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**THE FAMILIAL TRAUMA AND SEARCH FOR PARENTS
IN JOYCE CAROL OATES' MARYA: A LIFE**

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ÖZET
Tezli Yüksek Lisans
Joyce Carol Oates'un Marya: A Life Adlı Romanında Ailevi Travmanın Yol
Açtığı Ebeveyn Arayışı ve İyileşme Sürecinin İrdelenmesi
Fatma İleri

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Ebeveyn yokluğu özellikle anne yokluğu kişide psikolojik travmaya sebep olur. Eğer bu kayıp çocuklukta yaşanırsa çocuk üzerinde ve onun gelecek yaşantısında önemli etkileri olur. Kişi bu travmanın sekteye uğraticı etkilerinden sadece bazı sosyal mekanizmalar sayesinde kurtulabilir. Bu mekanizmalar onun hayatını paylaştığı arkadaşları, akrabaları veya kendisine yakın hissettikleri olabilir. Bunlar din gibi başarı gibi kurumlar veya ileride yaşayacağı sevgili veya eş ilişkileri gibi sığınaklar olabilir. Anne figürünün eksikliği kişiyi yukarıdaki kurumlarla doldurmaya çalışacağı büyük bir boşluğa terk edebilir. Travmaya uğrayan kişi yaralarını iyileştirmek için buna sebebiyet veren olayla yüzleşmeye çalışır.

Joyce Carol Oates'un Marya: A Life romanının özelinde kahraman Marya, ancak annesiyle yeniden bir araya gelince hayatında huzura kavuşabilir. Bir kere kırılmaya uğrayan anne-kız ilişkisi yeniden kurulunca, Marya'nın benliğindeki yaraları tamir eder. Oates'un "kızı" Marya güçlü bir kişiliğe sahiptir ve yaşadığı travmanın hayatını çatırdatmasına izin vermez. O erkek egemen düzenle savaşan bir kadındır. Marya anne yokluğundan acı çeker fakat hayatındaki anne sessizliği onun kendine güveni sayesinde anne söylemine döner. Oates ataerkil toplum yapısının kadınlar üzerindeki kısıtlamalarına karşıdır. Kadın egemenliğine dayatılan toplumsal kısıtlamalara rağmen, Oates'un romanları, haklarını ve arzularını dile getirmek için uğraşan annelerin kızlarına bıraktığı cesur mirası işaret eder.

Anahtar Kelimeler: 1) Joyce Carol Oates, 2) Marya:A Life, 3) Travma, 4) Anne eksikliği, 5) Boşluk Duygusu, 6) Anne Sessizliği,

ABSTRACT

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The loss of parents, especially the loss of mother causes a psychological trauma in a person. If this loss is experienced in childhood, it will have crucial effects on the child and her future life. Only by the help of the social environment can this person get rid of its staggering effects. These institutions may be her companions or relatives she shares her life with or feels close to herself. They can be an asylum as religion, success in life or affairs with lovers or husbands in the future. The absence of mother figure leaves the person in a big gap which she tries to fill with the above institutions. The traumatized person strives for healing her self by facing the event which causes her the trauma.

In the specificity of Joyce Carol Oates' Marya: A Life, the protagonist Marya can only reach peace in her life by reuniting with her mother. When mother-daughter bond, which was once broken, is established, it fixes the wounds in Marya's inner self. Oates' "daughter" Marya has a strong personality and she is reluctant to let her life be shattered by the trauma she encounters. She is a woman who fights against the masculine symbolic order. Marya suffers from loss of mother; however, the maternal silence in her life turns into a maternal discourse by means of her self assurance. Oates resists the limitations of the patriarchal culture on women. Despite societal limitations imposed upon maternal power, Oates' novels indicate that mothers who strain to assert their own desires and rights leave their daughters a powerful heritage.

Keywords: 1) Joyce Carol Oates, 2) Marya: A Life, 3) Trauma, 4) Loss of Mother, 5) Vacuum, 6) Maternal Silence.

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INTRODUCTION

Joyce Carol Oates is one of the most productive writers of the 20th century American literature. She starts her career in Syracuse University, she teaches in university of Detroit and in University of Windsor, Canada and presently she continues her writings while teaching at the same time in Princeton University as a sterling professor. Throughout her career she has written a lot of novels, short stories, novellas, essays and plays. The themes of family, power and resistance are at the core of her works. Her vast oeuvre contains an impressive variety of characters like the men, women, adolescents, children, members of professions, sinners, rebels, the unemployed and so on. All these appear within a family or community relationship in her works. The trapped individual in the claws of a harsh capitalistic order of society, the depressive economic conditions and their enormous impact on the poor, as a result of these conditions, isolationism, which falls upon the individual, and the power relationships among the powerful and the weak are Oates' main concerns. She complains about the lack of communication among the members of the family and community in her novels since to Oates, it is the main reason of the gap among the relationships. In almost all of her works, she draws attention to the violence which comes as a result of this lack of communication. Whereas in her earlier novels she writes about the victimization of the weak, the brutality of the capitalistic life style, and its product of selfish man and his torturing his kids and wife, in her later novels, her weak characters, especially, the mothers and daughters who have been shown as victimized characters gain their freedom and self-esteem. Marya: A life(1986), which is the subject of this thesis, is important for Oates career, because it is one of these novels that Oates gives life to a parentless young girl and her turning into a self-assertive strong young woman in search of her lost mother.

This study is mainly concerned with the quasi-autobiographical novel of Joyce Carol Oates' Marya: A Life (1986.) In three basic chapters the study assesses the psychological life of the protagonist's as well as its reflections on her social life in a dominant patriarchal society. Parallel to this, how she struggles with the devalued and vulnerable place of woman as a working class daughter is evaluated in the light of psychoanalytical theories. Marya's development into a self-assured young woman,

her leaving home to gain her much adored career is analyzed in the light of Freudian telos, which emphasizes the necessity for separation as a measure of maturity. What Marya achieves is a big victory, because in patriarchal society men take the primary responsibility over the welfare of the community. Therefore, he acts as a dominant figure in social, economic and political procedures. Patriarchy consists of social relationships that enable men to dominate women. In this social order women's role are rigidly prescribed. The daughters are less valued than boys. Since they are seen as extensions of their mothers, they face the same devaluing conditions that their mothers faced earlier. In this thesis Freudian psychoanalytical approach is preferred to elaborate Marya's experiences in life. Marya loses her father at the age of eight and starts to live with an adopted family who are her uncle and aunt. She is separated from her mother as the typical procedure of patriarchal norm because her mother is believed not to be a chaste woman in this order. The mother does not appear until the end of the novel. The psychoanalytical approach is chosen because it offers the best means of unraveling the dynamics and meanings of Marya's search for the lost mother. In Freudian psychoanalytical perspective, the mother-daughter relationship is at the center of the drama of a girl's struggle to become a female human being with a heterosexual, individual identity. In this sense, sexual identity and separation from the loving, caring, nurturing and powerful relationship with the mother figure is central to the infant's world. Marya's bond to her mother is characterized as symbiotic, whereas bond with the father is delayed until the Oedipal phase. Because of early attachment and identification with the mother, daughters unconsciously internalize maternal values, behavior and identity. As a result, according to Freud's thesis, the daughters eventually begin to resent their feminine identity and blame mothers for their lack of penis, either literally or as symbolic lack of power in a patriarchal society. The girl lives this feeling of lack of penis because she feels castrated. During the Oedipus complex she directs her love to her father and identifies herself with her mother because mother has the ability to nurture a child and recompense her lack. Thus, the struggles between mothers and daughters are rooted in this symbiotic attachment. The daughter desires separation from the mother since it is the only way for her to declare her maturity. As separation from mother in a male oriented world, to gain an identity holds great importance for the daughter,

reuniting with the mother also has crucial importance for her to realize her position and identification in society. Since mothers serve as a mirror for the daughters to define themselves in society, their loss causes the daughters to fall in a big gap in life. Thus, the daughters have to identify with their mothers to accept the adult female role.

The first part of the first chapter mainly consists of Freudian psychoanalytical views. Initially, Freud's theories of conscious and unconscious which make up his topographical model and his moving from this model to his structural model according to which he sets the basis of human psyche on id, ego and superego are elaborated. Freud's ego psychology is examined since it emphasizes an interpersonal approach and focuses on pre-Oedipal experiences which contribute to the formation of the psychic structure of the person and his personality and developmental processes. The second part of this chapter is based on Lacanian views of intrapsychical realms of the Real, the Imaginary and the Symbolic. Marya's loss of her parents especially loss of her mother leaves her a wound. The silence of her mother opens a big vacuum in her life which she tries to fill with some other assets. Her "transgression"¹ into male symbolic order will further be explained in terms of Lacanian theory. Therefore, the infant's move from the mirror phase onto the Symbolic realm is analyzed to shed light on Marya's experiences in early childhood. Marya transgresses because Oates transgresses since she narrates provocatively. In usual narrative codes the daughter of the family is not accepted to be too clever and talented to have words since it is in the limitations of men's area. Oates' picturing of a female character who achieves a status that is only separated for men is transgression. The last part of the first chapter continues to depict the development of the psyche in early childhood by Melanie Klein's views of object relations, her theories of good and bad breast and projection and introjection which play important role on the infant's earlier experiences with its mother and their reflections on her adult life. Klein's work can be considered as an extension of Freud's. Her

¹ Marilyn C. Wesley, Refusal and Transgression in Joyce Carol Oates' Fiction. (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1993), p. 2

developmental growth theories are based on “separation-individuation” model. She observes processes in pre-Oedipal children that are very similar to Oedipal conflicts in older children. Klein imagined that all adults, to some extent, retain psychotic processes, involving a constant struggle to cope with paranoid anxiety and depressive anxiety. Hence, Klein applies her theories to adult neurotics as well as psychotics and children. Her technique uses deep interpretations which she thinks directly related to the child’s unconscious. Klein’s object-relations perspective emphasizes the duality of the daughter’s individuation process, in which she must both identify and separate from her mother. The separation to create a unique sexual identity drags a daughter away from her mother, whereas her development of gender identity pulls her closer to her mother. According to the object-relations theory, the first connection of the infant is with her mother (or the caring figure which is usually female), for this reason sameness with mother becomes important for the girls to develop a gender identity. Since Klein’s theories revolve around the figure of the mother, they are one of the starting points of my evaluation of Marya’s search for her lost mother.

Joyce Carol Oates is the writer of a more than forty novels, several short stories and plays and essays and the second part intends to give brief information on Joyce Carol Oates’ life, her works and her way of understanding art as means of communication in society. Her views of why her writing is pervaded by hope are discussed. As a National Book Award winner writer, Oates claims that literature as a form of art is “sexless.”² Actually she does not accept being regarded as a feminist writer. However, she follows the maxim that “to have a sex-determined voice or to be believed to have one, is, after all better than to have no voice at all.” Her ever-present-themes of violence, lack of communication, the struggle of the weak in society and “Gothic,” which has given her the reputation as the “dark lady of American Literature, are also emphasized.

The last part of this dissertation studies the struggles of a young girl who clings onto life and who consciously refutes to be devalued by the repressive attitude of

² Greg Johnson. Joyce Carol Oates: A Study of the Short Fiction. (New York: Twayne Publishers., 1994.), p. 119

male oriented world. Her trauma and the adopted family, her efforts to build a satisfying career, her relationships with her comrades and lovers which artificially fill up the vacuum of her lost mother are presented. As a last word, the repression of feminist unconscious, mother-daughter symbiosis, disconnection and reunion with mother from the daughter's side and the blossoming results of this reunion are the core themes of this work.

