CHAPTER IV

THE STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS

For Lawrence as for Nietzsche, it is the beauty and mystery of flux of 'Becoming' that enchants us, not permanence not 'Being.' Permanence exists only in the conscious mind and is a structure erected to perfection, therefore airless and stultifying.

Joyce Carol Oates

 Radiance of inner perception: The great composers Vivaldi, Corelli, Handel and Bach were accustomed to steady themselves with a single emotional atmosphere all through the 'movements.' The new school, which succeeded them, culminating in the great persons of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven was used to rapid changes of mood and vivid contrast, not only between different subjects of the same 'movement' but also within the same subject. This epoch making novelty made music a more faithful vehicle freely expressing a powerfully passionate, kaleidoscopically varied and elementally emotional nature. The liberation, expansion, and intensification of personality and emotion brought into music, resulted from the spiritual enlargement emanating from the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars.

century, discarded rationalism and reason opting instead for introspection and feeling. This deeper and more searching inwardness is a singular achievement of the present century reflected in the writings of William James and Henry Bergson and in the clinical level in the work of Sigmund Freud. Leon Edel mentions that "Proust's observation of himself, Joyce's matching of language to sound and image, Virginia Woolf's use of poetic imagery, Faulkner's bold sally into the consciousness of an idiot all these represent victories of literature over the seeming anarchy of life."[2]

The Complex Modern Times: James C.C. Coleman while examining the Twentieth Century as the Age of Anxiety mentions that man is a psychic casualty in this Age of Hysteria enduring the stress and strain without any hope of freedom from the bondage. The will to meaning has become more primary and central than the 'will to pleasure' and the 'will to power' in this age of Psychopathologies. The desire for omnipotence is countered by impotence, the struggle for autonomy is defeated by shame and humiliated by failure and fear of persecution. Mental derangement is delineated in literary compositions in its infinite


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subtleties, giving a life like vividness and an unsurpassed emotional vigour in the process of representing the complex times.

The Ordeal of Oates's Characters: Surrounded by a 'living web of language' writers seem to filter the world through their consciousness. Oates appears to be deeply interested in learning the language and idiom of this consciousness to set her own opposition to it. She deliberately chooses mental derangement, passion and violence as her stock themes, as Neurotic disability is presented as the backdrop to most of her literary exercises. The deliberately cultivated lack of form and focus only makes Oates's short fiction linger as though they are real events one wants to forget. Her characters live on the boundaries of sanity waiting anxiously to catch even a momentary order in the flux of their lives. Oates's acute grasp and felicity in representing a character and situation makes her tormented people thoroughly convincing. Her purpose is to evoke people's struggles to "Order their fantasies, their doubts even their certainties into an external structure that celebrates the life force itself - the energy of life,"

as per her remarks while accepting the National Book Award.4

4 Joyce Carol Oates's remarks on accepting the National Book Award for then Vanguard Press Release, March 4, 1970, pp 1-2. See Appendices.
Oates though describes the social disintegration very much
like her peers, she does not appear to subscribe the causa-
tion to environmental or historical factors alone. She
considers instead, psychological reasons as the determinist
forces. Stevens C. Charlotte treats "Because Oates almost
always provides either directly or by suggestion, a psycho-
logical history of her characters, the fiction itself
suggests a basically psychoanalytic explanation for
character's motivation as well as for the inevitable
catastrophes."

Dealing with a sense of isolation, Oates drives her
characters towards a violent destiny activated by the
inner compulsions. With a singular concentration, she
taps the unconscious responses, presenting a truthful detail.
Emulating Dreiser, Oates gains an open access to primary
feelings and conveys the depths of feeling usually associ-
ated with Balzac or Shakespeare. Oates's characters find-
ing themselves inadequate and vulnerable, subscribe to a
neurotic alternative as a defensive action protecting
their partial and static selves. Charlotte C. Stevens
strongly implies in her thesis, that Oates's imagination is
dominated by fundamentally Freudian patterns. Basing the

5 Charlotte C. Stevens, "The Imprisoned Imagination,
the family in the fiction of Joyce Carol Oates," DAI
35-1, (July 1974) p.479 A.
argument on the textual evidence and interpretation, she further explains how 'family imprisonment' in Oates produces essentially infantile character types unable to 'redefine' or 'reexamine' any of the family structures and models which have entrapped them, because of the primacy of their own emotional dependencies and bondages. 6

Oates's characters often experience the feelings of depersonalization and disembodiment. Charlotte Goodman quoting from R.D. Long's The Divided Self, explains that these feelings are characteristic of individuals who are afraid of their own identity, imagining themselves in constant danger of obliteration. 7

Like Bellow, Oates creates characters who are not infallible creatures but are burdened, alienated victims. In most of her fiction she portrays characters moulded by society or by their own emotional environments. She endows them with sufficient power, to overcome ignominy and to explore for values completing their lives. She mentions, "All of my writing is about the mystery of human emotions," and "I am concerned with only one thing... the moral and social conditions of my generation." 8

6 Ibid.
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6 Ibid.
Oates has her focus, on the mysteriousness of the ordinary and the confounding discrepancies of human fact. She has come to believe that man's social standing and obligations inevitably are driving man to a blind alley and much mental agony. In her fiction an indefinable feeling of deep regret a gnawing sorrow can be discerned running as the under current. The emotional chaos she weaves into her fiction, heightens the awareness of the depths of mental experience. Represented always in conflict, Oates's characters venture to liberate themselves from the stifling emotional confinement. While illuminating the emotional experiences of her characters, be they migrant workers, rich farmers, suburban executives or urbanites, Oates evokes an overwhelming sense of suffocation. Zenobia Mistri writes that "Oates's characters continually search for viable ways to surface into life." She contends that they effect their ability to control in (a) creating new possibilities for survival, (b) relying upon another human being and (c) combining both the strategies. The last approach the thesis opines, seems to yield the greatest amount of equilibrium thus enabling the Oatesian protagonist to make the transition from one state of being to another.9

Oates's interest in Personality: Aesthetically ambitious and intensely passionate, Oates appears to explore the tensions in her own psyche as a clue to the study of modern man. She has an instinctive grasp of psychology and does not endorse the mechanical incorporation of any particular school of psychology. This characteristic feature lifts her fiction into the realm of interesting art. Oates has built up a faith in the instinctual wisdom of the unconscious like her peer Nabokov providing a commentary on the consciousness. Her fiction reveals an obsessive concern with the human psyche striving to create an order from the chaos. By presenting the dis-integrated and inadequate selves in her fiction, Oates appears to emphasize the integration of personality. G.F. Waller explains that Oates is terribly concerned with personality because it is so important, while at the same time fragile and vulnerable to threats from both outside and inside the self. Robert Possan quotes Oates saying: "without personality there cannot be art," for without it we cannot imagine the existence of others or create the metaphors needed for proper understanding of human beings. Her deep interest in personality


makes her consider even neurotic behaviour as natural. She in fact thinks that the impulse to 'make well' is the most sinister goal of civilization. The pathological behaviour, reveals, according to her, the true possibilities of 'Night Side' of the human experience. Dreams, madness, love and psychopathology of everyday life, Oates considers, are excursions of the alien invasion. She writes in Night Side: "We are at all times vulnerable to incursions from the other side of the personality .... We cannot determine the nature of the total personality simply because of it, perhaps most, is hidden from us" (NS, 20). Unlike the third force psychologists stressing on self-actualization and self-enhancement through love, aesthetics, mysticism, creation, insight and other peak experiences, Oates believes in a glimmer through exalted view of human personality. G.F. Waller clarifies that Oates contributes to a will to meaning, rather than a will to satisfaction emerging through pain, anguish, neurotic and self-alienation.12

A New Trend of Characterization: Her well-crafted fiction presents a microcosm with an ability to compact a lifetime of emotion. Plunging into the thick of mundane

12 G.F. Waller, Dreaming America, p. 52.
existence in her fiction, Oates makes her stories throb
with life retaining a basic ideational and theoretic unity.
"Most of my writing," Oates explains in an interview,
"is preoccupied with the imagination of pain... I feel
the moral imperative to chart the psychological processes
of someone who has gone through suffering of one kind or
another, but who survives it (or almost survives it)." 13

Freud regarded writers because of their intuitive
grasp of the hidden motive behind human action. He con-
sidered them the 'Precursors' and 'Conductors' of his
science. Kafka explored the Freudian concepts of guilt
and punishment of the dream and the fear of the father.
Thomas Mann has always been susceptible to Freudian
Anthropology. Joyce with his interest in the numerous
states of consciousness, with his use of words, with his
sense of interpretation and with his inimitable treat-
ment of familial themes fully exploited Freud's ideas.
Stendhal and Proust even without the knowledge of Freud
echoed his theories intuitively in their works.
Schopenhauer and Nietzsche anticipated Freud's concepts
and worked as if they were to suggest his "all the theory.
Oates's debt to these Titans of the human race is no

13 Quoted in "Transformation of Self: an Interview
with Joyce Carol Oates," Ohio Review, 15, 1973, p. 56
G.F. Waller, Dreaming America, p. 54.
more a secret. She often confesses her allegiance and open appreciation of these sensitive souls. Lionel Trilling expresses the sentiment, that "to pass from the reading of great literary work to a treatise of academic psychology is to pass from one order of perception to another, but the human nature of the Freudian psychology is exactly the stuff upon which the poet has always exercised his art."¹⁴ The authors in modern philosophy and current intellectual movements have given Oates' unique psychological perception, she deftly handles in laying bare the pathology of the times. Often like Sherwood Anderson always makes the psychic centre of personal experience as her frame of reference, not satisfied evidently with the simple realism. This practice is in line with the thinking of the post war writers summoning a new trend of characterization inspired by psychology Oates approaches her characters in terms of their psychic life considering the external acts as either symptomatic or symbolic expressions. The characters are accepted not for what they appear but for what they think and feel.

