewish writer, with a just and reasonable argument, draws on two illustrative cases which substantiate this line of demarcation between hating the Jews and hating the Israelis:

No doubt there has been an upsurge of anti-Semitic incidents in Europe. But there has also been an upsurge of legitimate criticism of Israel that is not in the least anti-Semitic. When Israel recently jailed and then deported four pro-Palestinian Swedes... under the misguided policy of seeing all the Palestinians’ sympathizers as enemies of the state, it was an action that ought to be condemned -- and the Swedes who have done so ought not be
considered anti-Semites. . . When the same thing happens to a Japanese physician, that too ought to be condemned . . . A column by Gideon Levy made the point that Israel cannot reject and rebut all criticism by reciting the mantra: “The whole world is against us.” (Cohen A19)

Such “realist” views, as the writer calls them, bring to the fore the need to sustain a major difference between Judaism and Jews (who have lived in the area for hundreds of years along with the native Arabs in harmony and peace prior to the declaration of the state of Israel in 1947) and the Zionists who are defacing the whole of the Jewish race. It is not rare to come across a valid Jewish criticism of Israel. Recently, a new Jewish group which distances itself from the Jewishness of Israeli policies has seen light:

“We come together in the belief that the broad spectrum of opinion among the Jewish population of this country is not reflected by those institutions which claim authority to represent the Jewish community as a whole,” the letter says. Jewish leaders in Britain, it argues “put support for the policies of an occupying power above the human rights of an occupied people” in conflict with Jewish principles of justice and compassion. (Borger n.pag.)

Indubitably, this has rarely been an Oatesian stance. This is why Jewishness and Zionism commingle in her few texts which have dealt with the Jewish question. The Playwright’s case is so far the only case in Oates’s fiction that nails the lie of equating the two terms.

In The Tattooed Girl, for instance, Oates chooses to filter the strident anti-Semitic consciousness sustaining no difference between these two terms. Anti-Semitism and its
corollary concept the Holocaust are both historicized and textualized, blending both
history and fiction, relegating any focus on the differentiation of the Jews and the
Zionists. This is may be because, as Eithne Farry remarks, “It’s the characters that
ultimately hold most fascination for Oates” (11). Like the occasionally heated up
controversies of asserting/denying the Holocaust, Oates’s The Tattooed Girl brings to the
fore the pros and cons of this issue through a love/hatred relationship between a wealthy
intellectual Jew, Joshua Seigl, and his anti-Semitic secretary, Alma Busch. This relation is
classified by a host of contradictory feelings of love and hatred, of envy and
sympathy and of acceptance and denial of the various aspects of the Jewish presence in
the United States in the twentieth century.

What emerges out of this unstable relationship are some portraiturets of the Jewish
character from two different points of view. The first one has to do with the anti-Semitic
attooed girl and her boyfriend Dimitri who raise the controversial questions in the text.
One of these has to do with what Rockaway and Gutfield describe as “the centuries-old
accusation” of the Jews’ killing of Jesus Christ which “appears as the most commonly
held Christian notion regarding Jews” (355+). Resonances of such an accusation have
their parallel in Oates’s text. A short dialog between Alma and her Grandfather cast some
light on this point:

A Jew is a despised thing her grandfather had said screwing up his burnt-
looking face to spit, and Alma said, Why? and he said, Because they are
accursed of God and man, and Alma said, Why? for sincerely she wished
to know, and her grandfather said, vague but angry, Jews killed Christ.
Judas killed Christ, he was a Jew. And so she would set her heart against
the Jew though he had been kind to her. (*The Tattooed Girl* 101)

This short dialog, in effect, suggests that the religion-based hatred of the Jews is an
accusation which is transmitted through generations. The epistemological roots of such
anti-Semitism are neither provided in any of Oates’s texts nor are they debated in any
substantive argumentation. Instead, Oates’s texts simply recirculate some of the sweeping
assertions of the prevalence of anti-Semitism in American culture, attributing the roots of
such antagonism to the older generations. Alma’s anti-Semitism arises from her
stereotyping all Jews as evil people like those “rich banker-Jews” who destroyed her past.
Despite this apparent stereotyping of the Jews as “rich,” Oates’s fiction attempts to assert
the assimilation of the Jewish race (except in the eyes of what Oates calls “anti-Semitic”) in the so-called American melting pot. Their wealth is but a part of the movement of the
wheel of capitalism in American history. However, both Oates’s *Blonde* and *The
Tattooed Girl* apparently refute such a Jewish assimilation into the melting pot. Otto Ose
and Joshua Seigl are identified in terms of both their association with the Holocaust and
their racial supremacy.