PART ONE

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

1.1 Freudian View of the Psychological Development of the Child

Freud has been considered the father of psychoanalysis. It is his successors who put him into this position because they have shown profound influences of Freud whether they tried to express themselves by confronting Freud's views or complying with them. Freud, as a scientist, was interested in how the human mind functioned and affected the body. He also wanted to explain how the mental illnesses such as neurosis and hysteria affected the clients' relationships with their outer surroundings and what kind of effects structures like civilization and religion have on people. He used psychoanalysis to do this. Psychoanalysis uncovers the tracks of the past traumas of neurotics and deciphers their ongoing dynamic natures. By this way it frees the libido which was stuck there and uses its energy for more useful aims. To do this psychoanalysis uses the transference phenomena which is a process by which emotions and desires originally associated with one person, such as a parent or a sibling, are unconsciously shifted to another person, especially the analyst. Freud, in Beyond the Pleasure Principle, claims that "what psycho-analysis reveals in the transference phenomena of neurotics can also be observed in the lives of normal people."³ The outcomes of transferences he observes in his patients show that traumas go far back to their "early infantile influences." That is to say, Freud thinks that the reasons of hysteria are the suppressed memories of the early sexual instincts of childhood.

In his topographical model, Freud wants to picture the mental processes and tries to describe the relations among the mental processes, namely the preconscious, conscious and unconscious. Any kind of mental activity which happens beyond consciousness and cannot be brought up to the level of consciousness by any concentration belongs to the very deepest part of the mind which is the system of the

³ Sigmund Freud. Beyond the Pleasure Principle. (New York: Norton and Company, 1989.), p. 23

unconscious. Freud calls the unconscious “the repressed”⁴ in Beyond the Pleasure Principle. The Unconscious seeks pleasure. It expresses itself by desires and fantasy. Everyone lives her/his own unconscious world. The rejection of the outer world derives from the instant pleasure principle of the unconscious. The level, which is the source of the memories and knowledge that can be brought up to the consciousness with a little concentration, in other words, the level that does not derive from the repressed (unconscious), is called preconscious. Preconscious develops parallel to the development of the child’s self. The mental processes which take part in the conscious differentiation are considered to be in the conscious level of perception. Conscious level is the one which a person can name the processes of thought, feelings and observations that he receives from the outer world.

Freud realizes that his topographical model does not provide a thorough solution for his patients’ neurosis because he cannot explain the mental conflicts with this model. He finds that during the transference, his patients use some defense mechanisms which do not belong to the consciousness. Thus, Freud reaches the result that repression, defense and preconscious are not identical because, as it is well known from the definition, preconscious can become conscious very easily. That is to say, it is not possible to comprehend the repression process of the human brain with an approach which assesses the mental power only in terms of conscious and unconscious. Therefore, Freud leaves his topographical model and adopts the structural model to observe human personality. In structural model he divides the human mind into three levels, the id, the ego and the superego. The functioning of brain is a result of a web system among interactions, balances and controls of these three elements.

The id is the most primitive of these three elements, which is designated as the repository of sexual and aggressive wishes. These wishes are completely unorganized and under the rule of pleasure principle. Freud calls these “drives.” The id is formed by the mental representatives of sexual and destructive drives. It can be thought of as a dark, chaotic, wet and uncanny scene. It is a threat to the security of

⁴ Sigmund Freud. Beyond the Pleasure Principle. (New York: Norton and Company, 1989.), p. 35

the civilized adult in society because it is under the effect of the pleasure principle. In Civilization and Its Discontents, Freud recounts how civilization represses the sexual desires of the human beings. He states that civilization obeys “the laws of economic necessity”⁵ and uses “the large amount of man’s physical energy for its own purposes” by putting a distance with his sexuality. Freud’s “pleasure principle” tells us to strive for whatever feels good, and the “reality principle” tells us to put the pleasure principle in the second place or an inferior level so that what productive and useful needs to be done can be done. According to Freud, the infant is born with the id, which requires satisfaction of its⁶ needs, and is completely dependent on its mother for its needs to be fulfilled.

The ego is connected to consciousness and outer world and responsible for their regulations; besides, it also does some unconscious functioning. That is to say, the ego controls the comprehensive functioning of the mental power since it has a bond with reality. It also regulates the instincts with the defense mechanisms. As the ego gradually develops in a child during growing up by building up a balance and matters among inner and outer world, there is no ego in an infant. To Freud, the ego is constituted as a result of a change the change in the id from the effects that the outer world has on motives. The ego is constantly confronted with its two “merciless masters,” the superego and the id. The mental health of the individual depends directly on the ego’s ability to mediate the opposing demands of these two elements. Therefore, it is the hero of the personality. The ego has the ability to meet the unrealistic strictures of the superego and the libidinous demands of the id for its own realistic, rational purposes for the personality, for the self. The ego does not have its own energy. All our motivation provides its stimulus from the id. The ego stems from the internalization processes with the lost objects which were once given energy by the id. In this respect, becoming an adult means a mourning process since getting mature means losing a beloved object. In short, there is an intense pain behind the shaping process of the ego. Some other functions of the ego are controlling the instincts, regulating them, judging, and building up a relation with

⁵ Sigmund, Freud. Civilization and Its Discontents. (New York: Norton and Company, 1989), p.59

⁶ The pronoun it will be used in this work on concerning the themes on the infant. If gender separation is needed, then her or his will be used throughout the study.

reality, object relations, making a synthesis, learning, wit, sensing, perceiving, language, thinking, movement and defending itself.

In the structural model the last element to complete its development is the superego and it stems from the resolution of The Oedipus complex. Freud explains the superego in Civilization and Its Discontents as below:

The tension between the harsh superego and the ego that is subjected to it, is called by us the sense of guilt; it expresses itself as a need for punishment. Civilization, therefore, obtains mastery over the individual's dangerous desire for aggression by weakening and disarming it and by setting up an agency within him to watch over it, like a garrison in a conquered city.⁷

Since the child sees her/his parents as the organizer of the law and internalizes the prohibitions within being of its parents, its sense of guilt takes the place of fear of punishment. The fear of punishment is also prior to the superego formation. The infant has to submit to a higher authority which is her/his parents. The superego is directly related to the moral value systems which come about with the unconscious behavioral codes of the pre-Oedipus phase of the child's development. Freud saw it as the vehicle of morality, reflecting the "higher nature" of man and the child's relation to her/his parents and to society. According to Freud, one of the primary functions of society is to restrain our aggressive impulses. It achieves this goal by installing within the individual a sort of watchdog. Freud calls this the superego to master man's desire for aggression. The superego is always ready to punish the ego's libidinal satisfaction. Freud uses the term the superego for conscience, values, ideals, shame and guilt. As Freud puts in Civilization and Its Discontents, "nothing can be hidden from the superego, not even the thoughts."⁸ Just like the child's seeing its parents as law and having no choice but obeying them, the ego submits to the imperative demands of the superego. The superego is the "censorship of morals" and the rival of the ego. The tension between the ego and the superego is conspicuous as a sense of guilt and worthlessness. The superego is the mental process which also regulates the individual's destructive instincts and helps people to live together peacefully as the civilization orders.

⁷ Sigmund, Freud. Civilization and Its Discontents. (New York: Norton and Company, 1989.), p. 8

⁸ *ibid*, p. 72

The child, during her/his phase of latency, continues the process of internalization and identification with her/his teachers, stars and heroes as she/he lives the same experience with her/his parents in her/his earlier phases. Her/his conflicts with her/his parents go on even after the formation of the superego. The “don’ts”, prohibitions, restrictions and punishments that came from her/his parents earlier are now internalized in the child’s superego and rule the child’s behaviors even when his parents are not around. At the core of Freud’s theory of repression is the view that the culture, whether by parents or other figures of authority, brings restrictions on the sexuality of humans. This restriction of civilization isolates men and women from their emotions and passions. Yet, repression is never “complete.” The desire for gratification and pleasure is as strong as the desire for repression and forgetting. Thus, the repressed unconscious “shapes the personal and social life.” The infant’s sexual life is autoerotic since s/he is in blissful contentment via getting pleasure from any part of her/his body. Hence, s/he lives his narcissism and omnipotence. The infant’s narcissistic fantasies occur in the pre-Oedipal period. The infant has needs to satisfy its erotic needs. First, s/he has the objects that satisfy her/himself, then, the necessity appears to give them up. Then they are not always present and he remembers their possible absence. When these love objects are partially left, they are merged with ego, or self. This is how the ego is formed via setting up of objects inside itself. Thus, this identification within the love objects, which are now in him, is called narcissism. There is no distinction between self and other or between itself and an idea of the other in this phase. The infant, to have a social identity, has to move beyond her/his autoerotic fantasies towards a relationship with parents. Thus the personality and selfhood starts to shape in relation to society and culture.

Freud talks about a castration threat for the boy and “*penisneid*” in the unconscious of woman. Penisneid (penis envy) is the female version of the castration

complex, experienced not as a threat but as a privation.⁹ Freud progresses explicitly from a male norm and compares female development to it:

His discussions of female sexuality focus on the girl's ordinary phallic sexuality, her castration complex and the simplicity of her oedipal configuration: 'The girl's Oedipus complex is much simpler than that of the small bearer of the penis. . . . [I]t seldom goes beyond the taking of her mother's place and adopting of a feminine attitude towards her father.' Her castration complex--envy for penis--leads up to her Oedipus complex; the Oedipus complex is never given up in as absolute a way as is the boy's, because she has no castration to fear.¹⁰

During the Oedipus complex the girl's sexual desire shifts to the father and to have a baby with the father. Here the baby—preferably a boy baby—symbolizes the penis, because he brings penis to the girl. Thus, the girl gains heterosexuality. The girl gives up her mother as a sexual object and object of attachment without turning to her father as a sexual object. She sees her father as an object of identification.

It is already said that the superego completes its development with the resolution of The Oedipus complex. Now, how an infant comes up to that point in Freudian view should be examined. Whatever we have in the unconscious, according to Freud, is almost about sex. The unconscious is mainly consisted of sexual desires which have been repressed. For Freud, sexual desires are instinctual, and they come to the surface during the process of nurturing the infant by its mother. All the basic needs of an infant produce pleasure, which for Freud means sexual pleasure. He explains the infant's developmental stages in five phases: oral, anal, phallic, latency, and genital. During the psychosexual development of the child, pre-phallic phases — oral and anal— are mainly autoerotic, which means the child's sexual impulses center on his own body. In the phallic phase this changes to find a love object for itself. The years from three to five can be named The Oedipal phase of the psychosexual development of the child. In the Oedipal phase the child realizes his

⁹ Jane Gallop. The Daughter's Seduction: Feminism and Psychoanalysis. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982.), p. 25

¹⁰ Nancy J. Chodorow. Femininities, Masculinities, Sexualities: Freud and Beyond. (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1994.), p. 7

difference anatomically from the other sex. The boy's Oedipal resolution ends with the fear of castration, and his incestuous feeling towards his mother ends with his threat of castration by the father. Thus, he identifies himself with his father to escape from that threat. However, the girl's Oedipus complex starts with the fear of castration. The girl is already castrated because she does not have the penis and her love is directed to her father who has the penis and identifies with the mother who has the ability to nurture a child to compensate her lack. Both the boy and the girl resolve The Oedipal situation by identifying with the parent of the same sex and by forming a superego. After this information on Freud's theories, Lacan's views of the Real, the Symbolic and the Imaginary phases will be examined since he is considered as the interpreter of Freud and contributes much to psychoanalysis.