Oates evoking a new consciousness: Her fiction can almost be termed as autobiographical for it appears to feature her own imagination and temperament indulging in a strange exploration of the psyche. She is an artist like Virginia Woolf endowed with a rare talent to crystallize some of the most elusive of the inner experiences. John Ratti, reviewing Oates's Anonymous Sins mentions that "whether poet or novelist Oates inhabits the same interior world. Her sensibilities and themes remain unchanged."

Carolyn Walker explains that such "of the power of Joyce Carol Oates's fiction lies in her disturbing ability to identify and expose the fears we have deep within us. Through her art she touches these dark personal fears: those we admit, those we deny and those we dimly perceive but perhaps refuse to confront." She illustrates that Oates explores two major fears (1) The individual's fear of physical or emotional damage inflicted by another person. "Where Are You Going; Where Have You Been?" depicts a helpless woman's fear of male sexual aggression like "In the Reunion of Ice" exploring an individual's fear of emotional pain when involved too deeply with another person and (b) men's secret fear of the consequences of a sudden eruption of hidden

psychic forces which the individual suspects as lying within him but which he can neither fully anticipate, understand nor control. Mother in "Matter and Energy" stirs fear because she suggests what could happen if we lose control either temporarily or permanently. 16

As in modern art practised and promoted by Van Gogh, Cezanne, Picasso and others Oates endeavours to pierce below surfaces perceiving new relations to the reality of nature. Oates like Kafka and Camus ventures to recover the direct aesthetic experience by boldly portraying the despair and dehumanizing; American culture. Rollo May explains that when the culture is caught in the profound convulsions of a transitional period, the individuals suffer spiritual and emotional upheaval, either sinking into dogmatism and conformism giving up awareness, finding the accepted ways of thought and yielding security, or forced to strive for a heightened self consciousness to be aware of their existence with new conviction and new bases. 17 The present widespread interest in Oriental thought in the western world is a


reflection of a cultural crisis - a sense of estrangement, and a desire to go beyond the obvious dichotomies establishing a new consciousness.

Anxiety: People cross their paths in the day to day world enacting dramas of various hues. Each drama is isolated and each individual remains locked within the private experience in spite of innumerable points of superficial contact and relation. Oates like Joyce and Woolf, brilliantly weaves from one mind to another. She filters the anxiety seeping through the isolated existences in lives of intensities in her major fiction. The feature worthy of notice in Oates is the clarity and directness with which she examines the inner life. Her protagonists plunge deeper into the unknowable, testing the ability of the psyche to bear anxiety. The Kafkaesque nightmarish intensity, the erupting psychic forces and the bizarre behaviour of the characters in Oates's fiction seem at the outset without any clear rational motivation. But Oates's summoning of such an atmosphere is deliberate and the exercise reveals her felicity in grasping the essentials of the state of anxiety. Percival M. Symonds mentions that Anxiety occupies a focal position in the dynamics of human behaviour. He explains that a large part of human adjustment in fact is concerned with
avoiding or relieving anxiety. 18

It is an extremely distressing state, characterized by a peculiar helplessness and most people go to the extent of self-destruction seeking relief from this state of anxiety desperately. Mortan Kaplan and Kloss describe that the "Psychoanalytic concept mentions that the most basic drives of human drives are those of libido and aggression. Love and hate, the creative and destructive principles were judged even by Plato to be the innate pattern of the soul — our desires and temper which need to be controlled by reason." 19 The opposition between human drives and the demands of the society creates a dilemma which can be resolved only in the state of anxiety. The modern day writers have extensively used this distinction between choice and necessity in presenting frequently the dramatic point of an entire story thriving on fixed forces of inner motivation. Karen Horney explains describing the neurotic times, that Freud propounded two views concerning anxiety — (1) anxiety resulting from a repression of impulses exclusively to the impulse of sexuality, a purely physiological interpretation (2) Neurotic anxiety resulting from fear of these impulses, the discovery of which


would incur an external danger - a psychological interpretation. Karen Horney's concept is based on the integration of the two views of Freud that anxiety in general results not so much from fear of our impulses as from fear of our repressed impulses.\(^{20}\) Alfred Kazin writing about Oates mentions that the middle class American living a life that is too exceptional feels now acutely threatened by history. This condition, he mentions, expresses itself less as upon social conflict than as individual anxiety, revealing itself as the typical American rhetoric of bitterness.\(^{21}\)

Joyce Carol Oates appears to be the mouthpiece of the women writers voicing the American complaint that the self no longer feels safe and is thoroughly betrayed. The present study has already suggested in an earlier division, Oates's delineation of Narcissism and Sadomasochism as character traits built up in order to control underlying feelings of insecurity or danger as aggressive tendencies. Oates depicts her characters as neurotic persons driven imperatively toward dominating everyone and wanting to be loved by everyone - toward detachment


from people and a craving for their affection. By depicting such utterly insoluble conflicts Oates appears to touch the dynamic centre of the neuroses.

The individual in Oates seeks self-identity and fulfilling way of life within the personal experience living in the midst of insoluble conflicts. Abnormality is the direct expression of the individual's inability to find adequate self-identity, values and meaning. In Oates the need for security appears to be closely related to the need for adequacy. Rollo May offering an existential definition of anxiety mentions that "Anxiety is not an affect among other affects such as pleasure or sadness. It is rather an ontological characteristic of man, rooted in his very existence as such it is always a threat to the foundation, the center of ... existence."22 This subjective state of the individual's becoming aware of his 'nothingness' in Oates's fiction, strikes at the core of self-esteem overwhelming the person's awareness of existence blotting out his sense of time and erasing the memory of the past and stifling the future. Anxiety in these lives thus is ontological as a threat to Dasien their 'Being.'

Existentialism: Socrates in his Dialogues, Augustine in his depth psychological analysis of the self, Pascal in

22 Rollo May, Existence, p.50.
his struggle to find a place for the reasons of the heart are illustrious progenitors of Existentialism in western history. It arose in Kierkegaard’s violent protest against Hegel and Aristotle. According to him, their intellectualism had perverted the essential meaning of life and he felt that we cannot neglect reason completely, yet reason is unable to grasp the innermost scheme of things. Kierkegaard questioned Hegel’s identification of abstract truth with reality. According to Kierkegaard truth exists only as the individual himself produces it in action, concerned basically with Ontology, the science of Being. This reaction against reason became even more pronounced in later Existential thinkers, especially in Sartre, who turned completely away from traditional philosophical thinking and consequently he relied on intuition as the foundation of knowledge. 23 Ontas’s endeavor in all her fiction is to rediscover the living person amidst the compartmentalization and dehumanization of modern culture. Paul Tillich writes that “Reality or Being is not the object of cognitive experience, but rather ‘existence’ is Reality as immediately experienced, with accent on the inner personal character, of man’s immediate experience.” 24


Heidegger's seminal work *Being and Time* offered Binswanger and other Existential psychiatrists and psychologists the deep and broad basis for understanding Man. The human being, engaged in studying the natural phenomenon is in a unique and significant relationship to the objects studied. The subject man can never be separated from the object which he observes.\(^\text{25}\) Oates's depiction of the love relationships already examined in this thesis appears to be the direct application of this existential bent of mind. Existentialism in short, is the endeavor to understand Man by cutting below the cleavage between subject and object which has confused Western thought and science since the Renaissance. Three simultaneous modes of 'being-in-the-world' characterize the existence of each 'Being' in Oates's fictions. (1) The world around — environment (2) With world — the world of one's fellowmen and (3) Own world — the mode of relationship to one's self.

Zenobia Mistri charts the ways in which Oates's characters try to gain equilibrium and control in their lives as they attempt to negotiate a passage into 'being'. All of Oates's characters are driven by the need for love and a centre. Each of them has blocked this need by 'control' in the varying manifestations. Oates's

\(^{25}\) Ibid, pp 26-27.
characters seek a spiritual centre an 'omega' point, a place where a synthesis is permitted. In her fiction Oates depicts the individual in the perspective of the larger world of culture and history. In a 1973 Psychology Today essay Oates writes: "All the books published under my name in the past ten years have been formulized complex propositions about the nature of personality and its relationship to a specific culture." Ellen G. Friedman mentions "beneath her fictive Volcanic surface lies a vision of reality of the "Pervasive idealism of American culture, the romance tradition of classic American literature, and the quintessentially American notion of freedom and self sufficiency." Primal of Emotion: Oates's epigraph to her second volume of poetry Angel Fire comes from Byron and it says "Passion is the element in which we live, without it, we hardly even vegetate." Oates recognizes in her fiction the primacy of emotion over reason emphasizing the reality of human passion. The intensity of passion Oates depicts serves as an index of the character's capacity to

26 Zenobia Mistry, DAI, 38-10, (April 1978) p.6122 A.  
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26 Zenobia Mistri, DAI, 38-10, (April 1978) p.6122 A.
transcend the trivial. Oates's admiration for Chekhov, Yeats and the Absurdist Playwrights as revealed in The Edge of Impossibility, stems from the fact that they resist "systematic definitions, remaining true to their subject - life - by refusing to reduce their art to a single emotion and idea" (EI.141-137). Producing stories that project the raw vitality of suppressed desire, impulses, urges, and instincts Oates writes linking with metaphor her human and geographical landscapes. Peter S. Prescott writes that Oates' "compresses much emotion in small space. She can show in a brief paragraph the fright, hurt, anger, love, impotence and hostile weather, tension between people that kills communication."29

**Anxiety in Oates's Short fiction.** A close scrutiny of Oates's representative short stories suggests the efficacy of anxiety in a literary art form. The salient features of the classical psychoanalysis and modern existential philosophy are so obvious in her fiction. Oates deftly portrays the existential turmoil motivated and inspired by her deep interest in Sartre particularly impressed by his Nausea.