The second way of representing the Jew in Oates’s fiction is more sympathetic
with the Jewish characters in her texts. In this way, Oates’s texts present a defensive
discourse of the Jewish race as in the case of the Jewish characters in *I’ll Take You There*
and *The Tattooed Girl*. Recurrent in this second representation of the Jew is the depiction
of the Jews as a victimized race. In Oates’s *I’ll Take You There*, for instance, the narrator
says she has reasons to believe that her Grandparents, who are German Jews, had
“carefully changed their name to disguise their background, and to throw off their pursuers” (80). Here one can visualize the image of a runaway family who had survived the widely circulated stories of the Nazis’ systematic extermination of the Jews, sacrificing their “real” Jewish names, adopting new ones for self-protection. By the same token, in Oates’s *The Tattooed Girl*, this sense of victimization is sometimes associated with the Jewish professor Joshua Seigl himself and sometimes is extended to subsume the whole of the Jewish race. Oates’s sympathy for the Jewish philosopher is given voice in the various crematories, literal and metaphorical, with which *The Tattooed Girl* is replete. Apart from the recurrent allusions to the Holocaust, Seigl is sexually neutralized: “The love affair had ended abruptly several years ago. Seigl had never understood why, exactly” (Oates, *The Tattooed Girl* 5). His and his sister’s Jewish identity have been obliterated by their parent’s “mixed” marriage as the text calls it (Oates, *The Tattooed Girl* 7). The initial “J” in his and his sister’s names is but one thread of sustaining that Jewish identity. The sympathy is extended to include the whole of Seigl’s family: “As for Karl Seigl, his son’s illness wouldn’t have seemed to him very surprising. Shouldn’t a Jew expect the worst, for his children as for himself?” Oates goes to the extent of imagining the dead father Karl Seigl’s response to his son’s ailment. “Unstated the words would pass between them Always I knew Joshua. Something terrible would happen to my children” (Oates, *The Tattooed Girl* 7). Here, as in different parts of the text, Jews are portrayed as victims even, crudely though, by heredity. As an extension to the sympathetic discourse and part of it, Jews in Oates’s *The Tattooed Girl* are both envied and hated. They are envied because of their being well-off and wealthy people: “Jew-bankers make billions of dollars” (143); they are hated because (a) they do not know
what they own (b) the source of their wealth is mysterious: "Jew-money it must be. Seigl had inherited. Because you never saw the man work. Never any actual work. Not even teaching you'd expect someone like him to do" (152). and (d) they are accused of being "anti-Christ" (205).

In the international picture of the Jewish question in Oates's fiction arise the issues of the Holocaust and the Israeli-Arab conflict. The Oatesian representation of the Holocaust casts shadows of doubt, not on the very event as such but, on the reliability of the forms of narratives of this event. It, simultaneously, highlights the contradictory discourses that overshadow the debates over the notion of the Holocaust. Let us take the fictional creation of the Holocaust in Seigl's writings in Oates's *The Tattooed Girl* for further elaboration on the topic. Talking about Seigl's only fictional work, *The Shadows*, Essler, one of the early applicants for the post of secretary for Seigl, states that a novel furnishes "the shadows of things, not the things themselves" (*The Tattooed Girl* 10). For Seigl "*The Shadows* was 'fiction' - 'a work of the imagination.' It was not a family memoir, not the work of a Holocaust survivor and had not been presented as such" (*The Tattooed Girl* 54). These are some of the basic ethics of, broadly speaking, historical fiction: a means of escaping from his present illness to what ostensibly sounds like historical realism. For Seigl, like Oates herself, such an escape has, to borrow Oates's words, "the effect of psychological therapy" (*Them* 11). Indeed, the analogy between the genesees of Oates's *Them* and Seigl's *The Shadows* is more than striking. Both texts are based on second hand experience. For Oates "Maureen's numerous recollections . . . her life as the possibility for a story" are the genesis of *Them* (11); for Seigl, "the tragedy of his grandparents' lives and deaths" told to him "by way of his father's obsessive
memories" (The Tattooed Girl 54). Besides, both texts narrate a family saga. Both share some elements of American historical fiction (e.g. vivification of history and the use of the memoir form). All those analogies aside, The Shadows’ portrayal of the Holocaust as a mere shadow is not a denial of the Holocaust as it is a part of the larger intellectual debates on the production of historical objectivity in fiction writing. As a shadow then it follows that Siegl’s “Holocaust”—the crux of the matter in his novel—is neither real nor graspable. Analogically, Alma believes that Seigl’s Holocaust in The Shadows is “all made up” and “all lies” (The Tattooed Girl 257). This way of perceiving history, if Seigl’s The Shadows is a history at all, is very much in line with the Gotheian sense of the term. Similarly, Alma’s skepticism of the Holocaust is in line with the Gotheian view of the absence of complete historical objectivity: “Everything in history remains uncertain, the largest events as well as the smallest occurrences” (Szasz, “Meanings of History Part III” 215). Alma’s skeptical attitude towards the Holocaust, her uncertainty of the very Jenial of the Holocaust and her so-called “stereotyped ideas about Jews” (The Tattooed Girl 257) are, ironically, charges articulated and claimed more by Seigl than by Alma herself. Addressing Alma, Siegl lists more “stereotyped” characteristics of Jews than Alma herself has done:

Do you personally believe, Alma, that Jews are somehow different from you and your family? Jews are – what? Exotic? Treacherous? Dangerous? Not to be trusted? Likely to swindle you? A separate and distinct race of human being? . . . Sure you aren’t one of those who think that Jews have horns, are you? (The Tattooed Girl 258)
Seigl enlists some of the common attributes prevalent in discourses about “Jews-hatred” since Wilhelm Marr’s foundation of Antisemiten-Liga in 1879. However, what Seigl’s words amount to is that, like most liberal humanist intellectuals, the individual’s self is all that matters: race, religion, ethnicity are “false” parameters of defining the self. Despite the fact that he distances himself from the Jewish race [i.e. he is not a Jew neither by birth nor by conversion (The Tattooed Girl 259)], Seigl sets himself to defend the Jewish against any stereotyping. “Exoticness,” “treacherousness,” and “danger” are a part of the type of discourse that has become widely classified as anti-Semitism. Ironically, these words, fit nowhere in Seigl’s role in this text. These words are but a few of the words that qualify both Alma and her abuser boyfriend Dimitri. It is worth adding here that the shrewishness that characterizes Alma’s relation with the sick wealthy novelist Seigl is, to borrow Wartenberg’s words, “a countervailing form of power over” (229) his economic power.

The second issue Oates’s The Tattooed Girl raises and that is pertinent to this discussion of the Jewish question is the Israeli-Arab conflict. Right from the very beginning of the declaration of the State of Israel till this very moment the Israeli-Arab relations have witnessed several wars and ceaseless tragic and painful struggles mostly of the native Palestinians under the aggressive occupation of Israel. The Israeli expansionist policy has taken the Israelis into further conflicts outside the borders of the occupied territories of Palestine into the neighboring countries: Egypt, Syria and Lebanon. In all of these wars Israel has been supported by the American war machine and money machine. This is so because of American Jews dominating American economy and politics as one of Alma’s causative references demonstrate:
It's politicians. It's the Jew banker-owners... Nobody gives a dam for the people who live here, that's how the Jew-bankers make billions of dollars and the U.S. government countenances like the U.S. government supports Israel. (Oates, *The Tattooed Girl* 143)