1.2. Lacan's The Real, The Symbolic and The Imaginary Phases

Whereas Freud starts his views of psychoanalytical development of the child in terms of conscious, unconscious, ego psychology, sexuality, drives and desires, Lacan sets his own psychoanalytical approach on structural theories such as how the infant forms an ego —an illusion of ego— through language. To Lacan, the unconscious determines the human existence and is built up with the language. Freud's civilized/heterosexual adult was coming into being from a polymorphously perverse child, pre-Oedipus and Oedipus phases, by forming a superego through the complementary interaction of pre-conscious, conscious and unconscious. Lacan was interested in how the infant reaches a "self," a unified conscious self by the word "I."

Lacan says that Freud's psychoanalysis is mainly a word play. He believes that the elements that make up the unconscious have direct link with the language and the structure of the language. Lacan maintains in The Language of The Self that "the dream has a structure of a sentence," "structure of a form of writing."¹¹ To Lacan, the child's dream represents "the primordial ideography" and in the adult the dream "reproduces the simultaneously phonetic and symbolic use of signifying

¹¹ Jacques Lacan. The Language of the Self: The Function of Language in Psychoanalysis. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981.), p. 30

elements.”¹² The elements of unconscious —wishes, desires, and images— all make up the signifiers. Whereas Freud was interested in bringing the chaotic desires and drives into consciousness by psychoanalysis and interpreting dreams so that they could have a meaning and could be made clear and manageable, Lacan is interested in stabilizing the meaning of signifiers which paves the way to becoming an adult. Becoming an adult, a “self” is the process of trying to fix the meaning of the signifier(s) to Lacan. As Lacan is considered to be the interpreter of Freud, he asserts a trio of intrapsychic realms, the Real, the Imaginary and the Symbolic which comprise the various levels of psychic phenomena in the place of Freud’s oral, anal, phallic stages and Oedipus and castration complexes that end the polymorphous perversity and form the “adult.”

To start with the category of the Real, one can start as follows: in the beginning, the baby is a “whole” with its mother. It is inseparable from its mother and there is no distinction between the baby and the mother. The infant has no sense of a self or an individuated identity. It is not aware of its body as a coherent whole. It has got some needs to be nurtured like breast sucking, to get changed or to be hugged. It is not aware of the fact that its needs are satisfied by another whole person. It does not recognize a distinction between its needs and the nurturer object of its needs. This is called the state of nature and to both Freud and Lacan. Yet state of nature has to give way for this infant to become aware of its identity to be transferred into an individual in a civilized society. The first step of this process requires a “loss” which means the child realizes that there is a difference between itself and its mother. It loses the earlier sense of unity and security it used to have. Thus, the first stage in which the baby is still a whole with its mother is called the Real phase by Lacan. If its needs are satisfied by its mother, if there is no separation from the mother or no distinction between its needs and the object that satisfies its needs, the baby exists in the realm of the Real according to Lacan. While the baby is in the Real, there is no absence, loss or lack. The Real is a fullness which means there is no sense of dissatisfaction for the infant. Therefore, it is a stage of

¹²Jacques Lacan. The Language of the Self: The Function of Language in Psychoanalysis. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981.), p.30

completeness or wholeness. Consequently, since there is no absence or loss, there is no language in the Real.

According to Lacan, the language is about loss or absence because one needs the words only when the object one wants is gone. As a result, the realm of the Real is beyond language and it is lost when one enters into language. When the infant is about 18 months, he starts to get the ability to distinguish between its body and the other objects around it. Its needs then have changed to be its “demands.” Demands are different than needs as they are not satisfied by an object. Demands need recognition or love from another. The baby starts to differentiate itself from its mother and gets the idea that s/he is not part of the mother. Hence, the idea of “other” is generated. However, this sense of other is not yet the one in the “self/other” opposition because the baby has not reached or become a “coherent self” yet. This awareness of differentiation creates an anxiety, a sense of loss in the infant. Thus the infant demands to be a whole—a unity—with the mother as in the realm of the Real. This demand is called the demand for fullness or original unity but, it is impossible since the loss or the lack is the condition for the baby to become a self or a subject in culture. Since the demand is for recognition from the other, it cannot be satisfied. The reason for this is that the 18 month-old infant is not able to articulate what it wants. The infant cries and the mother gives him a breast or something but no object can satisfy the demand because it is insatiable. The infant cannot recognize how its mother responds to it because it has not got a conception of itself as a thing, it only has the notion of “other” that exists but it is still not a self. Demand cannot be satisfied because demand is the demand for the fullness, the completeness, of the other that will stop up the lack that the baby is experiencing. However, of course this is impossible, because that lack or absence, the sense of “other”ness is the condition for the baby becoming a self, a functioning cultural being.

At this point what Lacan calls the “mirror stage” happens. As Lacan says in The Language of The Self :

The ‘mirror phase’ derives its name from the importance of mirror relationships in the childhood. The significance of children’s attempts to

appropriate or control their own image in a mirror is that their actions are symptomatic of these deeper relationships. Through his perception of the image of another human being, the child discovers a form (Gestalt), a corporeal unity, which is lacking to him at this particular stage of his development.¹³

The baby still neither has a sense of its body as a whole nor controls its own body. In the mirror phase the infant realizes a complete image of itself that appears in the mirror and this image in the mirror gives the infant a primordial sense of his fragmented body. The image in the mirror is the image of the infant's first sense of coherence, so the mirror represents the infant's first encounter with subjectivity, with a coherent identity and with a sense of "I" and "you." Lacan takes the mirror image as the model of the ego function itself, with Mitchell's words "the category which enables the subject to operate as I."¹⁴ The infant sees a "unified, independent self" in the mirror but perceives this self as "separate from its own viewing self and the observing parent."¹⁵ The mirror stage Mitchell claims in Feminine Sexuality "takes the child's mirror image as the model and basis for its future identifications."¹⁶ The image in the mirror represents a desired unity with which the child identifies but presently experiences itself as lacking. Thus, "the subject is caught in a dynamic of 'insufficiency' and 'anticipation' in Lacan's terms moving between 'the fragmented body . . . to orthopedic vision of its totality."¹⁷ As a result, the child sees the image in the mirror and thinks that the image is "me" but, it is not the child and it is only an image. This, Lacan calls the "misrecognition" (*méconnaissance*), which is a characteristic of the ego. "The ego's quest of wholeness, autonomy, and mastery of its environment involves a futile exercise reflecting the most superficial ends of the personality."¹⁸ This misrecognizing creates the ego that says "I." Therefore, the ego

¹³ Jacques Lacan. The Language of the Self: The Function of Language in Psychoanalysis. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981.), p.160

¹⁴ Jacques Lacan. The Language of the Self: The Function of Language in Psychoanalysis. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981.), p.31

¹⁵ *ibid*, p.138

¹⁶ Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose (eds.). Feminine Sexuality. (Hong Kong: Mac Millan, 1992.), p. 30

¹⁷ *ibid*, p. 138

¹⁸ Gary Rosenshield. "Freud, Lacan, and Romantic Psychoanalysis: Three Psychoanalytic Approaches to Madness on Pushkin's *The Queen of Spades*." *The Slavic and East European Journal*. 1996
<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=00376752%28199621%291%3A40%3A1%3C1%3AFLARPT%3E2.0.CO%3B2-D> (30.11.2007) pp.1-26. p. 7

for Lacan always operates on a level of fantasy. That is why Lacan calls the phase of demand and the mirror stage the realm of the Imaginary. The Imaginary order is “the undifferentiated realm of preverbal images and fantasies”¹⁹ that comprise “mirror images” and identifications with the infant’s close relationship with its mother. There is an illusion which is related to the mirror phase that the child has to encounter in socialization process. In the realm of the Imaginary the idea of self is created through an imaginary identification with the image in the mirror. This phase is the realm of images either they are conscious or unconscious where the alienated relation of self to its own image is created. It is pre-linguistic and pre-Oedipal. The mirror image is called the “ideal ego” because the infant is mistaken by its image in the mirror. It internalizes this whole self in the image which is a compensation for the lost original oneness with the mother’s body. As a result, we lose our unity with the mother’s body-the natural state-to enter culture. The child projects its ideas of self onto the image he sees in the mirror. Thus, a self/other dichotomy is created, previously the child was only aware of other but not self. The identification with the self is achieved through the other in this sense. By this way, “self” is “other” in Lacan’s terms. Pronouncing of the “I” comes with the identification with this “other” in the mirror. When the child has gained the idea of otherness or a self identified with its own “other,” the child begins to enter the Symbolic Realm. The Symbolic order is the realm of language. As Mitchell puts in Feminist Sexuality, “when the child gets its first sense that something could be missing, words stand for objects”²⁰ and symbolization starts because the words are only spoken at the moment when the first object is lost. Having a self is expressed by saying “I” and this is possible in the Symbolic realm which corresponds to Freud’s resolution of Oedipus complex that shapes the superego. According to Lacan, the ego is shaped not intrinsically but extrinsically. The perceptions of the self are structured to an external image. On this point, Lacan opposes to Freud’s ideas of ego, which Freud believes is constituted from within. The self is a delusion in Lacan’s view. For Lacan, by entering the Symbolic order, the individual can “overcome the demands of the ego for unity,

¹⁹ Peter Brooker. A Concise Glossary of Cultural Theory. (London: Oxford University Press, 1999.), p.116

²⁰ Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose (eds.). Feminine Sexuality.(Hong Kong: Mac Millan, 1992.), p. 31

wholeness, and fixity and open himself up to the linguistically mediated manifestations of the unconscious.”²¹ In the Symbolic order there is a principle of lack. This principle of lack is the basic structure in Lacanian view. To be a speaking subject, the child has to obey the rules and laws of language. Thus, Lacan calls the rules of the language the Law-of-the-Father or the Name-of-the-Father. This is the entry into the Symbolic and corresponds to Freud’s resolution of Oedipus and castration complexes.

As a result, language is specifically paternal in Lacanian view. Phallus enters the system here. It is the center of the Symbolic order, the whole system or structure that stabilizes all the relationships among the signifiers in the unconscious. It is “the King,”²² the Other so that “I” has a meaning of self. No one has the Phallus or no one governs the language. Phallus rules the whole structure. No one can take its place at the center. This is what Lacan calls desire which is insatiable and in his terms “is born from the split between need and demand. It is irreducible to need, because it is not in principle a relation to a real object which is independent of the subject, but a relation to the phantasy.”²³ It can be defined as the “remainder of the subject, something which is always leftover, but which has no content as such.”²⁴ To Lacan every subject consists of Lack. We have the language because of the loss or lack of the union with the maternal body, and this is component of the making up a culture. As Lacan, Melanie Klein makes great contribution to Freud’s views so in the next chapter her points of view on child development will be elaborated.