*By The North Gate* (1963) Oates's first collection of stories attempts to depict the relationship of past to

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present, filtering the sense of disorder and violence from both past and present. James Mc Conkey reviewing the collection comments that the modern story and novel alike are composed of variety of 'blocks' many of which look backward rather than forward. "If a character — and by implication, his creator — is unable through an act of will, to determine his future he can still relate the present moment to the experiences of the past." Memory has all the capacity to turn the disorderly and often violent present moment more explicably, showing the tension between oppositions, one times, better than the 'epiphany' or the 'tidy resolution'. Oates's stories the writer contends are connected through their moral impulse and hence can be read like a single unit. "Her characters are caught by the past, they are bewildered by the intrusions of the past upon the present, and yet it is in that flow of past experiences that they are given meaning and identity."30 Her main concern is to construct some thing rational out of one's movement in time. Though her fiction some times fails to capture the peculiar social texture of a particular time and place, it brilliantly illuminates the emotional lives of her characters evoking an over-

whelming sense of psychological pressures disturbing the American situation.

In the first story of the collection "Swamps" Oates patiently probes the depth and intensity of the loneliness. The grand father of the story is quite lonely. Desiring to offer a new meaning to his loveless existence, he brings a destitute pregnant, insane, young woman to his cottage. He tends her interests in many a war with the outside forces. But he dies frustrated cheated by his own convictions. Oates very efficiently captures the anxiety through her inimitable narration. The simple incidents connected with a family in a rural landscape meticulously record the pulsating inner story like on Electro Cardiac Graph. Oates suggests that there is no truth either in the body or in the intellect. Existence is not that simple as to factor it in terms of pain and pleasure. In a closely knit family, each member is a force to reckon with, luring the others away from the centre. The son taunts his father saying "Yes I am sick of life. I am sick of this life." (BMG.6) A typical neurasthenic, suspecting every one, he suits his father for bringing him into the dry as dust world. He is neither ready to offer nor to receive love and endures the torture. "It ain't life one sur on him, it's himself.... this here is a damn good world, a good damn good world, it's
all you got and you better pay attention to it" (BNG.11-12). With all this optimism he is ultimately thrown in disbelief and remains watching all his dreams shattered.

"In Images" Oates captures the dislocation in the present, throwing light on the dark and subtle roots of personality. She reads malady in the melody of love. Oates' insight into the peculiarities of infancy is exploited to the maximum fictional advantage. Life is a bundle of images. It is the image that matters influencing the reality. In fact reality gains its significance through the images. As the images chronicles in the human cell structure, images are in the evolution of human personality. Oates appears to study the 'oral stage' of the human sexuality in the first section. Through the images suggesting oral criticism Oates suggests the greed for love and recognition in the protagonist's heart. In the next section Oates describes the 'Anal Personality' (BNG.107) revealing simultaneously the girl's naked hatred for her mother and her siblings. "The girl watches the baby and her mother - they are so close - and she hates them both and wishes them dead." (BNG.107). The image of her behaviour towards the siblings is underlined by suspicion and ill-will and hatred. She considers that she is so very superior to them - something very precious and doubts the sincerity of others - a distinct
anal character. In the fourth section "Five years ago" Oates depicts the ambivalence. She introduces the passions of the romantic love - the criticism based upon the grown-up adult genital sexuality - that ultimately fill her inadequacy and drive the ambivalence. The title story "By the North Gate" contains dreams and nightmares denoting underlying anxiety. The little rever's anxiety lies in his desire to lure forth way, fulfilling his essential insecurity. He is eternally involved in cheating death that looms large over the frightening reality.

His dog Nell stood symbolically representing his person. The loss of his kith and kin was like the dog's ears mercilessly slit. "The dog's ears had been slit, neatly and viciously and were now crusted with dried blood."

(ENG.196). The act of killing the hog by the mischievous children is the desertion of his children - Frank, Bill and Nancy - to represent only those children who intrude into his farm and kill the hound Nell for their sport. The deep gash in the stomach of the dog is symbolic of the misery caused to him because of his children. Like in a dream we notice a thought inversion. Nell is made purposely a female hound, the inversion of his own sex. It is also to match the womb with the femininity responsible for procreation that is the cause of all his anxiety.
The Wheel of Love (1970) is another collection of stories eloquently expressing anxiety. Reviewing this collection William Abraham wrote that there "is a sense of tension, of nerves strained to the breaking point of the pitch that is close to madness in much of what she writes." 31 The Virginia Quarterly Review mentions that a single created personality dominates the experience of each story and the situation makes up the action. 32 Alfred A. Knopf calls these stories "Prose poems in which Oates makes her impact in new ways as did James in The Sacred Fount and Virginia woolf in The Waves." 33 Pearl B. Bell reviewing the volume mentions that a quality of mind and emotion asserts more markedly in these stories. They show the multiple faces of love—female sexual and familial. "In fact love in her hands becomes a universal form of self-ordained depravity, often obsessive and perverse, an involuntary act of enslaving self-condemnation." 34

Many of these stories take place in and around Detroit, where the middle class people attempt to cope

31 The Reader's Adviser: To Literature, Vol. 1
with rootless and disoriented lives. Robert E. Long mentions that these characters are "people with disintegrating marriages, but most characteristically the protagonists are girls or young women who are trapped within themselves by traumas impelling them toward a self-destroying isolation or actual insanity." 35

Oates reveals an unerringly eye and an intelligible ear in "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?" One of her most widely reprinted stories. It is an interlude of terror building fearfully toward a violence so unspeakable that it must happen only in fiction. In fact the world of her fiction is often violent and strange, the landscape threatening and the mind troubled by inner turbulence and outward terror. Caroline the protagonist stands as the representative of adolescent character peculiarities. Though a tender being, she is caught between the crisis across exigencies of passion. Play lands her into deep trouble. Arnold Friend and Ellie are adults and they lead the lives of predators in the guise of adolescence. Their aggressive nature evidently malignant, assumes numerous expressions. Though Oates meticulously avoids direct references to specific incidents of destruction, she paints

these two, potentially capable of any perversion. Arnold is deeply neurotic and turns menacingly hypnotic in trying to seduce the young girl Connie. In another approach to the story it appears that he dared to turn aggressive only on noticing how Connie herself is playfully eager for a violent affair. In the company of another crook with his battered car when a defenceless highly wrung teenager is lost in romantic dreams, Arnold forces himself to dominate. Oates builds up the tempo with an obsessive atmosphere and aggressive and violent tone in an effort to endow a poetic exuberence to the prosaic theme of initiation into love life. The real anxious moments are for Connie who though is preparing for the adult grown up sexuality is indeed not yet ready. Perhaps it is not the fear of Arnold Friend and Ellie Oscar for any possible physical harm that causes Connie this anxiety. It is only the unknown dread toward the most natural human act that disturbs her terribly. Only when this ambivalence is cleared she could go happily into the sunlit pastures seeking fresh experiences away from the lands of scepticism and cynicism. Oates's ability to absorb and then to transmit the terror in her fiction is frequently noted and admired. Much of the terror in the story comes from the recognition that there must be thousands of Connies. Oates explains why Connies exist in this world. They exist because of the moral indifference of the entire adult society. Connie is left defenceless
against the temptations represented by Arnold Friend. The superficialities of Connies' values become terrifyingly apparent when Arnold Friend the external embodiment of the teenage idol celebrated in popular songs appears at Connie's home. Although Arnold works out his disguise with great care, he soon loses all subtlety in permitting Connie to know of his evil designs that he is not simply crazy but a criminal with plans to rape and probably to murder Connie. With a portrait of a psychopathic killer Arnold has also the traditional sinister trait of the devil, the arch deceiver, and the source of grotesque terror. The story explicitly prepares for portraying the perverted version of religion. To Oates religion is a "kind of psychological manifestation of deep powers, deep, imaginative, mysterious powers, which are always with us, and what has in the past been called supernatural, I would prefer simply to call natural. However, though these things are natural, they are still inaccessible and cannot be understood, cannot be controlled."36 Joyce M.W.'s mention that Arnold Friend is the incarnation of Connie's unconscious erotic desires and dreams, but in uncontrolable form.37


37 Joyce M.W.'s, "Don't y.u know who I am? The Grotesque in Oates's 'Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?"
The frightening thing about Arna is that her voices and makes her own sexual desires explicit. Connie's fears drive her into a grotesque separation of mind from body in which her unconscious self is terrified of him. Dedicat-
ing this story to the balladeer B.B. Dylan, Oates is attempt-
ing to represent the updated prose version of a ballad in which a demon lover carries away his helpless victim.