Alma, a poor sex object "some guys are crazy for" (57), voices a larger economic concern: this is the American tax-payers' concern for the billions of dollars that go directly to the state of Israel. The American Government, Reese states in an article in *Washington Report on Middle East*, paid "some $4 billion to Israel to get out of Egyptian territory" and "wants the American taxpayers to cough up $2.2 billion in addition to our regular $3 billion-or-so annual subsidy to pay for the withdrawal from Gaza" ("Not Again" 18). Such a Jewish domination of America's economic power is extended to include domination of the American media. Medved refers, for instance, to "the disproportionate number of Jews in Hollywood leadership positions" which "might somehow," as he thinks, "account for the alienation of the industry elite from the American mainstream" (*Hollywood Vs. America* 314); besides, Medved also asserts that Jews are "most commonly blamed for all aspects of the negative aspects of today's entertainment industry" (*Hollywood Vs. America* 313). The claim that Seigl's novel is "all made up" and "all lies" (Oates, *The Tattooed Girl* 257) is suggestive of this kind of domination of media. Such a Jewish domination is facing an increasing opposition from many American nationalists like the writers of what is called nationalist movements (also sometimes called "the Patriots") such as the *National Vanguard, the American Free Press and the National Priorities Project*, the "911 Truth" some politicians such as David Duke, academicians such as Norman Finkelstein and journalists such as Charley Rees.
These organizations and writers have websites that are devoted to expose what Duke calls the "'Jewish Supremacist' domination of and impact on the larger channels of fashioning American culture and identity." Some illustrations of the Jewish effects on American life have been discussed in Duke's audio message to "European Americans and the Islamic World." In his speech he accuses what he calls the "Jewish Supremacists" of having changed the face of America that, he no longer recognizes his homeland. Most of this drastic change to America's identity is through what he calls "the sane infection of Hollywood" (Duke). Like in Oates's *The Tattooed Girl*, Alma's anti-Semitic discourse has to be encountered by Seigl's anti-anti-Semitic discourse, so is the case in American culture. Oates's novel is the space where these conflicting cultural forces co-exist without canceling each other.

The media's ability to shape people's channels of perception and reaction is of great importance for policy makers in twentieth-century America. Medved's comment on the role of Hollywood in fashioning images of the United States is insightful:

The dark visions that Hollywood offers of our present and our past not only influence the attitudes of children and adults in this country; but increasingly shape the image of America in the world at large. (*Hollywood Vs. America* 233)

Nowhere does the role of the media seem to be of more significance than in cases of wars and international conflicts. It is in such cases that the state fears the all-pervading influence of the media; it fears the power media have in fashioning the audience's reactions and even their political attitudes. “Throughout the Gulf War” Kellner once
comments “military images and discourse totally dominated television programming and in general promoted a war culture” (The Persian TV Gulf War 76). A Superpower, like the USA has to keep tight control on the media as the role of the media has been tested more than once in twentieth-century America. There are numerous instances of the politically tight grasp of the media in the so-called most democratic state in the world. Kellner describes the claim of a crying teenager that had witnessed “the Iraqi soldiers remove fifteen babies from incubators and had seen them left to die on the floor of the hospital” as “the most outrageous propaganda ploy.” This story, harped on both by the President and the Vice President, “helped mobilizing support for U.S. military action” (Kellner 67). By the same token, Edward S Herman discusses such a role, more especially in American foreign policy, in a long article in 1993 and among the many illustrations of the political exploitation of the media he mentions the following:

Thus in the 1980s the Reagan administration was able to demonize the Soviet Union as an Evil Empire, Libyan leader Muammar Qadafi as premier terrorist, Grenada and Nicaragua as U.S. national security threats. . . with a high degree of mainstream media cooperation. (23-45)

The most recent illustration of the American/Zionist tight control over the Press is during the 30-day war against Lebanon in the last few months. This is how I understand the American blind-folded support for the Zionist state of Israel reiterating the same Zionist pretexts for all kinds of aggressive acts. Tight control of the media aims at assuring the masses’ profligate ignorance of the very roots of the conflict in the Middle East; not only this but it also enables the state to offer a one-sided view of the conflict for public
consumption. This is best illustrated in the most recent instance of American support for Israel. Christopher Bollyn's introductory paragraph of his essay “War Is Terrorism with a Bigger Budget” puts in a nutshell the support the Israeli government gets from the current Bush Administration:

The Israeli aggression against Lebanon is a monstrous war crime in which the Zionist state has been aided and abetted by the U.S. government. The vicious Israeli assault on Lebanon has been accompanied by a host of lies that have been dutifully parroted by the Bush administration and the Zionist-controlled mass media. (n.pag.)