²¹ Gary Rosenshield. “Freud, Lacan, and Romantic Psychoanalysis: Three Psychoanalytic Approaches to Madness on Pushkin’s *The Queen of Spades*.” *The Slavic and East European Journal*. 1996
<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=00376752%28199621%291%3A40%3A1%3C1%3AFLARPT%3E2.0.CO%3B2-D> (30.11.2007) pp.1-26. p. 7

²² Jane Gallop. *The Daughter’s Seduction: Feminism and Psychoanalysis*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982.), p. 96

²³ Jacques Lacan. *The Language of the Self: The Function of Language in Psychoanalysis*. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981.), p. 189

²⁴ Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose (eds.). *Feminine Sexuality*. (Hong Kong: Mac Millan, 1992.), p. 32

1.3 Melanie Klein's View of Child Development

With the late 1920s Klein began to write about the “early ego’s internal objects or representations of the mother.”²⁵ Later in 1935, Klein wrote her theory of “depressive position” which since then has been called “object relations.” She developed new techniques to explore the inner world of the children. Klein’s work differs from Freud’s in taking the troubled children as the core of her studies. (Freud worked mainly with neurotic women.) For Freud, the term “object” meant internal representation; for object relationists, however, the term meant “interpersonal” or “intersubjective relation.”²⁶ What’s more the real difference between Freud and Klein is about authority. To Freud the ego precedes the superego and has a complex relation that is dependent on and critical of the superego. To Klein there is no real distinction between the ego and the superego. The ego is formed in relation to internal representations of the mother, and it is the center of moral relations. To Klein the superego is shaped in the earliest relation to the mother in the first year of life, not in the context of the Oedipus complex. By the term superego, Klein means feelings of moral responsibility to the solid others. With the term “Oedipal,” Klein does not mean a sexual interest in mother but, a “pregenital desire to possess and control the riches and goodness of mother’s body, a desire that frequently expresses itself in phantasies of oral incorporation.”²⁷ She also does not mean the “internalization of the father’s authority but the young child’s innate sense of guilt at its own greed and aggression toward mother.”²⁸

As Klein works with the infants and with their phantasy world she discovers some mechanisms that infants develop to deal with anxieties, drives and fears because phantasies dominate the early life of the infants as responses to intense drives and feelings. Her concept of phantasy includes the “element that fissures, disturbs,

²⁵ Lindsay Stonebridge, Reading Melanie Klein. John Phillips ed. (New York: Routledge, London.1998.), p. 37

²⁶ *ibid*, p. 37

²⁷ C. Fred Alford, Melanie Klein and Critical Social Theory. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989.), p. 35

²⁸ *ibid*, p.24.

disorganizes or displaces.”²⁹ The infant’s mental processes like controlling its hunger takes place in phantasy, and the infant experiences these phantasies both bodily and mentally. Since the infant at this stage cannot differentiate between reality and his own phantasy life, he takes every frustration as a personal attack by an outer hostile force and projects the feeling of persecution to the bad breast or if the feeling is a gratifying one, he projects it to the good breast.

Whereas Freud talks about a sexual drive or a life drive and an urge for self-preservation, Klein talks about the good and the bad objects that stimulate the drives. For Klein, Freud’s drive model is objectless. Freud thinks that human body is born prematurely. Hence, the infant has not got a notion of protecting itself and satisfying its needs from the outside. Only when its caretaker (usually the mother) satisfies his needs does the infant feel that the mother and himself are a whole, not separate parts. If the mother fails to satisfy the infant’s needs, then she is felt to be missing. Hence, this loss makes the baby feel anxious. Klein criticizes Freud at this point. Klein thinks the drives are not objectless but are directed towards objects. If the infant seeks milk from the breast, he is directed to a part object, which is the mother’s breast because an infant can only be directed to one part object at this phase. He is so immature to perceive the whole as a separate one from its parts. He is only aware of the gratification or deprivation which turns into in his mind to good or bad. For the infant, the gratifying object is the good and the depriving object is the bad object. The good and bad objects determine the child’s relations to everything. As a result, as C. Fred Alford quotes from Juliet Mitchell in Melanie Klein and Critical Social Theory, “drives, for Klein, are relationships.”³⁰ Klein thinks libido and aggression are contained within the infant and refer to relationships with others. Thus, drives are emotions directed to others, either real or imaginary, from the beginning of life.

Klein puts the emphasis on the early infancy and the anxieties which drive the ego to develop defense mechanisms. To her, the psychotic anxieties and the ego

²⁹ Lindsay Stonebridge. Reading Melanie Klein. John Phillips ed. (New York: Routledge, London.1998.), p. 3

³⁰ C. Fred Alford. Melanie Klein and Critical Social Theory. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989.), p. 26

defenses of the infancy have a great influence on the development of the child. The object relations exist in the beginning of life, “the first object being the mother’s breast which to the child becomes split into a good (gratifying) and bad (frustrating) breast; this splitting results in a severance of love and hate”³¹

Klein also suggests that human beings live to get pleasure out of life. Therefore, they have to cope with the destructive forces in themselves in order to get maximum security in life and to get pleasure out of life. Every individual has the love and hate instincts, interacting with each other throughout life. Klein asserts that “aggressive, cruel and selfish impulses are closely bound up with pleasure and gratification so that there can be a fascination and excitement accompanying gratification of these feelings.”³² She adds that both the “self-preservation” and “love instincts” need a mixture of aggression if they are to get “satisfaction,” which means “aggressive element” is an important part of these instincts in “actual functioning.”³³ Accordingly, in Klein’s theory, it is the love that urges aggression not the ego or the superego. As Juliet Mitchell points out in Reading Melanie Klein neonate brings into the world two main conflicting impulses: love and hate. To Klein love is the manifestation of the life drive, and hate and envy are manifestations of the death drive. From the birth, these two drives are in conflict with each other. Neonate, from the beginning, tries to change the death drive with the life drive. The baby develops mature mechanisms dealing with drives while encountering a world both satisfying and frustrating. These happen from birth in relationship to another person or “a part of that person--prototypically it is the mother and her breast.”³⁴

Object relations, for Klein exist from birth. The first object, the mother’s breast, has a crucial role in building up the ego and the superego. The loving, feeding and caring parts of the mother contribute to the development of the inner world of the infant and finally develop the ego. The infant, with the life drive, deviates from the death drive. By modifying the death instinct with the life drive and introjection —the

³¹ Melanie Klein. Envy, Gratitude and Other Works 1946-1963. (New York: The Free Press, 1975.), p.3

³² Melanie Klein and Joan Riviere. Love Hate and Reparation. (New York: Norton Library, 1964.), p.5

³³ *ibid*, p. 5

³⁴ *ibid*, p. 5

use of the good object as a defense mechanism by the ego against anxiety— and projection —deflecting of death instinct to overcome anxiety— the infant creates the fusion of the ego and the object which is the core of the developing ego. Introjection is largely in the service of the life instincts and confronts the death instinct. These two forces, life and death instincts, attach themselves to the mother’s breast which is at that time felt to be good or bad at different times and split from each other to comply with persecutory anxiety. However, the infant in the first few months apprehends the objects as parts because his inner life is chaotic and there is no cohesion. To deal with this, within the first year, he moves from part objects to whole objects, that is to say, from fragmented ego to a more coherent ego. With maturity, the infant grows more unified and obtains control over the objects. Like the ego, the superego is for Klein the result of projective and introjective processes. While the projection and introjection lessen, his perception of the outer world becomes more precise.. First of all, the infant projects the troublesome features onto the object, the breast and reinternalizes the image of the object as an amalgam of himself. Thus, “the infant’s own greed is transformed into an image of a greedy breast, which becomes the demanding superego.”³⁵ As is seen, initially, the parents are not in the superego process. The infant’s fears come from the influence of the superego because he has fears of the external world and reflects them to himself in his phantasy world. The child’s first images are endowed with immense sadism, originating from the death instinct and in childhood fears these images are reprojected. Thus, the early function of the superego is to arouse anxiety. When the child attaches to the mother positively, the anxiety is transformed into guilt. Guilt is the result of attacking the mother, father, sisters or brothers and the social feeling arises to repair the broken bonds.

Melanie Klein explains the developmental stages of a child by two concepts: “paranoid-schizoid” and “depressive position.” She explains the concept of her “paranoid-schizoid” position as the destructive impulse which is there from the beginning and is turned against the object. The paranoid-schizoid position begins at birth and continues first few months. The destructive impulse is first expressed in

³⁵ Michael. St. Clair. Object Relations and Self Psychology. (Pacific Grove: Brooks ,1996.), p. 46

phantasied oral-sadistic attacks on the mother's breast. With the oral-sadistic impulses and the persecutory fears the infant wants "to rob the mother's body of its good contents."³⁶ He desires to enter her body by putting his excrements into her with the anal-sadistic impulses. Klein later terms this persecutory phase as the paranoid position which precedes the depressive position. Thus, the earliest organization of defenses takes the form of phantasies of persecution in the infant. By this way, he defends his self against persecution by splitting, which is aimed at keeping the good and the bad aspects of the self separately.

Depressive position, which starts about the fifth month of the infant, is Klein's second developmental stage. The infant then starts to distinguish between the part and whole objects, gain a more realistic position toward the world and tries to establish a good whole internal object in the ego. During this stage the infant has complex and ambivalent feelings about the whole object he relates to. In depressive position the infant's task is to establish concrete relationships with its good objects. New and complex defense mechanisms emerge in this period. Whereas in the paranoid-schizoid stage the main defenses against persecutors are the splitting of good and bad objects, idealization and violent expulsion which is related to projective identification, the depressive position includes the emanation of manic defenses. These manic defenses are the wishes of the infant to enter into the mother's body or filling the mother's body with her/his excrement, with anal-sadistic impulses. The guilt that the infant experiences toward the loved object is now replaced by a desire to repair the object for former attacks. By this way, preservation of the loved object concomitantly works to protect his own ego identifying itself more with the loved object. The infant discovers that he is not completely able to protect itself against internalized persecuting objects. Not desiring to lose the good object, the infant uses manic defenses to defend against guilt, despair and feelings of annihilation. As the child gains confidence, his manic defenses diminish over time because he develops now ways of expressing them such as hugs or kisses. The infant tries to lessen his anxiety and guilt through phantasies and actions directed toward

³⁶ Klein Melanie . Envy, Gratitude and Other Works 1946-1963. (NewYork: The Free Press,1975.), p.3

mother, which means the child first tries to restore the other it has destroyed by “phantasies of omnipotent reparation and then by affectionate and healing gestures toward real others.”³⁷ In Klein’s view the depressive position corresponds to the Oedipus complex. The fear of losing the good object in this period is the rising of the Oedipal conflicts. “Oedipal desires intertwine with depressed anxieties as the infant struggles to integrate love and hate.”³⁸ Sexual impulses and phantasies emerge to repair the effects of the guilt. In the light of this theoretical information, in the next chapters to analyze Joyce Carol Oates’ Marya: A Life within a psychological view point a brief explanation of the writer’s life and works will be analyzed.

³⁷ C. Fred Alford. Melanie Klein and Critical Social Theory. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989.), p. 35

³⁸ Michael St. Clair. Object Relations and Self Psychology. (Pacific Grove: Brooks ,1996.), p. 49

PART TWO

ON JOYCE CAROL OATES AND HER WORKS

2.1 Joyce Carol Oates' Brief Life Story and Her Works

Joyce Carol Oates was born in Millersport, New York, on June 16, 1938. She has been considered a very versatile and productive writer of modern American literature. Her family came from a multicultural immigrant origin. Her maternal grandparents were Hungarians. She lived her early childhood in upstate New York, specifically Lockport, where she attended school. Starting her career with a pseudo name, Rosamond Smith, Joyce Carol Oates marries Raymond Smith, who runs *The Ontario Review*. She starts her academic life in Syracuse University and she is now a sterling professor in Princeton University teaching creative writing. This unusually productive woman of contemporary American Literature has been feeding her “lustier readers” for more than fifty years and she is likely to create more assets for humanity in the future. Her vivid characters make her work interesting. Her consciousness to criticize the system socially, economically and politically and her conscience to defend equalities and the weak set her apart among the honorable American writers. Her first book By the North Gate was published in 1963. It was a collection of short stories and since then she has been producing novels, poems, plays, essays and short stories. She started writing at a very early age. “I drew pictures to tell my stories before I could write,”³⁹ she says. Her novel them (1969) won the National Book Award as the best American Novel of the year. Oates wrote them (1969) under the influences of the turmoil of the 1960s when she moved to Detroit at the age of twenty three. Living only a few blocks from the racial tensions of the decade and the participants’ vast social drama led her to write this novel. The cities, which she has lived in, have had crucial impact on her writing. Oates acknowledges that Detroit is the place “which made me the person I am,

³⁹ George Mc. Michael (ed.). Anthology of American Literature. Vol. 2. (New Jersey: Mac Millan Publishing Company, 1980.), p. 2156

consequently the writer I am.”⁴⁰ She gets affected from the “ceaseless motion” of Detroit.