Aided by psychological insights, Oates is trying to reveal the complexity. Oates catches the mental state of her characters brilliantly in "In the Mind of Ice,"
"Unmailed Unwritten Letters," "convulsion," "Shane,"
"The Heavy Sorrow of the Body" and other stories of the collection. Seven stories in the collection "Four Summers,
"You," "I Was in Love," "An Interior Monologue," "Heard I contemplated the world from the Detroit House of correction and Began My life Over Again," "Matter an' Energy,
"What is the connection Between Men and Women?" denote a shift into the first person point of view evoking various states of mind. "An Interior Monologue" in the collection represents a man's point of view as if to balance the female voice that reverberates in the stories. Stories like these provide an immersion in the inner reality of characters according to Bernard Paris, advising "a kind of knowledge which is not wisdom, though it may be the basis of wisdom." Such fiction "gives us an immediate
knowledge of how the world is experienced by the individual. It enables us to grasp from within the phenomena which psychology and ethics treat from without."  

Oates's characters often are victimized, deceived and overcome by coincidence. They are manipulated by deranged people, deprived of life, love and fortune and yet they seek and foster the very conditions they abhor. They are victories in defeat. To use Freud's revealing metaphor they 'snatch defeat from the jaws of success' because for them the outward defeat is an inner triumph. New York Times Book Review reviewing: Murmures and Infidelities (1972) notes that it "displays variously diminished people and various elements of crisis and crack up..." Oates's talent is for setting complex perceptions across without insisting on its significance and without rigidity; her fiction too much for the purpose."  

Like in Fiedler's works in Oates's fiction marriage is insufferable, adultery is inevitable and just, and is inevitably disappointing. The burden of thought in this volume is that none is equal to marriage or to life and there is a breakdown of communication all the way down.


Miss Oates is particularly successful with bleak landscapes where the isolation is real rather than superimposed by her own peculiar slant on human relations."40

As her mastery deepens Oates's stories have become increasingly elliptical, complex, and chilling. Unlike the stories of Henry James, according to Thomas Mann, Freud's work was "a storm signal f science, against the currents of Nineteenth Century irrationalism. Concerned with the 'Night Side of Life,' Freud never assumed the unconscious as the soul animation of human behaviour. He has objectively studied the actual superiority of the impulse over the mind.41 Oates's interest in the night side of human existence in all her fiction particularly in Night Side endorses the opinions of Mann and Freud. Her endeavour is to remove the unreasonable hatred and fear of the irrational in obsessively depicting it in her fiction. It is as if to facilitate the other's enjoying a different relation to the unconscious. Flaubert, Joyce, Camus and Sartre are the major influences while employing

Frederick J. Hoffmann, Freudianism and the Literary Mind, p.208.
the theme of irrational manifestation of life. Shutting her ears to the noises of adult wisdom and conscience, judgement Oates like a student of psychoanalysis listens to the inner voices in Night Side. The volume contains some of Oates's best and most interesting work. "Daisy" is a study of the untenable position in which the 'sane' are placed when their kin are judged 'insane'. The story explores this relationship in the lives of Bonham, an artist, and Daisy his talented but disturbed daughter.

In a state of weakness he signs a paper committing her to a mental institution. Perceiving afterwards the terrible things done to her he demands that she be released to his custody forthwith. Robert Phillips mentions that Bonham in his rage and Daisy in her infirmity recall James Joyce and his daughter Lucia Anna, who in the words of Joyce's biographer Richard Ellman, was to affect Joyce's life much more deeply than he would have believed possible.

"The disarray of Lucia Anna Joyce's mind and its possible sources in Joyce's own strange and nomadic life is at the heart of this accomplished tale, one of the best in an important collection." 42 Though there are no full fledged ghost stories, the sense of 'Otherness' predominates in these stories. Much of the action takes place in the dark

and one feels at all times the little daily round of life can be disrupted. The characters depicted are in the grip of terror. The very first story announces "It is not extinction that awaits but hideous dreamlike state, a perpetual groping, blundering — far worse than extinction — incomprehensible: so it is life we must cling to, arm over arm, swimming, conquering the element that sustains us."

(N.29) Oates provides a distinct emotional colour to her otherwise clinical studies of mental disorder. The subject of borderline sanity though has impressed Oates earlier she exposes a peculiarly private and pervading pain in this collection. The characters in these stories often lose fighting their moods, memories and psychic horrors when confronted with irrational manifestations they cannot suppress or deny. These revelatory moments are tinged with a quality of realism which is "first rate" according to John Romano and "unlike other people it makes sound psychological sense."

Creative writers, despite the variety in subjects since Freud opened the gates of psychological enquiry are delineating the 'dark realm' mostly by implication and metaphor. Though writers like Conrad, Joyce, Woolf have given a great impetus to the new stance of creative

perspective, the succeeding generations are not so enthusiastic to take the lead. Particularly the matters concerning women's deepest impulses are not enthusiastically considered worthy of creative endeavor inspite of women's liberation movement. Barbara A. Bannon reviewing The Goddess and Other Women (1974) writes, these stories of Oates concerning women add "up to a rather melancholic series of portraits reflecting women's loneliness, alienation, passivity, hopelessness."44 Oates plays brilliantly with Lolita themes from the girl child's point of view. Displaying a great range, Oates lays out her obsessive patterns in twenty five separate stories instead of incorporating them in a novel. John Alfred Avant considers "Magna Mater" the best of the stories in the collection telling about the tense relationship between a divorced mother and her mentally ill son. Moving with a sense of life lived at the bone the reviewer mentions that this story discovers the master story teller, effortlessly compressing a situation into an "exciting story that has enough abrasive interplay to fill out a novel, rearranging time sequences for small juxtaposition that produced the precise effects desired."45 As fresh excursions

44 Barbara A. Bannon, Publisher's Weekly, October 7, 1974 p.54.
into the American nightmare the stories have sexual assault or the fear of it as a recurrent source of trauma as an automobile accident. Sometimes the two motives coincide as in "Blindfold" where little Betsy's uncle in the course of an illicit game drives off in a panic ventas over the steering wheel with shame and kills himself in a crash. His niece is a witness to this nightmare. Marian Engel writes that Oates is extending her range getting closer to the core of her fictional women's torment. Refusing to glorifyize "she makes reality work for her by selecting details other American writers reject as tediously unromantic. She never emphasizes to make points, but does not dramatize... She uncovers the underside of a puritanism that forgot to tell us what to do with Kali."

The reviewer contends that the loose form of story collection "allows her to counterpoint self-abnegation and power, rape and the desire to be raped, the desire to mother, the desire to wound."46

Post-Freudian Psychoanalysts such as A. Rl Abrahan, Otto Fenichel, Melanie Klein and Erik Erikson modified and added to Freud's observations about the anal phase of human development. Obstinacy, pride, pretension, depreciation of others and resistance to outside interference

are some of the pronounced traits of anal sadism. The Hungry Ghosts: Seven allusive Comedies (1974) cleverly exploits the nameless feelings of dread, impulse of love transformed into impulse of derision, tyrannical superego and compulsive ritual acts of obsessive and compulsive characters. Gates focuses on the interior lives of ordinary academics, their anxieties, ambitions and rationalizations in these stories of the collection.

