



## Violence and victimization in the novels of Joyce Carol Oates

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### Abstract

For the past six decades the American land witnessed with major controversial issues like Race and Racism, Violence against women, Feminist sensibilities, and Gothic horror, social, political, cultural, economic and racial changes. After William Faulkner, Joyce Carol Oates, plays a crucial role in the American literature. Oates is America's most honored and respected authors, and is certainly one of the most productive serious writers in modern time. When her earliest novels and story collections began appearing in the 1960s, Oates quickly developed the reputation as "writer's writer": passionately engaged in the craft of fiction'.

Oates was recognized as a major new voice in American fiction while still in her twenties. As a result, it is very difficult to summarize her novels. The present Research paper is an attempt to explore the genius of Joyce Carol Oates thematic concerns in her novels. Though Oates creative writing includes novels and other genres, the focus of the present paper is exclusively on her novels.

**Keywords:** Violence, feminist, India and America, social order, survival

### Introduction

"When people say there is too much violence in my books, what they are saying is there is too much reality in life".- Joyce Carol Oates

The theme of *violence* in the selected novels of Oates; Joyce Carol Oates's 'A Book of American Martyrs' (2017) captures the full devastation of gun violence. This novel is said to be the single best piece of writing on gun violence that has ever been done.

Joyce Carol Oates Them, Loretta Botsford is a teenage girl when the novel opens. Her father has lost his business and spends his time lying in bed, smoking and drinking. She works in a laundry. In his drunken state, he often troubles her, asking her for money. She is a proud and healthy girl, and she is also very ambitious. But, her father's frequent demands for money oppress her. In every family, usually the father is the breadwinner. In them, the father is dependent on his young daughter, who earns a little money. In this sordid environment, Loretta grows into a strong girl, retaining her urge for survival. Women are considered frail because they happen to depend on men. Their dependence is exploited and thereby they are oppressed.

Most women become passive, submissive, and mute in the fifty four face of patriarchal oppression. The father holds complete power and becomes despotic.

Joyce Carol Oates' world is violent. Her dependent one recourse man has to adopt is a sense of self-affirmation in the cheap, flash wasteland of modern America. Often his only avenue to a sense of integrity and selfhood is that of violence.

In the novel *Expensive People*, Oates brings in non-physical violence, in the lives of the wealthy. Even here we find the word murder becoming a casual expression. The first word of the novel, "I was a child murderer," (EP-01)<sup>1</sup> sets the tone for the intended violence. It is all through only violent activities without any human relationship. The world of *Expensive People* is a nefarious one. Children become alcoholics and do what they please. Gangsterism and barbaric activities are all the daily routine in the society of the *Expensive People*. It is a devastating experience. Richard Everett, early in life discovers that human beings are as fragile as glass. They can be easily being tormented and physically eliminated. To prevent this, he wants to practice a facade of self-control and self-reliance.

Nada's murder is the one that surfaces, violence, which disrupts the lives of the *Expensive People*. The undercurrent is tension and loss of values.

"It seems disingenuous to ask a writer why she, or he, is writing about a violent subject when the world and history are filled with violence".—Joyce Carol Oates

*Novel Them* is not an exception. It records, the brutal malice enacted in the daily exchange of person to person. The family life is torn apart again by violence only.

It narrates the tragedy of two generations destroyed by powerlessness and the belief that violence can, usher in a change to better the social order. Loretta Wendall is an invisible figure, braving all the turbulence she encounters in her life.

Oates asylums several years and go back over her complex, winding tracks that fetch her characters to their current

dilemma. *We were the Mulvaney's* effort cleverness, gaudiness evades the tensions and pleasures of family life and family relationship. The Mulvaney's be able to be both family and minutely understood individuals with their own quick and personal misfortunes. She continually describes her scorn for the higher class position. Moving away from the dusky tone of her additional new masterworks, Joyce says the story of a family stressed to manage with its fall from grace into an extremely moving and remarkable account of the staying power of hope and the power of love to overcome suffering.

*Wonderland* traces the deterministic and radically disconnected life of an orphaned boy who becomes a successful surgeon and who seeks, but cannot achieve, any transcendence of his limited and discontinuous life. Nothing including changes of identity and sexual love gives him a strong or growing sense of his own individuality.

In the Novel *Wonderland*, the violent act of Jesse's father killing the complete family and killing himself is portrayed as *Do With Me What You Will*, Elina is a neglected child. Her parents always quarrel and later they divorced. Elina lives with her mother. Marries with Marvin. After a few days she gets indulged in an affair with Jack. She becomes Aggressive. Abandons Jack and continues to live with her husband. In this novel Elina behaves aggressively.

*Bellefleur*, it is a novel of Gothic genre about seven generations in New York. Jean comes to New York as he was sent out of France to live with his father. His brother Jadediah goes and lives in the nearest mountains. When he returns all his family is wiped out, except Germain. He marries Germain. They got three children. One of them is Raphael. He builds Bellefleur mansion. It is a haunted mansion. A Violent and mysteries thing happens in this novel. It is purely a violent novel.