Equating the deceptive procedures taken during this assault with those used in the 9/11 attack, Bollyn says “the gross deception foisted upon the public caused widespread misunderstanding of the facts and the identity of the guilty party” (n.pag). By the same token, Middle Age, published in 2002, that is at the threshold of unashamedly endless political lies could not escape touching the subject of the connection between the media and war. In the conflict of the Middle East, however, the media was under tight official control, siding with the Zionist state of Israel. This politically unbalanced American policy towards the Middle East is omnipresent in political as well as literary discourse. Oates's fictional treatment of the Jewish question is a case in point. The Israeli-Arab conflict turns up in some of Oates's texts but she follows a similar line of thought to the Republican administrations she criticizes. That is she falls a prey to the very power she condemns. She addresses this issue in the very way main stream media such as the CNN and other news agencies do. Such news agencies not only misrepresent “events” but turn
facts upside down: The defenseless kids are made terrorists and the armed Israeli soldiers killing plenty of innocent kids of less than seven years of age are depicted as defending themselves. More beguiling is, implicitly though, the role of the media in covering the Israeli-Arab conflict in Oates’s “Aiding and Abetting.” Steven, the protagonist of this text, watches on TV:

jarringly close-up newsreel footage taken in the Gaza Strip where several rock-throwing Palestinian boys have been shot by Israeli border guards.

He raises the TV volume slightly, not loud enough, he hopes, for Owen to detect. (*I Am No One* 44)

Oates’s very rhetoric about this conflict has been fashioned by the long impact of media on American viewers. Hence, it is no coincidence that she reports the episode in the very order and style in which American media had been reporting such incidents for ages now. Besides, “not loud enough” suggests that either the voice of the repressed colonized people should not be loud enough to be heard or the atrocities of the oppressive colonizer should not be louder as to be heard in the international media and may provoke wider antagonism. Oates’s interpretation of a scene she may have seen one day on TV cannot betray the way she has been fashioned by the state-tightly controlled media. If this shows anything, it shows to what extent the media succeeded in fashioning the masses' view of the Israeli-Arab conflict. It also demonstrates how political power controls the mass media to fashion public opinion, to mobilize public support, to create a virtual space for opposing ideas and to mold the national character in the most positive light. This latter point is more likely to refute the negative hypothesis that power is always repressive. It is
out of and as a reaction to ceaseless American support for Israel that a group of American intellectuals, mainly left and liberal intellectuals, emerged as an opposing team to America's unchecked power politics, and more especially, to America's unbalanced policies in the Middle East. I have no doubt that Oates is a part of those larger movements of Lefts and Liberals. For, she like Noam Chomsky, Charley Reese, David Duke, and Michael Medved, participated in the circulation of the resistant discourse to the double-standard official discourse that deals with the Palestinian issue. Worried like all other humanists, Oates is a part of the wider rejection of American politics. She is aware that the "politics" as "war," as it is defined in Blonde, is dragging America into an endless ocean of antagonism and unknown but surely unmitigated chain of disasters. Worried like all other American taxpayers, Oates is a part of the wider consciousness of the consequences of America's support for Israeli's policies. It is common knowledge that such support is costing Americans a King's ransom of dollars. Oates's The Tattooed Girl put this in a nutshell: "The U.S. always bailing Israel out, billions and trillions of dollars down that rat hole, well how's about we don't bail them out for a change, give the Palestinians a break" (33).

Oates's fiction is, partially albeit, a part of the connection between power and the media. Middle Age, for instance, represents the role of the media as one of the techniques that fashion the American state at different intervals of history. Middle Age makes it clear that it is the media that make it possible for the Vietnam War to become a major concern of the American public. Broadly speaking, most Americans evade any entanglement in politics, both domestically and internationally, so far as their three most significant rights of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" are not threatened. Yet, millions of people
have been moved by the atrocities of the Vietnam War they watched on TV screens or seen in newspapers:

The Vietnam War waged on the far side of the moon. Why it mattered so much, so suddenly, wasn't clear. If you didn't switch on the TV except for New York or local news... you could mostly avoid it. (Oates, *Middle Age 70*)

This is how the media waken the audiences' interest and provoke their antiwar sentiments. That is why "Marianne... said she hated war, any war, and prayed the Vietnam War would end soon, and all wars would end, forever. And then no one would be mad at anyone else, ever again" (Oates, *The Mulvaneys 52*).

One more point that is worth discussing here is the American official "indifference" to the Nazis' "slaughter of the Jews." Otto Ose brings this to the fore when he calls the "Nazi's, and the American collaboration in the slaughter of the Jews" and his accusation of FDR'S "turn(ing) away Jewish refugees and send(ing) them back to the gas ovens" (Oates, *Blonde* 290). Contrary to this seemingly Jewish version of the story goes some other American historical narratives. Patterson who, though admits of the Roosevelt's administrative "flaws" in dealing with "European Jews" (274) repeats the "restricted" option FDR had before him (274-75). More to the point, Patterson substantiates his defense of the quasi-neutral official stand: "Bombing, they [American politicians] argued, might lead the Germans to accelerate their slaughter of the Jews" (Patterson 274). Besides, it was FDR's 1944's War Refugee Board, as Patterson expounds, that led to "the salvation of thousands [Jews] late in the war" (Patterson 275).
What both ways of looking at Ose’s questions yield is not far from Alma’s anti-Semitism in Oates’s *The Tattooed Girl*.