"Democracy in America" narrates the story of Ronald Pauli in a university campus in Canada. After several attempts he is permitted inside Mr. Novak's residence. He deliberately avoids any personal contact with her, lest others should interpret it as a strategy on his part to gain favour with her husband, "it was only his second year at this University and he was not exactly certain of his future." (HG.12). Ronald observes her as a passionate woman and displays self-consciousness in her presence. He is visiting the partment to collect his original typed manuscript from Mr. Dietrich's room. The jumble of chairs, boxes, bedding, books, magazines and the debris of - empty tin cans, empty milk cartons, and frozen food packages and the sharp and smell of the basement room occupied by the dead Dietrich reveal an expense of spirit becommg the underrgthic and grotesque
symbols. Oates depicts Ronald in this world of expediency as a Hungry Ghost writing to devour what ever available. Ronald reveals in clear and explicit terms the primitive urge for survival, particularly sought in unknown forms. As an investigator Ronald reveals the twofold anxiety - to know the truth and to retrieve his prestige and security scattered all through the ramblings of a clever enemy. A bundle of complexes Ronald is building his own surmise absolutely confident of his inferior reflexes. Oates also endows a mischievous naivete, highly secretive existence to Mrs. Novak tactics, her aching new ties. With the characters play hide and seek outwitting each other, prying into each other's intimate brimming light the darkside of their personalities. Evidences abound in the story for Mrs. Novak's anxiety. Ronald is confident of Mrs. Novak's relations with the new District. Oates wants this story as the others in the collection as a satire and quotes Swift that "satire is not so wherein beholders do generally discover every day's free but their own" from The Battle of Books. Thus, she adds a statement from Fielding's Tom Jones: "... surely a man may speak truth with a smiling countenance." Calling this an allusive comedy Oates portrays consuming lust in the university campus. Mrs. Novak can be an adultress moving around as a ghostly devilish: all evidence of her shady conduct appearing at the same time innocent of the
symbols. Oates depicts Ronald in this world of expediency as a Hungry Ghost waiting to devour whatever available. Ronald reveals in clear and emphatic terms the primitive urge for survival, particularly caught in unknown fears. As an investigator Ronald reveals a two-fold anxiety — to know the truth and to retrieve his prestige and security scattered all through the room by a clever enemy. A bundle of complexes Ronald is building his own surmises absolutely confident of his infallible reflexes. Oates also endows a mischievous and highly secretive existence to Mrs. Novak making her a matching neurotic. Both the characters play hide and seek outwitting each other, prying into each other's motivations to bring to light the dark side of their personalities. Evidences abound in the story for Mrs. Novak's anxiety. Ronald is confident of Mrs. Novak's relations with the dead Dietrich. Oates wants this story as the others in the collection as a satire and quotes Swift that "satire is a glass wherein beholders do generally discover everybody's face but their own" from The Battle of Books. To this, she adds a statement from Fielding's Tom Jones "... surely a man may speak truth with a smiling countenance." Calling this an allusive comedy Oates portrays a consuming lust in the university campus. Mrs. Novak can be an adultress moving around as a ghost devouring all evidence of her shady conduct appearing at the same time innocent of the
recent tragedy at the basement. Oates can project anxiety in depicting two sides of Ronald's personality. He is a comic figure and at the same time not free from the infantile ambivalence. He runs away collecting only the papers he requires, shivering at the unknown responsibilities the 'knowledge' would have led him in. The story indeed is an allusive comedy though Ronald's book appears as not a complete survey of "Twentieth Century Criticism of the Works of Tocqueville and Grattan," but the complete survey of the secret relations between Mrs. Novak and Mr. Dietrich. The comedy lies in the allusive anxiety expressed by Ronald, who at the outset reminds Donald duck. If Ronald considers 'Publish or Perish' slogan for survival, it is 'conceal or perish' for Mrs. Novak. One is willing to publish and the other is suppressing the truth. Ultimately Ronald succeeds in retrieving the scattered pages and Mrs. Novak remains contented in anonymity. As an investigator Ronald has a nose for scandal. It was a caricature. Oates appears to possess an interesting opinion on American democracy. It is a non-committal policy. Each one strives in his own limited circle for a limited purpose. There are no links anywhere between persons seemingly intimate. It appears that it is the individual who is important than the Institution in American democracy. The irony is that this Institution
still is in one piece, enjoying a vast reputation with the individuals constituting. It running in different directions. This story is a comedy because Ronald returns to his apartment before it is too late and Mrs. Novak has all her secrets intact with no further fear of revelation and her daughter Janey, silently witnessing all the comedy.

The next story for the study "Pilgrims Progress" is another campus story projecting the personality of Saul Bird a Ph.D. in English from New York University with a chequered career. The story is about Wanda Barnett, a lecturer in Hilberry University confronting the hungry ghost in the person of Saul Bird and all her dreams of achievement getting shattered ultimately. Oates bestows a Mephistophilian subtlety and capacity on Saul Bird who was dismissed from so many Universities for his thoroughly radical and insane notions and corrupting influence on the staff as well as students. A neurotic he has a sway over weak, immature and potentially neurotic persons. His wife Susannah another intellectual, is with her husband through thick and thin without losing her balance. Saul Bird a seasoned compaigner is persistent in his advances on the tender and immature psyches, making good impression. For Wanda, Saul is the Messiah, the saviour. Her mad rush towards his ideals makes her suffer intensely. When she hears Bird's departure from the University for Chicago
once for all, she feels a fish out of water. Wanda like 'Erasmus Hubben and other faculty and student followers of Saul Bird is a fit subject for anxiety. Saul Bird is impatient and highly inconsiderate obsessively involved in his crazy schemes, he is a megalomaniac and makes no bone of the fact. A compulsive obsession springing from an inherent inadequacy expresses itself in his prejudices and perverted genius. But often perversion is taken for genius and he is permitted to thrive. Oates achieves a realistic representation depicting such devilish exploitation. The portrayal of other neurotic characters is incidental and of mere academic interest. They lend credibility to the story offering emotional support to Oates's ceaseless campaign against anxiety. In three years since its publication, The Pilgrim's Progress has taken an honoured place in the hearts of devout Christians. Its appeal spread to the world with its translation into 108 different languages and dialects. In form The Pilgrim's Progress is an allegory, a narrative in which such abstractions as virtue, sin, love and evil are personified by individual characters through whom the moral of the story is dramatically made effective. Thus Christian is not only a Bedfordshire peasant of the Seventeenth Century but is a symbol of Modern Man in search of Soul. The readers become simultaneously involved with his physical and spiritual travail and are caught inexorably in Bunyan's moral vision. The present "Pilgrims Progress" is indeed another version
of the allegory vividly satirical representing the eternal human foibles. Oates is very hard on the glib, hypocritical and superficial life. Wanda Barnett is Christian, though a female, earnestly making a pilgrimage from the city celestial to the city of destruction. She is though, in this story without the regular company of 'Evangelist,' 'Faithful' and 'Hopeful' and is led by the modern 'Mr. Worldly Wise Man,' Saul Bird, the Fiend of Hell. But in this modern allegorical comedy Christian is not rescued and is not greeted by the Heavenly Host because "she is such an obvious Woman."

With striking titles for her 'allusive comedies' such as "Up From Slavery", "A Descriptive Catalogue" and "The Birth of Tragedy," Oates makes a caricature representation of the academic community achieving an analysis of the frailty of the flesh and blood. Of all these stories "The Birth of Tragedy" is thoroughly convincing inspired by Nietzsche's first work The Birth of Tragedy Out of the Spirit of Music (1872). Nietzsche, who once thought that Wagner, the German composer would bring about a renaissance in German culture through his music, felt later that Wagner was a source of German disintegration and attacked him in bitter and vehement terms. With a Nietzschean central character, Oates's wonderful imagination, scholarship and profound psychological acumen are evident in this
story of a caricature study. There are very close resemblances between Professor Robinson Thayer and the great Philosopher. Oates sounds a bit flippant though in depicting such a towering personality stealthily maneuvering to ruin the career of a younger. Oates's interest is to drive Robinson Thayer into a Twentieth Century Nietzsche. She retains all the original flaws, adding complexity and even subtlety to the character and surprisingly leaving him sane and dignified towards the end. Oates's narration captures the spirit of contemporary educational system where brilliance and innovative zeal are easily stifled by the hungry ghosts occupying senior capacities. Dr. Thayer's neurotic urgency appears to turn the great tragedy of human relationships highly farcical. While dedicating the collection to "those fictitious and ghostly colleagues whose souls haunt this book, Oates explains "A Proto (ghost) is one who, in the ancient Buddhist cosmology, haunts the earth's surface, continually driven by hunger - that is, desire of one kind or another." By presenting ghostly characters Oates makes the disruption of accord revealed in minute details as she does in her collection The Fabulous Beasts. She depicts the broken connections in striking images. The wonder in that volume of poetry resides in Oates's success in convincing that connection is possible through
these Fabulous Beasts. She quotes Heidegger in the epigraph of that collection "it is not we who play with words, but the Nature of Language plays with us." In her short stories Oates meticulously works to capture the fire of passion that made the 'Being' so vocal and so alive. Helen Vendler quotes Oates saying "Let us not forget what passion is like - its hysteria, its urgency, its feeling of fate, its brutality, its irrationality, its hyperboles, its intensification of perception into near torture, its cries and tears, its agony, of hunger and thirst, its annihilations and exhaustions." 47 In her short stories Oates like John Hawkes replaces plot with recurring images of haunting nature, the character with the symbols of nightmare and neuroses and the theme with a general vision of deterioration and collapse. Anxiety, Depression and Psychoneuroses become things of beauty in Oates a degree rare in contemporary literature which glorifies the sick self.