*Bloodsmoor Romance* is a novel of five sisters and the daughters of Mr. Zinn; his adapted daughter is adapted by a balloonist. Later she gets in touch with spirits. Later her life leads to undesirable and mysterious conditions. This novel is about two young lovers Iris and Jinx who could not marry. Jinx comes and rescues from Patrick who harasses her. During the fight he kills Patrick. Iris goes for higher studies and marries an intellectual and the son of a professor. She feels sad bursts in to tears due to the sorrow for not marrying the Jinx. The novel opens with Violence.

*We Were The Mulvaney's* is a novel about a family who lived gloriously, Mulvaney's. On the Valentine's Day their younger daughter Marianne gets raped by her senior. Her brother takes revenge on him. Marianne's father tries to kill the culprit and he could not do anything and he sends her to a near distant relatives. All the members of the family disintegrated. And later all of them get back reunions.

*Blonde* is about the daughter of an unwedded mother marries at the age of twenty one years old and starts her career as a pin up model. Later she becomes a Hollywood Actress who is known as Marilyn Manroe. Commits suicide and violently ends her life.

*The Falls*, The novel opens with Arian becomes a widow on the day of wedding near the Niagara Falls. Her husband suicides. For seven days she searches for her husband's body. Later she marries Dirk and gets three children. After a few years she internal develops a new fear that her husband will leave her and goes. Dirk is in his way to close the contaminated canal the love canal. The marriage disintegrates. Dirk gets success to close the canal.

*A Book of American Martyrs*, is about Gus Voor hees Doctor killed by a low preacher Dunphy. The druthers of both people start their career very humbly. Doctor's daughter becomes a Teacher in a school and the preacher's daughter becomes a boxer. Later Doctor's daughter proclaims she is the hammer of Jesus but could not reply what is feminism.

*A Man Without A Shadow* Margot a twenty three years old doctor starts serving an amnesia patient. She serves him for thirty years. The patient occasionally behaves violently. Patient dies. She could get more information on analyzing him. Doctor gets reward.

*Expensive people* begins with a confession of violence. The narrator, eighteen year old Richard Everett, announces that he is a child murderer. Not, he points out someone who has murdered a child (his parents have in effect accomplished that) but a child who has committed murder. In this and other ways, *Expensive People* thematically resembles *A Garden of Earthly Delights*. Technically, however, it is more broadly satirical, more blatantly symbolic, and more contrived than either of the earlier novels. It is also more ambiguous, since the psychopathic Richard is hardly a reliable narrator; we are not even sure that he has in fact his mother.

### Conclusion

- Violence is quite commonly written in the novels of Joyce Carol Oates. Oates writes in a realistic manner, where her characters are melded with violence incidents, how they acted as per contemporary society. Oates want to give message to the society as outcome of violence will imbalance the harmony of the society.
- Violence is the major theme of her novels. This is major issue in the society. Oates brings real violence incidents in her writings to create awareness in the society.
- Violence is happening more in day today life especially in educational institutions like Universities and colleges. Instead of inspirable environment is being polluted with violence. Now a day's Educators are more involved with violence, rape, murder in schools and colleges. Instead of being educators to create awareness in the society. To stop such a evil incidents in the institutions to bring good laws against those people.
- Oates novels with feministic concerns. All most all female characters are dominated by men protagonists. They are submissive and they create sympathy among the readers. Oates gives a clear cut message to her readers to stop gender equality. Which is very much needed equality in the present society?
- In spite of Oates, many writers focusing on violence. There is no big change in the society. There is lot of violence is prevailing in the society, as well as in the educational institutions. Children's are being victimized, raped and atrocities by educators in Universities and colleges. To stop this incidents to bring savoir punishments against them.
- Educational institutions like schools or college teachers or principals are involved in rape attempts and illegal torture of innocent girls. Some times in some villages they are get killed. This must be eradicated as Oates advises.
- The society is completely filled with violent acts like rapes, murders and deceiving. The situation prevailing

like “Might is the right”. The dominating people exploring the innocent, poor and week people. This Criminal ideology should keep away from our minds as per Oates views.

- Dividing the people on the racial thoughts is inhuman. No race is superior and No race is inferior. Oates wants to give the strong message that racial thoughts need to be eradicated in the contemporary society.
- Oates is being a professor at one side and the other side as a prolific writer. From her childhood still in her eighties, Oates contributed hen number of books. Which is very difficult to other peoples, her entire biography is more interesting. Her workaholic nature is quite impressive and inspiration for the youth.
- Oates focused in her novels only on reality and she strongly criticizes the evils in the society and show empathy towards the victimized people. She has sympathy towards females but she is not a feminist writer. This made the feminists to erupt the anger on her for not being a feminist. Since she is a feminine sympathizer Nobel Prize is not awarded till now, due to strong male dominated lobbying.
- The female characters in her novel are almost submissive and victimized either raped, or murdered or suicide. Her argument towards the dominating males is smooth and never written in hard spoken language.
- Every year Oates releases a new novel and she is a quite fast writer. But she declines it saying she is too slow in writing, with this we can imagine that how genius is she, and we can admire her humbleness and submissive nature.
- Oates has is very keen in describing different fields like a brain damaged patient in the novel *The man without a shadow*, and the prediction of future in Hazards of Time Travel by saying North American States(NAS) are a few example.

Even though she is an atheist, while describing the religious matters she is more keen on rituals. She is more sympathetic towards Indian philosophy and Buddhist philosophy as observed in some of her novels.

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