If Oates’s reconstruction of the TV footage fails to neutralize her discourse of the conflict in the Middle East, her reconstruction of certain facets of the American past is more than a success. This is so because such a reconstruction is meant to be different from the way(s) such a past used to be written. American histories of politics and wars have always been male-dominated narratives. Furthermore, much of what is narrated is filtered through male consciousness: that is from the war-makers’ sort of stand-point. Oates’s texts are a kind of rewriting those old male-texts but filtered through female consciousness. Much, if not all, of Oates’s fiction which deals with war is a rewriting of history from an Oatesian (female) perspective. In all of these few anecdotes, from the Korean War through the cataclysmic 9/11, one can obviously infer that Oates’s texts are but one version of the many texts written about these events and they are a part of the prevailing political rhetoric as well. Her texts tend to give a touch of the real through the use of detailed and meticulous description of the health hazards of wars as well as the sarcastic discourse which characterizes much of the antiwar agenda in the United States of America. What characterizes Oates’s fiction is the power of combining art and culture making the former a constituent part of the latter. In Oates’s *Rape: A Love Story*, for example, one may think that by juxtaposing the issues of war and rape in one volume and simultaneously tackling a very recent political event, Oates equates the Gulf War with a rape incident, which in many respects it is at least from an Arabs’ point of view. In both cases, the victims can neither resist the power of the crimes nor are there any laws anywhere that can bring them any sign of hope of potential justice. Indeed, this is also an
illustrative incident where American history not only intersects with other nations' histories but it also contributes to the fashioning of such histories to say the least. And Oates's texts participate in that process of fashioning by juxtaposing the aesthetic and the political.
Such polemic discourse has been a major journalistic trend in the U.S. One year after Blonde had been published, Castro's name was still associated with dictatorship: In an article in The Frederick News Post commenting on Jimmy Carter's visit to Cuba, Castro was still "the Cuban dictator" Newspaper Archive (Thurs. May 16, 2002, A-6). Two years after the publication of Oates's Blonde, the anti-Cuban regime discourse still appears as part of the hostility of official and journalistic discourse against Cuba. See for example, John Kane's "American Values or Human Rights? U.S. Foreign Policy and the Fractured Myth of Virtuous Power." This long article opens with describing Castro as "one of the U.S. government's oldest enemies": apparently a postulate in American journalistic discourse. Even in 2004, according to the English digital newspaper of Sancti Spiritus province, Cuba, "President George W. Bush revealed a plan to re-colonize the island" (16 May 2007. 27 May 2007 <http://www.escambray.islagrande.cu/Eng/opinion/Oplan0705161103.htm>).

At face value, this brief survey of hostility towards the Cuban regime bears a sense of continuity. There have been some voices for ending this hostility. Carter's visit to Cuba is one of the ruptures in the long history of such hostile relations between the two neighboring countries.

In this connection, it is worth noting that in one of his post-September 11 speeches, George W. Bush has said: "The world has changed after September 11. It's changed because we're no longer safe". Commenting on this policy of fear the Psychiatrist and Congressman, Jim McDermott says: "Fear does work... You can make people do anything if they're afraid." Asked how to make people fear he adds "We make them afraid." by creating an aura of endless threat." (Both the President's and the Congressman's words are cited in Fahrenheit 9/11 by the Director Michael Moore.) Several leading members in the Bush administration perpetuated this nightmarish discourse.

In a most recent interview with the Iranian President Ahmadinejad, on "Good Morning America," on the ABC, the President tells his interviewer that official American allegations against his country have no solid evidence and that the Iranians "think that the U.S. is following another policy trying to hide its defeats and failures and that's why it is pointing its fingers to others." In an answer to his fear of an American strike against Iran, the President says:

"Fear? Why should we be afraid? First the possibility is very low, and we think that there are wise people in the U.S. that would stop such illegal actions but our position is clear. Our nation has made it clear that anyone who wants to attack our country will be severely punished. (Sawyer, Diane. Interview. "Iranian President Ducks Charges That Iran Is Arming..."