**Psychological Realism**: Marcel Proust discovered like Henry James that writer of fiction can represent as well as create life if he could summon the emotional sympathy from the reader. Dorothy Richardson placed the reader with the consciousness of a single character, Miriam

Handerson with a tenacity of purpose in her pioneering work. Determined to produce a feminine equivalent of the current masculine realism and imitating Balazsaac and Arnold Bennet she opened a new pathway to a convincing reality. When Richardson and Proust confined themselves to a single consciousness, Joyce was in the vanguard capturing the atmosphere of the mind. Long before Ulysses was published Virginia Woolf wrote:

Mr Joyce... is concerned at all costs to reveal the flickerings of that innermost flame which flashes its messages through the brain and in order to preserve it he disregards with complete courage whatever seems to him adventitious, whether it be probability or coherence, or any other of those posts which for generations have served to support the imagination of a reader when called upon to imagine what he can neither touch nor see.... If we want life itself, here surely we have it." 48

The techniques evolved by the psychological novelists exploring the realities of the mind have passed into the common currency of fiction. The younger writers of the century are subscribing further refinement of techniques and are employing stream of consciousness in new ways as well as integrating it into the older type of narrative fiction. The literary art has achieved an impossible feat by portraying the mind's atmosphere. The moment the novelist started placing the reader in some one else's

consciousness, strange things happened in fiction providing new dimension to story telling. Writers with romantic and realistic bent of mind voice their craving toward self-expression and exploitation of the perverse. They capture the splendour of the living relationships by touching the living moment. This moment of vital human experience which the emotional life filters from the relationships is the focal centre of Oates's fiction like Lawrence's novels. Oates fastens upon it and pours into it the intensity of her entire spirit. James Joyce had found an alternative to the well made plot and external characterization in the "stream of consciousness" technique. Virginia Woolf found Joyce's conception of the inner drama fraught with tremendous possibilities and exploited to the maximum advantage. Like Virginia Woolf, Oates extends her literary virtuosity in creating a fiction that conveys inner experience. Like Balzac exploring the outer social world and the naturalists with a sensibility to appreciate this outer world, Oates has enthusiastically participated in the significant shift of emphasis on the inner world pioneered by Henry James. The study of Oates's novels while illustrating her exquisite talent in representing the psychological realism also reveals her preoccupations with various states of mental being. Henry James extended the definition of experience and province of fiction, to include the
subjective world. He felt that experience is never limited as it is never complete, being an immense sensibility. "It is the very atmosphere of the mind and when the mind is imaginative - much more when it happens to be that of a man of genius - it takes to itself the faintest units of life, it converts the very pulses of the air into revelations." 49

The Stream of Consciousness: M.L. Barret calls With Shuddering Fall (1964) "an extraordinary first novel, sustained at a strong emotional level, rich, poetic, hard and tender ... perfect in form and probably ... a small masterpiece." 50 Oates gives prominence in this novel to the theme of Initiation. Amply experimenting on the conventional practice of masculine 'heroic' action and feminine 'passivity,' Oates ventures to descend on Jungian individuation and a mystic affirmation in renunciation. Oates seems to view the state of freedom inevitably leading to chaos and confusion in this story of Karen Herz. Oates sets the motion of the novel introducing highly romantic characters - a paternal figure Herz, a devoted daughter Karen and a rebel 'har. Karen's Initiation is the theme of the novel. Oates drives Karen to freedom from the

49 Ibid. p.23

paternal past released by the initial events of the novel. But this freedom only makes her vulnerable to a chaotic living with the rebel Shar. She returns towards the close of the novel to protection and care, sheltered in her past with her father Herz and her church. She reconciles to re-enter time and history learning to endure the limitations of reality. Her adventure with Shar and her acquaintance with freedom ultimately culminates in the process of Initiation. Ihab Hassan explains "that critical encounter with experience, the aim of which is confirmation into a social and moral order ... entails reconciliation to time, endeavor in history, the final acceptance of death. In the process of initiation, dreams surrender to reality."\(^{51}\)

Initiation in this novel is significantly effected by the rejection of anarchy represented by Shar Rule and not by the submission to the authoritative paternal order represented by Herz. Robert H. Pusey mentions that "Repeatedly Oates's people crave an order associated with 'home' and the loving protection of the father. Repeatedly this conflicts with a yearning for the road and freedom from the father. And both are expressions of a

struggle to control their own lives against the forces of accident."  
Oates initially drives the characters to freedom, bringing them back home aligning them with reality. Oates develops this theme of initiation through a reimagining of the Biblical story of Abraham and Isaac, conceiving her novel as a religious work. Oates by offering the reader great detail and scenic descriptions conveys meaning and evokes feeling. Karen muses "the creek had changed entirely - it looked lurking and sinister, and the rapids gurgled as if they gloat over its violent metamorphoses." (WSF.6-7). These visual images translate a pattern of sense, denoting psychological significance.

G.F.Waller mentions in a study of the novel that Oates is moving towards an evocation of obsession in the reader relying on emotions of fear, anxiety, insecurity and threat to convey an impression of the doomed struggle towards self understanding in the emotional wasteland of contemporary America."  
Oates's two central characters Shar and Karen, concentrate on a struggle for survival, mastery and autonomy. Karen's leaving her childhood home for the corrupt brutal outside world denotes a mortal fall from innocence into the complexities of adulthood. Karen

53 G.F. Waller, Dreaming America, p.90.
experiences a tragic distortion of Blake's insistence, that the redeemed soul moves from innocence through experience to a final reconciled state of mature innocence. Her desperate run towards maturity and her final capitulation to her family appear to be the movements toward repression and death. The Novel's three sections entitled "Spring," "Summer" and "Fall" stress the deterministic patterns the characters are acting out. "Spring," relates Karen's defiance of the paternal order. The accidental destruction of the bridge is a symbolic act denoting the destruction of parental authority. Driving the protagonist in the third section to Initiation, Oates makes the return felt, though terrible. Though the terms of Initiation are severe, Karen at last succeeds in establishing her identity. Fiedler while tracing the hidden currents of the American Gothic romances mentions that they strongly express "the fear that in destroying the old ego ideals of church and state, the west has opened a way for incursion of darkness for insanity and the disintegration of the self." 54 Oates in depicting Karen's disintegration of the self succeeds in charting the condition of freedom, Karen determines that "I can continue with it, with what I have become." (WSF.311-312).

54 Leslie A. Fiedler, Love and Death, p.129.
Oates contributes to a fatalistic theory that the circumstances of life and culture determine action, often preventing from providing a meaning to the already circumscribed existence. Unlike the romantic writers seeking meaning in defiance, Oates recognizes the humiliating defeat of her protagonists in transcending the limitations. In her critical works Oates voices this shift in romantic emphasis from the 'heroic struggle' to the 'inevitable defeat.' Detailing the tragic thought in "Troilus and Cressida" Oates writes, "Man's goals are fated to be less than his ideals would have them and when he realizes this truth he is 'enlightened' in the special sense in which tragedy enlightens men — a flash of bitter knowledge that immediately precedes death." (SI.30). This enlightenment resulting from a total surrender forms the theme of Oates's Trilogy A Garden of Earthly delights (1967), Expensive People (1968) and then (1969). They describe the defeat of the 'Faustian Will.' Depression, the symbol of dislocation in Oates's fiction becomes the initial incident leading to a disintegration of an associated life in these novels. The protagonists earnestly attempt to control their environment creating their identity in these novels. Depending on the notion of their adequate 'self,' these central figures venture to defy their personal history denying their past. Depicting depression,
world war, and the post war economic boom. *A Garden of Earthly Delights* provides a chronology and setting at the same time detailing the limits against which the individual has to express himself. The first section "Carleton" portrays the lurking misery and squalor of the migrant labour unfolding; a drama. Detailing Carleton's physical and spiritual deterioration, this section sets the first stage of alienation Oates depicts in the novel. Clara, the central character, the daughter of Carleton, abandoned by her lover Lowry and now pregnant, aspires for higher social status. Oates presents in Clara a hysterical with a will to power that is inseparable from a will to prostration and an unquarried aggression toward men. Her fanaticism is a function of a gnarled and impoverished psyche. Her destructive will, the means by which ideology is transformed into hysteria, turns her into a neurotic female, craving for power. Portraying Clara stabilising her position in Revere household Oates details the erratic nature of 'will' thoroughly disturbing the existence in Revere household. This appears to be the second stage of alienation leading to the story of Swan, Clara's son. Clara plans maniacally to disinherit Revere's three sons desiring for Swan, Revere's empire. "You're going to take every thing away from them someday and kick them out of this house .... Remember that" (GED.300). In depicting
Swan Oates charts the potential of will in conjuring alienation. Swan is actually caught in the existential predicament, not certain of his biological father. Oates believes in relationships and she reads in the severance of bonds the loss of identity. The conceited characters inevitably suffer alienation in Oates. The third section affirms this notion of alienation. Oates depicts all her characters in this novel seeking the liberation from the burden of their experience. They all seek the Garden of Eden which is unimaginable and incoherent. Ellen G. Friedman in a fine study mentions that in this novel as the individual's relations become abstract and existence grows from a dependence on place and family the individual responds by withdrawing his libido from the outside world. This introverted libido attached itself to the self, resulting in solipsism personified by Carleton and Lowrey, nihilism personified by Swan and megalomania personified by Clara. Swan's killing of his step father Reverc and his committing the suicide is Oates's attempt to capture the contorted landscape of Bosch's "The Garden of Earthly Delights" after which the novel is named. These parts of Bosch's triptych depict "respectively the creation of Eve in Eden, the debauchery of her descendents in the earthly garden of delights and the punishment of mankind in hell."