Among her major themes have been the brutal violence of contemporary America, its ordinary people and their routine lives, fading families, lack of communication between people, impoverished environment of her childhood, the dark, dangerous ghetto streets of Detroit or some other suburban areas where a lot of crime have always been committed during day or night. She has also been writing about the sexual abuse of desperate daughters who are victims of incest even by their own fathers, or of beaten, weakened wives who are tantalized by their husbands. Hardships and unhealthy living conditions of poor families who are purposefully pushed into poverty and desperation for the sake of money by legal authorities are some other central themes of Oates. Another theme she employs is, ignored youth who are paid attention only materialistically but not lovingly by their parents, youth that causes fuss around their often surface in her novels or short stories. These kids cause violence in the streets of the ghettos. As Mary Allen depicts “mothers are afraid of their children as they watch them grow into separate beings whose nature they can never understand or control.”⁴¹ A good example of this last theme is a very famous short story which was named “Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?” (1967), anthologized often as well as the The Heath Anthology of American Literature. Its confused adolescent Connie’s fantasies and ideals collide with the environment and with the imperatives of her own maturity. Having been named the “dark lady of American letters”,⁴² Oates portrays an artist who must dramatize the nightmarish conditions of the present with all its anxiety, paranoia, dislocation and explosive conflict. To Oates, today’s modern American life is entrapped in a fake world, so-called genuine but fake affairs among people and their artificial language are undoing the thread among community. American society is on the verge of collapse because of the loosening familial ties, hard socio-economic conditions,

⁴⁰ Joanne V. Creighton. Joyce Carol Oates: Novels of the Middle Years. (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1992.), p. 5

⁴¹ Harold Bloom (ed.). Modern Critical Views Joyce Carol Oates. (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987.), p.73

⁴²Paul Lauter (ed.). The Heath Anthology of American Literature. Vol. 2.(Lexington: D.C. Heath and Company, 1990.), p. 2073

violence and lack of communication among people, isolationism and many negative reasons that affect humans' contentment and welfare.

Joyce Carol Oates attaches great importance to language. She has from the start been very much aware of the power of language to give meaning to human experience. Articulating the needs of man and the ability to name something give the person power or triumph over his world. According to Oates, language is man's weapon against his annihilation, for he "re-creates the world through language."⁴³ Man challenges death and silence by means of language. "Silence" she maintains is the "opposite of language," and, in her own words, "silence for human beings is death."⁴⁴ In her works people's relationships end because they run out of words to use with each other. This lack of communication among individuals is one of the most vital points she yearns to emphasize. Where language finishes, violence and destruction starts because the people who cannot use their verbal power to communicate resort to the physical language which is beating and killing. Hence, according to Oates, violence is the substitute for verbal language, she over and over tries to draw the reader's attention to current complication of modern man. The issue of language has a direct link to the issue of healthy community. Just like the domino effect, when one member collapses, there emerge the indications of the others to collapse. Oates pictures the "plastic"⁴⁵ suburbs excluded from the intimate communal life. Her characters suffer from the agony of aloneness in these plastic suburbs. They finally realize that suburban life, which fills their dreams, is not more hopeful than the urban life, which they left behind. In her thirteenth collection of short stories Last Days (1984), she diagnoses the pathology as the family "[the] vanishing animal in the United States, doomed to extinction."⁴⁶ She focuses on desperate people, who plunge into various kinds of psychological disturbance merged with political and social crisis.

⁴³ Mary Catherine Grant. The Tragic Vision of Joyce Carol Oates. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1978.), p. 111

⁴⁴ *ibid*, p.111.

⁴⁵ *ibid*, p.76

⁴⁶ Joyce Carol Oates. Last Days.(New York. E.P. Dutton Inc., 1984.), p. 22

In spite of all her dark portrayals of American society, Oates is an optimist concerning the state of literature. She claims that “novel can’t be dead or even close to dying”⁴⁷ when she is asked by Joe David Bellamy in an interview about the future of fiction. In her belief in the function of the novel, she is a follower of Tolstoi, she declares: “what use is art if it doesn’t help people live better?”⁴⁸ Having a profound perception of the importance of a “communal consciousness” in literary works, Oates accentuates that the writers should move from “Renaissance egocentrism to a new communal consciousness”⁴⁹ because Renaissance ideal declares “*I will, I want, I demand, I think, I am.*”⁵⁰ She is for the idea of a higher humanism. With 1980s she herself uses communal narrators who speak not as “I” but as “we,” and her narrative voice becomes “multivocal rather than individual.”⁵¹

Actually, she announces also that “Kafka was among her early influences”⁵² as well as James Joyce, Dostoyevski, D.H. Lawrence and Thoreau and she was inspired by another prolific American writer Henry James a great deal. James’ words, “we work in the dark we do what we can--we give what we have, our doubt is our passion, and our passion is our task, the rest is the madness of art,”⁵³ are affixed to the bulletin board of her desk and best expresses her own ultimate view of her life and writing. Oates says she has also been influenced by Lewis Carroll and Alice in Wonderland which was a turning point in her life. She had received this novel at the age of eight as a gift and was influenced much by the magical world of Alice. In the book, Alice was on her own, without a family. Oates writes Wonderland (1971) with the inspiration of Carroll’s famous story. Oates’ talent to convey the psychological states of the human mind at the very border of sanity and to combine them with the

⁴⁷ Lee Milazzo (ed.). Conversations With Joyce Carol Oates. (Jackson:University Press of Mississippi, 1989.), p. 23

⁴⁸ *ibid*, p. 39

⁴⁹ Greg Johnson. Joyce Carol Oates A Study of the Short Fiction. (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1994.), p. 9

⁵⁰ *ibid*, p.9

⁵¹ Brenda Daly. Lavish Self-Divisions: The Novels of Joyce Carol Oates. (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1996.), p.xi.

⁵² *ibid*, p. 15

⁵³ “Joyce Carol Oates on Missing Mom.” Interview by Harper Collins Publishers.

<http://www.harpercollins.com/author/authorExtra.aspx?authorID=7275&isbn13=9780060816223&displayType=bookinterview#> (19. 09. 2008).

turmoil of American lives has led her into the “gothic fiction.” From the gothic tradition of Southern literature she affirms that she was influenced by William Faulkner, Flannery O’Connor and Carson McCullers. Like Faulkner’s fictitious city “Yoknapatawpha” she creates her fictitious and symbolic “Eden County.” This Eden County is skillfully evoked in some of her works including Marya: A Life (1986). Lockport, where she spend her childhood and where her grandparents’ farm was set, was the base for Eden County.

In the 1980s she wrote genre novels appropriately described by herself as Gothic. Her trilogy made up of Bellefleur (1980), A Bloodsmoor Romance (1982) and Mysteries of Winterthurn (1984) was composed of fantasy, fairy tales, horror stories and other gothic elements. She uses gothic to see the world “in terms of heredity and family destiny and the vicissitudes of Time”⁵⁴ and to explore historically authentic crimes against women, children and the poor. Because, she claims it would be very hard “to create and identify with heroes and heroines whose existence would be problematic in the clinical atmosphere of present-day fiction.”⁵⁵ Most of her works hold the element of gothic. Gothic tradition in American literature is represented by William Faulkner and Carson McCullers. They are the eminent examples of southern gothic tradition which influences Oates’ gothic style. She uses grotesque and freakish characters as in her The Collector of Hearts. Her tragic and violent plots abound with depictions of rape, incest, murder, mutilation, child abuse, and suicide, and her protagonists often suffer from the conditions of the social environment and their emotional weaknesses. In early eighties she published several novels that exploit the conventions of nineteenth century Gothic literature as they deal with such sensitive issues as crimes against women, children, and the poor. For Oates “gothic sensibility” gives way to cultivate a surreal, often dreamlike landscape in which to dramatize the protagonists’ experiences. Gothic provides her with the ability to show darkest heart of society and the deepest mysteries of the soul with her powerful mastery of the storyteller’s art. Additionally, her novels which she wrote under the pseudonym Rosemond Smith have been said to prominently feature the

⁵⁴ Greg Johnson. Joyce Carol Oates A Study of the Short Fiction. (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1994.), p. 19

⁵⁵ *ibid*, p.19

Gothic trope of the *doppelgänger*, or double, while her stories and novels set in Eden county are thought to strongly echo the “Southern Gothic” atmosphere found in the novels of William Faulkner. Along with gothic to describe the “phantasmagoric wonderland”⁵⁶ of American life, she writes from a very wide range of genres like romance or detective in realist, naturalist and post-modernist works. Her short story “How I Contemplated The World From The Detroit House Of Correction And Began My Life Over Again” (1970) was written in post-modernist style and entered into the Anthology of American Literature.

Oates defines herself not a feminist writer. Nevertheless, her oeuvre is composed mainly of female characters who are victimized by the patriarchal society and its rules. Man is mostly the symbol of the brutal power and impotency which results in harsh violence against the weak —the children and the women. As a result, her confused female characters like Connie in “Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?”(1967) or Maureen in them(1969) are the victims of this male-centered system. Although Oates does not consider herself as a feminist writer, her feminist voice can be heard easily. Her female protagonists provide the daughter’s vision. As a natural respond to the male voice, her daughter characters subvert the traditional notion of male based authorship. Oates resists the literary traditions that perpetuate a “masculine,” individualistic concept of authorship. As Brenda Daly focuses on Lavish Self-Divisions The Novels Of Joyce Carol Oates(1996), Oates’ “linguistic dilemmas —in particular her struggles with the Law of the Father— mirror the social dilemmas that her fictional daughters must struggle to resolve in order to become authors of their lives.”⁵⁷ She uses voice of “we” employing communal narrators. Her use of “we” in mother-daughter duality shows her subtle concern with depicting her feminine delicacy and protesting against masculine conventions. In 19th century novel the mother-daughter bond was split. There was separateness in the relationship between the mother and the daughter. For the daughter, instead of mother there was the man “who-would-understand”⁵⁸ with Hirsh’s words, or the “brother tongue”⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Greg Johnson. Joyce Carol Oates A Study of the Short Fiction. (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1994.), p.9

⁵⁷ *ibid*, p.xiv

⁵⁸ Mariane Hirsh. Mother/Daughter Plot. (Bloomington:Indiana University Pres,1989.), p.58

⁵⁹ *ibid*, p.78

which was a tender form of discourse instead of the coldness of paternal authority and for the maternal silence. Whereas there was separateness between mother and daughter in 19th century novel, in modernist 20th century novels mother and daughter are united. Their relationship heals in a great deal. They become the complementary aspects of each other since this is compulsory for the daughter to understand her self. As Marianne Hirsch argues in The Mother/ Daughter Plot that the historical changes for the benefit of the daughter's part can be obtained with the modernist (women) writers. Hirsch claims that daughters refuse to identify with their mothers and sisters in nineteenth century novels, however, in modernist novel this pattern begins to change. Joyce Carol Oates is one of those writers who manage to write successful daughter-centered novels of which Marya: A Life (1986) is one. Oates combines the masculine rationality with feminine sensitivity in this novel.

Oates' vision is really tragic generally because the daughter submits to the father's incestuous desires; however, it is at the same time comic in feminist sense that the mother's strong bond with the daughter and her encouragement of her daughter's quest for self-definition help the daughter finding her way. Oates' effort is to emancipate her daughters and mothers from victimization. With her Do With Me What You Will (1973), she began to portray her daughters as more autonomous and strong-willed characters. To do this, she uses the dialogic "we" instead of "I" which is her communal voice. This can be identified as "a society's yearning to acknowledge the repressed (m)other in us."⁶⁰ Oates rejects the society's expectation of mothers' sacrificing themselves for others even a long time after the second wave of women's movement. Abandoning the traditional father-son relationship in her works, Oates creates daughter characters that resist incestuous alliances with their fathers. The mothers who were previously victimized begin to appear in her later novels as the strong voices in accord with their daughters. Her protagonist Marya in Marya: A Life (1986), who lives the first half of her life without her mother is at last likely to find her lost mother. This ending will render a happy future to a self assured, strong daughter.