4This article is rife with misguided views about the relationship between religions and terrorism and is part of the unbalanced prevailing views about such a relation. Unlike the writer, I cannot consent to equate "religion" with "fundamentalism" or even, in today's recurrent allegation, with the so-called terrorism. Indeed, only a few of some religious groups may opt for some extremist positions. Hence, I rather reject such polemic in Toto. Charley Reese's "No Muslim Peril" saves me the effort to respond to the biased discourse of Ranstorp. Reese's reply hits on the issue of extremism:

Yes, there are some Muslim extremists, just as there are some Christian extremists, Hindu extremists, Jewish extremists and so forth. Extremism is a personality disorder not confined to any one religion or political system. Anyone can become infected with it. (n.pag.)

5I am here using Oates's words, which to a great extent, substantiate the conspiracy view of the war in Iraq. For indeed, there are more evidences of the lack of any connection of whatsoever between Saddam Hussein's regime and the so-called Al-Qaeda. Interviewed in Fahrenheit 9/11, Richard Clarke, a National Counterterrorism Coordinator as designated by the 9/11 Commission Report, admits that the President has asked them to claim the involvement of Iraq in the attack of September 11 and, to the same end, Defense minister, Donald Rumsfeld suggested that America should "bomb Iraq" as there are "no good targets" to strike in Afghanistan. (See Fahrenheit 9/11.) By the same token, The 9/11 Commission Report finds no whatsoever connection between Iraq and al-Qaeda: "Nor have we seen evidence indicating that Iraq cooperated with al-Qaeda in developing or carrying out any attacks against the United States" (66).

6For further information about this group, readers are referred to the group's newly constructed internet site on the following link: http://www.iiv.org.uk/.

7I have retained the term "anti-Semitic" as I believe it to be Oates's target in those selected texts where the Holocaust is mentioned. I would rather use the term "anti-Zionism" or "anti-Israelism" as the term "Semitic" has more to do with the Jewish language (i.e. Hebrew). Day after day, Zionism is proven to be a violent political ideology.

8I take the liberty of diverting from the journalistic tradition of describing the conflict between Israel and Arabs as an "Israeli-Arab Conflict" in lieu of an "Arab-Israeli Conflict." This is because such a reversal of the phrase puts the records straight. It places Israel as the initiator cause of this conflict as an occupying power. Any survey of most American newspapers from the beginning of this conflict till the present time cannot escape noticing the persistence on starting the conflict with the word "Arab." Examples of these can be taken from Stevens Point (Wisconsin) Daily Journal (Sat. 10 Mar. 1956, 2); The Fresno Bee (Tues. May 27 1969, 3-A); The Post-Standard (Thur. 19 Feb. 1970, 2); The New Mexican (Fri. 16 May 1975, A 2); and Section 1 of Daily Herald (Sun. 14
Oct 1999, Section I, p. 10). These periodicals are accessible through Newspaperarchive.com. One of the few exceptions I came across is Joe Stork’s 1974 article “Oil and the International Crisis”. Joe uses the expression “the Zionist – Palestinian conflict” in his description of the conflict at the beginning of his article but he goes back to the decades-old cliché “Arab-Israeli conflict” at latter pages. (The article is published by MERIP Reports 32 (Nov. 1974): 3-20+34, 27 Nov. 2006 Jstor.org.)

9 Norman Finkelstein is described by The Jerusalem Post as “the child of Holocaust survivors” who “has argued that Jewish groups ‘have exploited the Holocaust to enrich themselves or to justify Israeli politics’” (Jta n.pag.). Apart from his famous book The Holocaust Industry, of which The Jerusalem Post talks here, critiqued the Zionist politics in a number of his articles such as his “Israel and Iraq: Double Standards” (Journal of Palestine Studies 20.2 (Winter 1991): 43-56, <www.jstor.org/search>). There is a counter movement in America, led by writers such as the Harvard law professor, Alan Dershowitz, the feminist Phyllis Chesler and Abraham Foxman; this movement is set to defend Jews and, by extension, the politics of Israel.

10 For a more illustrative and elaborative study of the double-standard discourses and policies of the United States in the Middle East see Norman Finkelstein’s “Israel and Iraq: A Double Standard” (Journal of Palestine Studies 20.2 (Winter 1990), 43-56, <www.jstor.org/search>).