55 Ellen G. Friedman, *Joyce Carol Oates*, p.47
Oates suggests through this novel that the contortion to the landscape is effected with the 'imperialistic will.' "They knew. They could see. They did not live in a world made up by some one else, controlled by some one else." (GED.139). This assertion of the will turns a man into a predator aggravating the agony, particularly in the isolation of the individual. When Clara seems to be motivated by ideas of conquest Swan presents a pathetic picture of struggling against his own incoherence, terribly handicapped by the conflict he has inherited. This state of Swan sums up "the world alienation"

Oates is meticulously building from the first section of the novel. Ellen G. Friedman describes world alienation "as a process through which the individual's relationship to existence becomes more and more abstract, until he feels completely alone, rootless and purposeless." 57

G.F. Waller writes: "After A Garden of Earthly Delights Oates's basic problem as a novelist had become how to combine her intellectual intensities with the suggestiveness of her world of surging and unpredictable emotions." 58

Flodler suggests that much of the best of American fiction is a parable of the rebellious child America

58 G.F. Waller, Drawing America, p.112.
engaged in an ambivalent effort in wresting itself from
the domination of mother, England. The Novelist is un-
fettered by the outmoded values persevered to drive the
victims craving for self actualization. Fitzgerald's
Tender is the Night was called by its author as The Boy
who killed his mother. Though Oates is persistently
driving her characters for autonomy she notices the effi-
cacy of American Romanticism in the sense of connectedness.
Richard in Expensive People, as though making the matri-
cide a heroic ideal, kills his mother to avoid his
dependence on her. He evidently opts for a different
approach to the process of Initiation. Richard kills his
mother differing from the Freudian romance and establish-
ing an irrevocable relationship of Killer and the victim
between himself and his mother. This novel inverts the
romantic quest for freedom into a search for bondage.
The Novel's first part records the confession of Richard
as a murderer. The family moves to Fernwood, and Nada
abandon's her husband and son for the third time. Richard's
father mentions that Nada wanted to terminate her pregna-
cy while carrying Richard. In the second part Richard
reads the notebook of Nada and the family moves to an
expensive house in Cedar Grove. Reading Nada's story
"The Molester," Richard purchases a mail order rifle.

59 Leslie A. Fiedler, Love and Death, p. 23
Observing Nada betraying her husband, Richard attends a lecture on sexuality. He begins his career as a sniper after overhearing Nada and her lover from his hideout in a closet. Missing his mother thrice deliberately, Richard kills his mother the fourth time. At eighteen he writes his memories in a one-room apartment eating his way into obesity. Ellen G. Friedman mentions that the novel is polyphonic, mixing elements of black humor, surrealism, the grotesque, social realism and especially parody within the psychologically realistic framework of Richard's Confession. As freedom is equated with the seliphasitic consideration the tale of Richard appears as a parody of romantic reaching denoting a spiritual stagnation. Oates seems to attempt a parody of American Dream charting this suburban paradise. The lines of T.S. Eliot beautifully sums up the predicament in the novel, "Between the idea and the reality... falls the shadow." Inflated with man's limitations, this shadow transforming itself into a suburban paradise in this novel becomes the centre of Richard's hallucination. Oates makes freedom from his mother an imprisonment to Richard. Killing his mother Richard remains terribly betrayed and doomed.

60 Ellen G. Friedman, Joyce Carol Oates, p. 58.
in the novel. Richard comments that "Whatever I did, whatever degradations and evils, stupidities, blunders, moronic intrusions, what ever singly ghastly act I did manage to achieve, it was done out of freedom, out of choice. This is the only consolation I have in the face of death, my readers: the thought of my free will. But I must confess that there are moments when I doubt even this consolation.. .." (EP.307-308). Oates is developing her art attempting to intensify realism to the state of parable of feeling capturing the American spirit of existence. She herself makes her intention clear by saying that she is "not content with reporting events" instead desires" to evoke their psychological reality for the reader, through the use of sensuous details and symbols."62

Out side death and madness, compromise, a paradoxical condition of denial in affirmation, appears to be the only choice available to the characters of Oates. Friedman suggesting Heratic and not Hamlet the representative man in Oates's theme comments that "the center of gravity in Oates's fiction is not in the sense of apocalypse but in the ordinary morning that follows it."63 Oates's endeavour

63 Ellen G.Friedman, Joyce Carol Oates, p.124.
in this novel is to move her characters towards that 'Ordinary day' observing the apocalyptic world disintegrating with bursting passions. Depression directly affecting the main characters Loretta and her two children Jules and Maureen also makes, murder, accident, abandonment, victimization and other urban features the basic rhythm in their lives. The three main characters seek liberation from the stifling condition of the reality seeking a future in a condition of compromise and initiation. Facing the vicissitudes of life they may enter their individual and probably very ordinary destinies, nevertheless they cut the sharp edges and humbly wait for the ordinary morning. The novel narrates the story of two generations of the Wendall family, whose lives are darkly determined by the hostile environment in Detroit.

Sixteen year old Loretta brings her boy friend Bernie to her home. She wakes in the morning to find next to her, Bernie's dead, bleeding body shot by her brother. Hysterical she reaches for the local policeman Howard Wendall and mockly prepares to satisfy the policeman. Loretta thinks of her Bernie "she had loved him and he was dead and she would never see him again. Never would he come to her the way Howard was trying to come to her.... He was dead, it was over, finished that was the end of her youth. She tried not to think of it again." (T.50).
Pregnant, she marries Heward Wendall and settles into a life of economic insecurity and terrible deprivation. As the story grinds momentum Cates lays bare the social and economic roots of the characters. She describes Detroit with its poverty, violence, patrol cars, garbage, predatory sexuality, unemployment and psychic as well as economic insecurity until we start wondering "To whose country have I come," incidentally the title of part 2 of the novel. The Wendalls are often haunted by the dreams of autonomy and power but their lofty desires remain only as dreams. Lorette's sharpest recognitions are negative that "the world was pulling with two parts, those who were hopeless bastards and were not worth spitting on and those who were going to get some where."(T.18). G.F.Waller records "With Oates, we are never provided with a firm moral perspective; instead we are taken directly into the maelstrom of feelings, motives, and drives of the participants and invited to see them as mirroring our own."

64 The fear of contingency is one of the significant emotional experiences of them; "Maureen thought of earthquake opening the earth in violent rifts, swallowing city blocks, churches, railroad tracks, she thought of fire, of bulldozers leveling trees and buildings. Why not?"(T.212)

64 G.F.Waller, *Dreaming America*, p.131
The Wendalls while involved in the struggle against external forces are also locked in a pitched battle with themselves. Oates writes "All of Detroit is melodrama, and most lives in Detroit were fated to be melodramatic." (T. 274)

G.F. Waller summarising the story of the Wendalls mentions that it "operates on two interacting levels: one is a story of conflict, tension, and material degradation; the other, continuously interwoven, is a story of spiritual aspiration beyond the suffocating violence and determinism of Detroit." 65 As the romantic hero reaching in transcendence, freedom, wealth, power, or even love fails to convince the characters the subservience to life process remains the only alternative.

Wonderland (1971) proclaims its ambition to "pursue the phantasmagoria of personality," divided into three books titled "Variations on An American Hymn," "The Finite Passing Of An Infinite Passion," and "Dreaming America." attempting to explore the inadequate self in story after story Oates is driving towards self-sufficiency. Joanne V. Creighton suggests that Lewis Carroll's Alice books strongly influenced the theme, structure and imagery of Oates's Wonderland. 66 This novel details the relationship

65 Ibid. pp. 133-134.

66 In an unpublished paper presented at a Special session 505 of the MLA Convention in 1977 on Wonderland, Ellen G. Friedman. Joyce Carol Oates p. 95
between the self and the world. Jesse the central character finds himself an alien attempting to discern the nature and course of the world. His confrontation with bewildering times conditions his final acceptance of the extended self. His metamorphic transformations in frequently opting for various states of consciousness reveal the inherent ambivalence in the current American culture. The first book of the novel opens with a scene from the Depression with its impact on Harte family. Jesse is orphaned as the only survivor after his father in a frenzied mood ventured to obliterate the entire family. Jesse endures much agony learning to promote his own autonomy. He becomes an emblem of Oatesean nightmarish freedom, struggling to gain an identity. Oates's protagonists often consider the mere survival as a triumph and Jesse's story is the story of such a survival. He becomes a brilliant neurosurgeon seeking substitutes for the love of the family in obesity. Oates's characters straining to escape the suffocating world in the romance tradition, reveal the isolated ego in gluttony obesity and greed. Oates like Daphne Du Maurier depicts the gothic and romantic qualities in making the protagonists struggle against awesome and irrevocable fate. Aspiring to a condition of 'personal bloodlessness' Jesse wants to insulate himself from the rest of humanity. Failing
as a healer, Jesse ventures to cleanse instead, his own sensuality in a ritual of purgation by making several incisions on his body with a razor blade. This incident symbolically conveys the cleansing of his own Narcissism. In correlating the historical, cultural, religious, philosophical and psychological aspects in the life story of Jesse, Oates is evidently attempting to realize the "laughably Balzacian ambition to get the whole world into a book." 67 Oates said in an interview "I could n't do it again. It might be my last novel, at least my last large ambitious novel, where I try to recreate a man's soul, absorb myself into his consciousness and coexist with him. 68 Oates deftly conveys in this novel the idea that the overflow of self to others is an imperative of life.

Detailing the career of Jesse, Oates reveals an affinity with Freud who considered psyche as profoundly narcissistic. 69 When Freud believed that psyche resisted any extension of itself Oates painstakingly describes in her fiction that reality forces a division of self.