⁶⁰ Brenda Daly . Lavish Self-Divisions: The Novels of Joyce Carol Oates. (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1996.), p.xx1

PART THREE
THE EFFECTS OF LOSS OF THE MOTHER ON MARYA IN
MARYA: A LIFE

Marya, aged eight, is a working-class daughter. Her father is a miner and the union leader and he dies at a brutal fight during a strike on which he goes to defend the rights of the workers. Marya and her two little brothers are taken away from their mother by their uncle to live in his adopted home in Innisfail because their uncle thinks that her mother, Wilma, is seeing some other guys. In this new home, Marya is not very happy. She cannot find happiness because of harsh treatments of her aunt Wilma. Marya goes to high school in Innisfail which is such a small town. She is a very clever and a talented girl when it comes to literature. With the helps of her literature teacher at school, she obtains a scholarship from a university at Port Oriskany. She decides to leave Innisfail to start a new life. She is very outstanding at her classes and becomes the assistant of a professor who later will turn into her lover. She learns much about life from professor. Before he dies, he advises her to find her mother because her thinks only then will Marya find happiness in life. Marya has one more love affair after the death of professor, however, it does not end up in happiness either. She cannot fill the vacuum which emerged with her mother's disappearance. She realizes that what she lacks is the existence of her mother in her life. She starts to search for her mother and finally reaches her trace.

The writer, Oates closes the novel at this point by opening a new horizon to her protagonist. The theme of "loss of mother" is very important for a daughter to gain her identity because the daughters first of all need to get separated from their mothers in Freudian approach to get mature and then need to find ways to have a positive discourse with the mother to understand her own self. As Joyce Trebilcot quotes from Luce Irigaray that separation of mother and daughter is the child's "irreparable wound."⁶¹ When the daughter is separated from the mother as Irigaray realizes as a psychoanalyst is that "both the mother's and the daughter's definitions

⁶¹ Joyce Trebilcot (ed.). Mothering Essays in Feminist Theory. (Savage: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1983.), p.266

of themselves become confused.”⁶² Mother and daughter depend on the other in a way that neither can define. This is a “double bind”⁶³ for both of them. There is the fact that every mother is a daughter and that mothers transmit to their daughters. She explains transmitting by passing of genealogy or origins from generation to generation which are represented symbolically in the body.”⁶⁴ As one can deduce from Trebilcot’s evaluations Irigaray believes that if relationship between mother and daughter is created as “supportive of life-affirming emotions”⁶⁵ this will have empowering psychological effects on women.

3.1. Silence of Mother and Adopted Family

Even though Joyce Carol Oates describes herself not as a feminist writer, critics regard Marya: A Life (1986) an example of “feminist realism” as well with Solstice (1985) and American Appetites (1986). Marya: A Life is a bildungsroman picturing the struggle of a “parentless” young girl who is easily distinguished even at her early ages among her friends with her intelligence and strong character. Oates says that Marya: A Life is the most autobiographical of her novels. It contains some autobiographical material from her childhood, to which she listened from her family, and a blend of life story of her mother’s and grandparents’ experience. She claims that it was her “mother’s father”⁶⁶ who was murdered just like Marya’s father in the novel. Oates writes the novel with a notion that challenges the masculine construct of the self, and she wants to draw attention to the repressed (m)other in all of us. In today’s patriarchal hierarchical order, Oates tries to set social justice in the institutions of society by exalting the true place of mother in community and to lessen the mother’s vulnerability against the traditional male dominated order.

⁶² Joyce Trebilcot. (ed.). Mothering Essays in Feminist Theory. (Savage: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1983.), p.266

⁶³ *ibid*, p.266

⁶⁴ *ibid*, p.266

⁶⁵ *ibid*, p266

⁶⁶ Joanne V Creighton. Joyce Carol Oates: Novels of the Middle Years. (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1992.), p. 62

The novel opens with a scene of the protagonist Marya's mother, Vera, waking up her daughter and two younger sons to a very horrifying trip to town. Their father, Joe, a labor union leader, has been murdered brutally in a miner's strike. The violence of the opening scene of the novel is typical of Oates' drawing the attention to a bleeding wound of modern American society's way of living. Vera, the mother, takes her three children to the morgue to identify their father's dead body. Marya witnesses her father's dead body swollen, discolored and bruised all over and his left eye not right, remembering at the same time the animals which the kids torture around the house and the fish her cousin Lee slams against the rock. In Shaheen Falls, where they live, the kids are very close to violence in daily life. Her mother warns Marya not to cry. "Don't you start crying, once you get started you won't be able to stop."⁶⁷ The mother is described to be wearing feminine clothes even when she goes to identify her husband's dead body. She has a "half buttoned" shirt on, "Marya could see her heavy breasts swinging loose inside her shirt", "her hair wild" and "her lipstick worn off."⁶⁸ However, her mouth is full of curses in a masculine tradition. Vera gives the impression of a borderline personality. In the very first page of the novel she screams at her children: "You! You and you and you! I don't give a shit about you, I wish you were all dead"⁶⁹ but right away she says she was sorry. Marya is used to being Vera's first helper, for even before her father's death, her mother used to put too much burden on her shoulders including the responsibility of taking care of her two brothers. Yet, her mother also loves her very much, she wants her daughter to nap with her, she wants to hug Marya, she holds her tight as if "someone might snatch her away,"⁷⁰ telling Marya that "you are just the same as me—you do love me—I know you!"⁷¹

After her father's death, Marya and her brothers Davy and Joey are adopted by their uncle Everard Knauer and his wife Wilma. Marya is eight years old at the time. She lives through all the negativity of living with a mother-surrogate. Marya

⁶⁷ Joyce Carol Oates. *Marya: A Life*. (New York: Berkley, 1988.), p.6

⁶⁸ *ibid*, p. 3

⁶⁹ *ibid*, p. 1

⁷⁰ *ibid*, p. 7

⁷¹ *ibid*, p. 7

⁷¹ *ibid*, p. 16

defines those years as the “years of secret glances” and “mysterious allusions and hints”⁷² because her mother is believed to be a “bitch” by her uncle and aunt. That is the reason why their uncle does not leave them to their own mother. Those are the years of neglect. Marya wonders what her aunt and uncle are saying “pretending never to listen, pretending to be intensely absorbed in one of her schoolbooks, or in drying the dishes, or in minding her baby brother.”⁷³ Exactly at the ages of “ego building” she encounters hard times at her uncle’s house. She is made to feel the loss of her mother down to her cells. There is an imbalance at uncle’s home. Uncle Everard is not very hard on Marya, however, he is not at home all the time. His love for Marya stays at a level of an adopted love. Therefore, it cannot take the place of a real father’s love. Her aunt Wilma’s way of treating Marya is more like a cruel one. She does not feel sympathy for Marya, moreover, she gives her hard time. In this sense, Wilma represents the “bad breast” in Kleinian view.

According to Klein, the infant has needs and s/he wishes these needs to be satisfied. If the mother satisfies them, the infant feels that the mother and her/himself are a whole, but if she fails to satisfy them, the mother is felt to be missing. This loss makes the baby feel anxious. Thus, the satisfying breast is a good object and depriving breast is bad object for the infant. The word object is used at this stage because the baby does not have a sense of whole object at this point and only perceives the part objects, which are good and bad breasts. The infant’s relationships are determined by means of these good and bad objects. Hence, aunt Wilma represents the bad breast for Marya. Since her aunt is the only role model for Marya, she sometimes stands for the good breast also, because Marya adores some of her manners like the way she blows her cigarette or the perfume she wears which is Marya’s favorite. Therefore, what Marya feels for Wilma is both love and hate. Her uncle, Everard, is fond of Marya even more than he is of his own daughter, Alice. Marya is “stubborn and strong-willed”⁷⁴ more like a Knauer. Alice is “more susceptible”⁷⁵ to tears however, having learnt from her mother not to cry as the first

⁷²Joyce Carol Oates. *Marya: A Life*. (New York: Berkley, 1988.), p.16

⁷³ibid, p.16.

⁷⁴ibid, p. 26

⁷⁵ ibid, p. 26

lesson of life, “[s]he [Marya] kept her moods to herself.”⁷⁶ Her aunt Wilma is too harsh on Marya. Thus, Marya develops a talent of being invisible, being “not there”⁷⁷ when she realizes a situation for which Wilma is going to pick on her. Marya learns to be subtle and quiet at such a home environment even at this early age. Marya’s senses are as strong as her imagination. She learns how to recover from her heartbroken moments by spending time in an old car in her uncle’s garage in the back yard. That old buick is her hiding spot throughout her childhood, keeping her secrets, and it is the only witness to see her tears.

Marya realizes the hierarchy in her new home very early. If uncle Everard is not around, all the authority passes on to Wilma or while they are playing together her cousin Lee, who is four years older than her and bigger in size, is the boss. Although uncle Everard is the father of the household, he does not represent the authority when contrasted with Lee. Lee is more authoritative than his father in his relationship with Marya. She can get along well with Lee when he is not teasing her. He is more like a caring figure at these times, representing fatherly love. However, there is a split in Lee’s inner self also. Lee teases her at home, but protects her outside the house, on the way to school from the other Canal Road boys. The kids are brutally wild against each other as Oates typically pictures in her novels and short stories. In modern times adults are so busy with their own business or problems that they neglect their children. As a result, violence for the kids is the easiest way to declare their power over the weak ones. Sometimes, Lee insults or molests Marya and her only defense is “stoic endurance”; she cultivates the ability to “go into stone”⁷⁸ during Lee’s assaults. When once he orders her to fetch a coke for himself, Marya, with an aim of getting her revenge on him knocks down the jack and Lee faints under the car in the garage. As we will see in the further examples, Marya knows how to exact her revenge very well. When Wilma forces her too much, Marya steals a few drops from her perfume which she “[will] always remember as the most mysterious and wonderful scent on earth.”⁷⁹ Marya’s getting her revenge on the others can be

⁷⁶ Oates Joyce Carol. Marya: A Life. (New York: Berkley, 1988.), p. 26

⁷⁷ *ibid*, p. 23

⁷⁸ *ibid*, p. 15

⁷⁹ *ibid*, p. 34

explained with Klein's views on "depressive position." At this stage the infant's anxieties shift from a fear of being destroyed to a fear of destroying others (in the paranoid-schizoid position which is the first developmental stage of Klein, her/his anxieties were the fear of being destroyed.) In reality or in his/her fantasy world, the infant realizes the capacity to harm or drive away the person who s/he ambivalently loves. Marya's behavior of getting revenge is the reflection of this situation. Wilma is the only female role model in Marya's life so that she identifies herself with Wilma. Although she is not very much fond of Wilma, Wilma's way of blowing the smoke of cigarette is something which excites Marya. In spite of the fact that Wilma punishes her or ridicules her in front of the others, Marya finds her general manners graceful and she knows she will still be "imitating (her) twenty years later."⁸⁰ Marya's both yearning for and hating Wilma can be evaluated as below: In Klein's second developmental stage of depressive position the infant starts to distinguish between the whole and part objects, and gain a more realistic position toward the world and tries to establish a good whole internal object in the ego. Her/his feelings toward the whole object are ambivalent and complex. S/he starts to develop new defense mechanisms which include manic defenses like the ones in the paranoid-schizoid position. These manic defenses are the wishes of the infant to enter into the mother's body or filling the mother's body with her/his excrement, with anal-sadistic impulses. However, these manic defenses are mobilized in depressive stage to protect the mind from depressive anxiety. Following this process, the infant begins to perceive the mother as a separate being. The infant, whose destructive phantasies were directed towards the bad mother who frustrated, now begins to realize that bad and good, frustrating and satiating, it is always the same mother. Unconscious guilt for destructive phantasies arises in response to the continuing love and attention provided by the mother or caretaker. Thus, the feelings of guilt and distress enter as a new element into the emotion of love. Only in depressive position the infant can see the polar qualities of the same object as different aspects. With this explanation it can be said that Wilma represents both the bad and good breasts for Marya because Marya both yearns for her manners which she finds graceful and hates her because she ridicules her in front of others. In the example of Marya's both adoring Wilma's