Oates attempts to deflate the romantic aspirations with a great understanding of reality. Intelligently blending romance and reality in *Do with Me What You Will*, Oates displays a rare insight into the essential condition. Elena, the central character, the 'little doll' with a dream-like face, 'virginal' 'perfect' - is abducted by her father divorced from her mother. He keeps her locked in a motel room where he finally abandons her. When her mother, Ardis picks her up from the police she is almost in a psychotic condition. Ardis manipulates her marriage with Martin Howe, an extremely rich and successful lawyer twenty-four years her senior. Elena sleeps away in "Virginal blankness" "Twenty-eight years, Two Months and twenty-six days." the title of the section. Elena is the best example of 'petrified character' in Oates's fiction. She completely lacks the will of her own and remains a mechanical doll who can be manipulated by others. Charolotte Goodman mentions that Elena develops this impassivity just to insulate herself from memories of the traumatic early infancy. Oates represents adolescent Elena as a statue employing Sylvia Plath's expression - "An invisible bell jar protected her." (DWM. 299). Recalling this incident Elena says, "I went into stone like the
statue in front of me: I had gone into peace." (DWM. 304). Later when she is awakened by a stranger Morisse, she moves through life in a detached way. When her lover threatens to abandon her - "I know how holy you are, how dead and empty thing..." he shouts at her - (DWM. 447).

As Faulkner's Benzy, Oates's Elena seeks epiphany in the cloistered shelter of the retarded consciousness finding no distinction between immediate reality and memory. Jack Morisse a rescuing prince awakens Elena from her cataleptic state and they ultimately escape to the reality together. The realistic aspects of plot and characterization provide a peculiar grace and credibility to the romantic fantasy. Frequent shifts from third person narration to the interior monologue give the plot a healthy psychological sense. Frederick J. Hoffman explains that the Interior Monologue is a natural stylistic companion of the psychological novel. It is based on the assumption that personality is not static and that motivation may be explored in the psychic life of a character as well as the overt act or speech. It explains that when personality is in constant state of unstable equilibrium the mood is in a fluid pattern never static. 71

Ellen Friedman mentions that the novel is built on the

71 Frederick J. Hoffman, *Freudianism and the Literary Mind*, p. 127.
apposition between romance and realism between fairy tales and life; between innocence and criminality. It is only through criminality that Jack and Elena escape the narcissistic insularity. Oates desired for long to destroy the Myth of Isolated Ego. Condemning the Subjectivity-is-truth of Søren Kierkegaard as outdated existentialism Oates writes "Many myths must be exposed and relegated to the past but the 'Myth Of The Isolated Self' will be the most difficult to destroy...." All major characters of the novel remain as manifestations of the undivided self by remaining emphatically circumscribed and denying the reality outside self. It is Elena who ultimately liberates herself by a criminal act of snatching Morrissey from his family. Freud explained that the Narcissistic personality often effects a self-cure by falling in love. Though it is not as effective as analysis, this cure appears as a really satisfying exercise.

When Thanatos dominates The Assassins, an inexorable Eros plays a triumphant role in Childwold. The novel relates the story of Lanny Bartlet, a ten year old girl and Kasch in midforties seeking the meaning of

72 Ellen G. Friedman, Joyce Carol Oates, p. 122.
his life by exclusive concentration on sexual gratification. Though Kasch succeeds in illuminating his Lolita he nowhere reveals himself and remains at the end of the novel a shadowy dismembered personality. Oates appears to sincerely attempt aligning herself to Freud's stand in equating ego instincts with death instincts and the sexual instincts with the life instincts. In an essay "Whose side Are You On?" Oates makes a ringing manifesto against the "literary high priests," the self-conscious and self-styled fabulatols. "Two decades of self-consuming, self-nourishing despair will be ending soon, and those among us who have prowled around in the gardens and cemeteries, after dark, will be eager to help with the raking up, the reclaiming of the vandalized land because it will occur to us that energies released in the day time, in the sunlight can be as exciting and powerful as energies released at night." While not sparing herself Oates challenges the writers producing the literature of "exhaustion," "Pure Objectivity" and "Parkania."

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Childwold represents Oates's transition from the despair of her earlier work toward new contexts searching the modern self. Eden Valley, once the backdrop for savage human encounters, now reconstructed to provide an emotional relief, Oates delineates a plot involving Laney's relationship with an eccentric and a recluse Fitz John Kasch. Drawn by violent passions for Laney, Kasch emerges as a tragicomic figure remaining ultimately frustrated and condemned. The tales of the other members of the family are woven between the monologues of these lovers. Oates makes Kasch credible through interior monologues. Oates's first person technique in this novel as in The Assassins enables her to follow the non rational impulses of her characters giving her readers rare and profound insights into the mysterious world of emotion, that motivates most of the action. Focussing on a single character Oates deftly experiments with the blend of first and third person narration, achieving a unique objective tone.

Longing for love and human relationship Kasch often becomes the vehicle of errant ideas. "The interior life constitutes the authentic life and actions performed in the exterior world are peripheral. Reality is what I am thinking through me, urging me as a means, a vessel, a reed even streaming through me with or without my consent the interior life is continuous, unhurried, almost undirected, unheralded." (C.138). Kasch wants to transform
the world of Bartletts into fiction denying them time and change. But he finds himself caught in the maelstrom of emotions. He remains a character in their murderous family scenario and victim of forces the Bartletts occasion. He muses "If only we had had the grace to break into laughter..." (C. 90), recognizing his absurd existence. Nabokov's Lolita appears to have inspired this novel. Oates expresses Nabokov's work as a master piece, "One of our finest American novels, a triumph of style and vision... a wedding of Swiftian satirical vigor with the kind of minute, loving patience that belongs to a man infatuated with the visual mysteries of the worlds." 77 This novel is written to express her disapproval of the fabulator's stance. Eileen T. Bender mentions that Childwold offers a composite tale allowing for multiple perspectives when Nabokov's novel is a self-conscious monologue controlled by Humbert Humbert's singular perspective and his nymphet is elusive, almost maddeningly insouciant. Oates subtly shifts her primary focus from the decadent solipsist voyeur to the responsive, youthful object of his desire. It is a critical revision." 78 Ellen G. Friedman


mentions that Oates in this novel "focusses on the vulnera-
bility of all things human to the transforming assaults of
time, to the rhythmic, transmuting metamorphic force of
the life cycle." Kasch is in search of an agent to
relieve himself of his yearning and homelessness, planning
to retrieve his past. Oates deliberately turns Kasch
vulnerable to Laney and her mother Arlene. Finding Laney
clusive Kasch moves toward her mother. Oates appears to
gramatize William James's perception that the essence of
life is continually changing character. Stressing at
the biological and emotional flux observing things move
from one phase to another driven by the life force.
Oates introduces the change creeping into the very atmos-
phere of Childwold. Ellen G. Friedman eruditely puts that
"through the sensibility of Laney, Evangeline, Oates
reveals the central themes of her vision - "that one's
life can neither be "owned" nor "controlled" and that
we conform to a universal "heart beat" which we cannot
transcend. The only choice is to surrender." Most of Oates's work romanticizes both the possession
and loss of power. She appears fascinated and at the same

79 Ellen G. Friedman, Joyce Carol Oates, p.164.
80 William James, "A Pluralistic Universe," Essays in
Radical Empiricism and A Pluralistic Universe, ed. Ralph
81 Ellen G. Friedman, Joyce Carol Oates, p.184.
time repelled by power like Mailer. This temptation to power, this drive to omnipotence appears to result from the inadequate self of the characters. All of Oates's fiction details the struggle for autonomy like Emerson and Thoreu, the earlier American Apostles of Self-reliance, and her contemporary Mailer. In its passionate representation of autonomy, Oates's fiction reveals a blend of oral and anal sadistic fantasies. Anal sadism—an urge toward mastery and erotism, a narcissistic over valuation of the self, defiance and emotional ambivalence noticed in Norma Mailer play a signal role in Oates's conception. With a desire for power Oates's male characters like in Mailer suffer from psychic impotence. Drastically incomplete they incorporate sadomasochistic traits oscillating in an ambivalence. The sadistic passion for absolute and unrestricted power is blended neatly with masochistic submissiveness creating a symbiotic system in which complete control and complete submission are manifestations of the same basic vital impotence. Acting out of paranoid delusions of persecution they are loaded with unmistakable homoerotic overtones. Oates's characters though neurotically driven are absolutely conscious of their existence and they make history incessantly, even in the limited sphere with their limited capacities. It is very difficult to reduce the Gothic dimensions of their
existence to a single word like "neurotic," nor the study of psychodynamics of repression, adequately explain their motivations. They appear to be consumed by an unappeasable hunger. Oates seems to possess a mystical understanding of the qualities of emotional life, animating even the inanimate, and dramatizing the mystery of secret thoughts, yearnings and uneasy feelings, effectively and in great style. The notion that recurs in Oates's fiction is 'numbing disbelief.' She subscribes to a view that man is located in a Universe that he can neither transcend, nor control and from which there is no separation or redemption. Like Joyce, Oates reveals a strong faith in 'associated life' - as an agent awarding significance to existence and as the only healthy alternative to the Faustian overreaching that characterizes the contemporary American culture. She considers driving this American Faust, a manifestation of Thanatos, a tempter offering seductions of death and darkness, to destruction, her sacred duty. When novelists are experimenting with surrealism, myth, allegory and fantasy in a bid to suggest the protean nature of reality in the Twentieth Century, Oates deftly employs psychological realism persistently probing into the fumbled experience like an analyst gaining unique objective stance. S.K. Oberbeck writes, Oates is just too tough to take with the bleakness and disarming ornateness of her vision. Yet to "read
Oates is to cross an emotional minefield, to be stunned to the soul by multiple explosions, but to emerge to safety again with the skull ringing with shocked revelation and clarity."82