⁸⁰ Oates Joyce Carol. Marya: A Life. (New York: Berkley, 1988.), p. 35

manners and hating her because she feels humiliating it is easy to see the psychology of the victimized. The victimized wants to be approved of by the victimizer. According to Freud, the parents represent the law and the child's relation to his parents and to society brings his ego into being. If the child experiences the Oedipus complex more intensely, and if he is "repressed under the influence of external measures,"⁸¹ the superego becomes stricter. Having lost her father in a fight and abandoned by her mother, Marya faces very harsh conditions and develops ways to deal with her aunt and her cousin Lee separately. The stricter rules in the adopted family build up a well-developed superego in Marya. Marya can get along better with Lee than she can with Alice. This can be explained with the Oedipus complex of a daughter. Since Lee represents the father figure for Marya, he cares for her. Alice can be put into the position of the mother since she is closer to Lee in familial bonds. In Freudian psychology the crucial moment for the young girl is her realization that she does not possess the phallus, that organic symbol of masculine power. The physical reality of the woman is thought to represent her inevitable impotence, her painful exclusion from the father's power, she endeavors to assume an appropriate role of nurturance to secure a permanent bond with a partner, a man who possesses the power of the phallus so that she can compensate for her loss. Her nurturant tendency encourages her to have a child, which Freud theorizes as another means of replacing the absent phallus. In the light of this explanation, Marya's feelings towards Lee can be understood more clearly. Lee represents the father figure here whereas Alice whom Marya falls apart unconsciously can be put into the mother figure.

Besides Lee's molestations which teach Marya how to defend herself, she is also sick of her unintelligent friends at school because unclever boys also want to insult her. Marya decides to leave Innisfail to go to college from which she received a scholarship at Port Oriskany. On the night of the farewell party given in Marya's honor, some drunken boys try to insult her. Most probably of feeling envious about

70 Joseph Sandler. "On the Concept of Superego" In R.S. Eissler (Ed.) The Psychoanalytic Study of the Child. Vol. 9. (New York: International University Press, 1960.), p. 133

her, they try to rape her with yellings of: “Going to Port Oriskany,huh? To college? Got a scholarship! I-got-a-scholarship! Ain’t I hot shit!”⁸² Being a Knauer girl, strong and athletic, Marya fights their attempts of rape but the boys manage to cut off all of her waist-length hair. With this scene, Oates defines femininity as victimization symbolically with the cutting of girl’s hair. Marya witnesses the male brutal world one more time, but she is too strong to be beaten with this. Marya’s resistance to this devaluing treatment is worth praising for a young girl. This can never curb her encouragement to leave Innisfail and to go to the university from which she received a scholarship. She even leaves her well-off boyfriend who has marriage dreams with her. For Marya college is on one side and Emmet is on the other. She prefers Alma Mater. The university represents mother here. As long as she cannot fill the gap which is left by her lost mother she will not be able to think about marriage. Therefore, she rejects Emmet’s proposal of marriage because she is so conscious that she can only fill her void by choosing to go to the university and completing her education. Her strength on these issues comes from her strong senses that she trusts very much when it comes on the verge of giving important decisions about her life. She leaves him because she is aware of power relationships at her young age. Even though she does not have a chance to watch power relations between man and woman in her mother and father’s relationship, she does not like her boyfriend Emmet’s ways of ruling her: “Marya noticed his air of authority, his satisfaction, his well-being.”⁸³ Once he twists her wrist a little and at another time she rejects him by telling “I don’t want to sleep with anyone. . . . I love you but I don’t want to sleep with anyone. I don’t *want to*.”⁸⁴ In fact, she notices other young women around and how “prettier” one of them “since the pregnancy, since the marriage”⁸⁵ but she is so sure of herself that her education comes first and rejects marrying Emmet although he is able to provide her with an affluent future. Her point of view of men is so clever that she thinks “how idiotic they are, how stupid and predictable.”⁸⁶

⁸² Oates, Joyce Carol. Marya: A Life. (New York. Berkley, 1988.), p. 113

⁸³ *ibid*, p. 95

⁸⁴ *ibid*, p. 94

⁸⁵ *ibid*, p. 99

⁸⁶ *ibid*, p. 101

Marya lives a trauma when her parents are lost one after the other one. The adopted family, even though they are her uncle and aunt, cannot provide her with the warmth of a real family. As Hirsch stresses that “at the point of pre-identity both mother and father preside powerfully over the child; their relationship is both necessary and complementary.”⁸⁷ In Freudian psychology, pre-oedipal period and maternal dominance in this period determine for the child much about the rest of her life. Because of maternal dominance in early childhood and mother’s closer identification with daughters rather than sons, the mother remains an important figure for the maturing daughter. Thus, female development becomes “a process shaped by the fluctuations of symbiosis and separation.”⁸⁸ Freud explains the same situation for the daughter’s relationship to her father and mother as below: According to Freud, the girl has “intense and passionate pre-oedipal attachment to her father which is characterized by phallic desires. When the father loses his ‘libidinal’ significance”⁸⁹ the girl sees the father as “not much else than a troublesome rival.”⁹⁰ Hence, the girl’s attachment to her mother gains importance. For this reason, Freud thinks the Oedipus complex is not absolute in the girl as in the boy. Chodorow interprets this situation as the girl’s “never-given-up-attachment to the mother.”⁹¹ Throughout the years of her becoming a mature woman, it will be seen that Marya’s mother stays in her unconscious which will ascend to the surface when she realizes that everything is hollowness without a mother figure. Only then will Marya be able to find her lost mother’s trace.

3.2. Institutions As Mother

As Marianne Hirsch discusses in her The Mother/Daughter Plot, in the Freudian family romance there is always an institution or a figure that the daughter replaces with the void which emerges with the loss of the mother. That void is a *sine qua non* for the abandoned child. In some novels which Hirsch analyzes, the

⁸⁷ Marianne Hirsch. The Mother/ Daughter Plot: Narrative, Psychoanalysis, Feminism. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press,1989.), p. 144

⁸⁸ibid, p. 20

⁸⁹ Nancy J. Chodorow. Femininities, Masculinities,Sexualities: Freud and Beyond. (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1994.), p.9

⁹⁰ ibid, p. 9

⁹¹ ibid, p. 9

motherless son finds a wife who is like “the mother he desired.”⁹² For the daughter, as Hirsch interprets from Freud’s theories that the repression of the pre-oedipal stage of the mother love and its reflections on the daughter’s adult life are more painful than the boy’s: “As Freud envisions the story of female development, the mother-daughter bond must be abandoned in favor of a strong attachment to the father which, in turn must be superseded by the adult love of another man and the conception of a child, preferably male.”⁹³ However, the daughter’s finding the adult love in another man is harder than the son’s since her first love-object is the same sex with her. Here is a twist which confuses the daughter to adapt to the male, the husband. Marya compensates for the hollowness in her life with some institutions like success, religion or education.

Marya is very intelligent at school. She has talent for literature. At high school her English teacher, Mr. Schwilk, who loves his job and really cares for his students even outside school, realizes Marya’s talent in language. Mr. Schwilk is much different than the other teachers. He seems much younger than he is as if a kid not much older than the high school students. He is bright and all-knowing, he roams in the classroom, firing out questions and answering them himself. He covers most of the blackboard with names of famous persons, fragments of poems, grammatical problems and memorable phrases in his looping scrawl saying that they should memorize them because they may need them some day. His clothing is different, “none of the students at the Innisfail School had ever encountered a teacher like Schwilk.” He wears tweed coats even in warm weather-gray, brown, green flecked with russet-he wears old-fashioned vests, shirts with cuff links, a black fedora hat set smartly on his boy’s head, red neckties, even bow ties. He is Marya’s favorite teacher. He encourages her in class to “speak up!”⁹⁴ He praises her, shakes her hand. With his encouragement Marya “felt her face go hard, willed every muscle to turn to stone and her eyes too, glassy and invulnerable, she could never be provoked into crying in class like certain of her weaker classmates, boys and girls both.”⁹⁵

⁹² Marianne Hirsch . The Mother/ Daughter Plot: Narrative, Psychoanalysis, Feminism. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press,1989.), p.81

⁹³ *ibid*, p.99

⁹⁴ Joyce Carol Oates. Marya: A Life.(New York. Berkley, 1988.), p.48

⁹⁵ *ibid*, p.48

Mr. Schwilk trusts Marya very much and believes that she will leave this village for bright horizons. Mr. Schwilk is a figure in school and the school represents both the mother and the father since it shares the same function with mother and father. Mr. Schwilk is very loving to Marya and with his love he represents both the mother and father love which is caring and nurturing for the girl. With a psychoanalytical view he fills the void which is left by Marya's own mother and father. He thinks that the kids are "contaminated" with the "remarkable local accent"⁹⁶ of the town. This is Schwilk's very idea. However, Oates' choice of the name of the town is interesting: Innisfail reflects the phrase "in fail." Mr. Schwilk gets sick and leaves Innisfail forever. What's more, he leaves an annual poetry prize instituted in his name and that year Marya receives the prize and a check for \$35. She thinks that this award will make her important in the eyes of her aunt and uncle. Mr. Schwilk is Marya's first trustworthy asylum since there is a big vacuum in the place of her mother and father. He is the first person she can speak to. This shows that he is a lovingly father figure for her. Her adopted mother Wilma cannot provide Marya with a loving caring, Mr. Schwilk takes her place instead. He accompanies her in having a dialogue with a close person although she does not have one in her adopted family. Schwilk fills this vacuum of Marya's maternal silence and helps her to enter the Symbolic order for the first time in her life (the second will be with Father Shearing.) In the class, sometimes they talk over a serious issue while all the other students listen to them with empty eyes unable to make a comment. Schwilk speaks of "freedom, necessity, determinism and the transcendence of fate"⁹⁷ and gives Marya some lines from Blake or a poem by Emily Dickinson when she seems to be lost in her trauma. When Marya tells about a fantasy of hers to Mr. Schwilk about her father who disappeared from her life by his sudden death and buried out in Shaheen Falls and her mother who disappeared but was not buried anywhere, Mr. Schwilk writes on the board:

We are led to believe a Lie
When we see not Thro the Eye
William Blake⁹⁸

⁹⁶Joyce Carol Oates. *Marya: A Life*. (New York. Berkley, 1988.), p.45

⁹⁷ibid, p.56

⁹⁸ ibid, p.52

Freudian psychologists speculate that children in order to “become themselves, have to separate from the mother who seems too powerful, too familiar with their independent needs, too intimately beloved to let them grow easily away from her.”⁹⁹ As Anthony Giddens points out in Modernity and Self Identity “in early infant attachments a break which is not achieved through trust and reliability can produce traumatic consequences.” Once the child lives the trauma, it is very hard to recover from its effects. The results of the trauma may affect the person throughout her/his life. It requires much effort for the traumatized person to adjust to the world after the trauma. The best way to get rid of the negative effects of the trauma is writing. Making stories and telling about the experience provide a kind of therapy for the person who lives through a traumatic event. In this sense, writing about the traumatic phase of the childhood, the individual talks to the “child-that-was”¹⁰⁰ which is both comforting and supporting. Similarly, as Hansen quotes from Judith Herman traumatic disorder requires psychological recovery:

. . . a healing relationship; safety; remembrance and mourning, wherein the goal is to reconstruct the trauma, not forget or exorcise it; and reconnection with persons or groups where the goal is to restore the victims belief that human relationships can be trusted.¹⁰¹

Hansen also quotes from Cathy Caruth: “To be healed, ‘the patient’ suffering from post traumatic stress disorder needs to verbalize, integrate and communicate the past in narrative and memory. . . .”¹⁰²

Marya’s separation from her mother and father is a traumatic one. However, she heals her wounds by herself with the help of writing, with her verbal skills. Marya writes stories and reads them to Mr. Schwilk only; with whom she feels comfortable for a period. As we typically see in literature, the daughters of silent

⁹⁹ Janet Handler Burstein. Writing Mothers, Writing Daughters: Tracing the Maternal in Stories by American Jewish Women.(Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996.), p.60

¹⁰⁰ Anthony Giddens. Modernity and Self Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age. (Cambridge: Polity, 1991.), p.72

¹⁰¹ Elanie Tuttle Hansen. Mother Without Child: Contemporary Fiction and the Crisis of Motherhood. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997.), p.110

¹⁰² *ibid*, p.111

mothers —Marya’s is silent in a way— grow up more determined to write “as if they needed to write stories their mothers could not tell.”¹⁰³

Her relationship with her English teacher, Mr. Schwilk, is an intimate one for both sides. When Marya is fifteen after Schwilk’s leaving Innisfail, she thinks she has no friends and tells herself that she needs none. She starts to visit father Shearing, who is in his late thirties, after he has an operation in hospital. The concept of priest is important in this instant because Father Shearing is a religious figure and in this sense represents the paternal love. He fills the gap of a real, loving and caring father figure for Marya. Her age at the time when she gets related to him is also very important because she is at the age of superego building. According to Freud the function of religion is to redeem mankind from guilt and through rituals of sacrificing. Freud thinks people are influenced by past events and the things outside their conscious awareness. He suggests that people experience conflicts between what they want to do (represented by their id) and what we are told by society and parents that they should do (represented by the superego.) This conflict is resolved to a greater degree, by the ego. Freud views religion as originating in the child’s relationship to the father. Thus, religion reflects an attempt to fulfill people’s wishes, and is an illusion. For Freud all neuroses have their origin in repressed childhood experiences, entirely of a sexual nature, the origins of that strange form of compulsive behavior called religion must be bound up with some repressed experience in the childhood of the human race. Father Shearing fills the space which is left from her real father because Marya lives her Oedipus complex in her relationship with father which we will witness soon. In her dialogues with father she tries to find answers to her questions about God, soul, heart and the like. She questions why both of her parents disappeared “mysteriously.” She is so realistic that she knows God cannot be “deceived in any way, that one stood naked before him.”¹⁰⁴ During her talks to Father Shearing she thinks that as a Catholic she has sins and the father consoles her. She learns “to suppress certain aspects of her personality in his

¹⁰³ Janet Handler Burstein. *Writing Mothers, Writing Daughters: Tracing the Maternal in Stories by American Jewish Women*. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996.), p.68

¹⁰⁴ Joyce Carol Oates. *Marya: A Life*. (New York. Berkley, 1988.), p.68

presence”¹⁰⁵ after the first catechism classes, especially, any hint of weakness. She is so decided on the issue of being strong. She never forgives to be weak after her first life lesson to her about not to cry. She adores the father: “Gracious when he performed well; yet more gracious when he erred. Remarkable man! Watching him then, Marya had felt her gaze go hot and greedy, felt her blood beat in slow helpless adoration. Celebrating Christ. In motion, in the flesh. Celebrating God, that most elusive of spirits.”¹⁰⁶

In the light of her meetings to the father, which she does not mention to Wilma each time, she obtains a healthy knowledge of God. She begins to think “God concerned himself with souls, not bodies; certainly not faces.”¹⁰⁷ She starts to criticize the high school attitude of “everything depends on being pretty or not pretty.”¹⁰⁸ With this illumination she vows:

. . . not to be the kind of idiotic girl who worries constantly over her appearance-slipping into the lavatory between classes, for instance to peer anxiously at her mirrored reflection. Nor would she turn into the kind of woman, like her aunt Wilma, who visibly warmed when paid a compliment; or, again like Wilma, who complained aloud about getting older.¹⁰⁹

She grows so conscious, sure and rational on these issues. According to Lacan mirror stage brings “fragmentation”¹¹⁰ or split. Marya resists looking at her mirrored reflection between classes like the other girls which means that she develops a more fixed self than her girlfriends. The other girls who regard everything as being pretty or not pretty fall into “misrecognition” in Marya’s sense. As she grows up, she ends up with more mature manners unlike the other young girls. Marya is the most loyal of the kids who visit Father Shearing. She helps the father while he wants to move or sometimes brings him some snacks to eat. During these moments she realizes some feelings of his being a man and herself being a young girl. She forbids herself from thinking anything obscene since for the priests acts of sexuality are forbidden.

¹⁰⁵ Joyce Carol Oates. *Marya: A Life*. (New York. Berkley, 1988.), p.69

¹⁰⁶ *ibid*, p.72

¹⁰⁷ *ibid*, p.68

¹⁰⁸ *ibid*, p.68

¹⁰⁹ *ibid*, p.68

¹¹⁰ Anthony Elliot. *Concepts of the Self*. (Malden: Polity,2001.), p.137

However, her mind cannot refrain from having an idea of the father's "masculine flesh."¹¹¹ Indeed, she is so overlaid with a "basic shyness; a fear, perhaps, of touching and of being touched."¹¹² This scene is very important that it is the reflection of Marya's resolution of her Oedipus complex. According to Freud, Oedipus complex is caused by a repressed sexual desire of the mother on the part of the male child, and of the father in the case of the female child, with consequent rivalry and jealousy of the other parent's sexual rights and privileges. This is why Marya becomes aware of father's masculine flesh. Her inclination which she is unable to lean towards her own father, turns to Father Shearing since he is caring and nurturing for Marya.

Her fraternity with father completes her illumination from the point she stops with Mr. Schwilk. The father gives her some books on Christian tradition first, then she starts on the philosophical ones like St. Thomas, Aristotle and Hegel. She reads Tolstoy, some plays of Chekhov, novels by Kafka, Lagerkvist, Kawabata whom she had never heard of, two novels by Graham Greene "which she devoured in a day."¹¹³ She wants to talk about them with the father. She is introduced to the subject of guilt, sin, adultery and grace which are so passionately commingled. This starting point will do a good base for her in her further learning. Father's mastery over the language shows that language is in man's territory. According to Lacan, language is the Law-of-the-Father or Name-of-the-Father and the child enters into the Symbolic order with language which corresponds to the resolution of the Oedipus complex in Freudian approach. As a result, since language is paternal in Lacan's view, in the novel *Father Shearing* takes the place of Marya's real father who is supposed to introduce her to this area. Marya enters the Symbolic order by having discussions with father over these works. The above writers which father gives to Marya to read have the best works in English language. Thus, she enters into the male world by her talent on language. Her camaraderie with the father goes on for eighteen months until the death of the father in a clinic in N.Y. City where he is transferred when he gets worse.

¹¹¹ Joyce Carol Oates. *Marya: A Life*. (New York. Berkley, 1988.), p.73

¹¹² *ibid*, p.73

¹¹³ *ibid*, p.75

Since Marya is suffering from the trauma of loss of her parents, her close feelings to Mr. Schwilk or to father Shearing can be understood in terms of the Oedipal theories. These men are the people who Marya identifies herself with since she cannot get the intimacy which she wishes from her own uncle and aunt. Because when she brings up the subject if there is any news from her mother, Wilma scolds her saying “who the hell do you think has been your mother all this time, you ungrateful little shit.”¹¹⁴ Father Shearing is a father figure for Marya as Marilyn C. Wesley points out in her Refusal and Transgression in Joyce Carol Oates’ Fiction that Marya’s relationship with the father is “symbolic incest. . . . which is the transgression that violates female exclusion from the world of language and culture.”¹¹⁵ Marya works as an assistant to the father transcribing his rhetorical works for a final essay. Marya wonders if “to be able to write so well, to wield such a vocabulary, to *argue* so powerfully; to ferret out miscalculations in a rival’s thesis to a mere hair’s-breath of a degree. . . if it is an entirely masculine skill, an art of combat by means of language, forever beyond her.”¹¹⁶ She is wondering with this scene about if she will write so powerfully and enter in this world of men’s, that is to say the Law-of-the-Father with her talent of grasping and questioning on issues. Before he dies, father Shearing gives her a watch which is given to him by his step father. This is a man’s watch and it “symbolizes his sponsorship of Marya’s access to the masculine intellectual world of language.”¹¹⁷

According to Lacan, the child enters in the Symbolic order with language. Language is described as the Law-of-the-Father. “For Lacan the subject is constituted through language, the mirror image represents the moment when the subject is located in an order outside itself to which it will henceforth refer. The

¹¹⁴ Joyce Carol Oates. Marya: A Life. (New York. Berkley, 1988.), p.80

¹¹⁵ Marilyn C. Wesley Refusal and Transgression in Joyce Carol Oates’ Fiction. (Westport:Greenwood Press, 1993.), p.131

¹¹⁶ Joyce Carol Oates. Marya: A Life. (New York. Berkley, 1988.), p.131

¹¹⁷ Marilyn C. Wesley Refusal and Transgression in Joyce Carol Oates’ Fiction. (Westport:Greenwood Press, 1993.), p.131

subject is the subject of speech.”¹¹⁸ Lacan’s Name-of-the-Father: the patronym, patriarchal law, patrilineal identity, language as our inscription into patriarchy. The Name-of-the-Father is the fact of the attribution of paternity by law, by language”¹¹⁹ Marya enters the masculine order with her verbal skills. In her relationship with both Mr. Schwilk and Father Shearing, she proves herself to be able to transgress the border which belongs the masculine order, in Lacanian view, the Symbolic. She starts writing, she gets an award and proves her qualification of grasping the serious theories of humanities to Father Shearing. Marya enters the Law-of-the-Father.

Following her senses on independence of her soul, Marya leaves Innisfail to go to the university, which she receives the scholarship from Port Oriskany. She stays in Maynard House in her sophomore year at Port Oriskany. She does not dread the poor and shabby conditions of her room because that cubbyhole of a room “was *hers*.”¹²⁰ At the week of her arrival she hears about a theft in the halls of Maynard Hall. On a Saturday morning in November, when she goes downstairs to check her mail, she notices that her wallet is stolen with \$45 in it. That is the money of week’s part-time wages from the university library. Not only her money but also her woolen socks and her sweater are stolen and she bursts into tears. That is the first time we notice her tears throughout the novel. The first friend she has at Port Oriskany is wealthy, blond and self-possessive Imogene who is a sorority girl and does theater major. Her qualities are just the opposite of Marya’s however she is clever to lure Marya into a relationship. When Marya walks on the campus paths one day, Imogene approaches and asks if Marya is walking the same way and adds: “I should confess that it is your voice that really intrigues me.”¹²¹ She thinks Marya’s voice would suit the voice of a character she plays and complains about her own voice. Imogene occasionally accentuates on her well conditions and noting that if Marya is not comfortable in her “depressive, little hole,”¹²² she is welcomed

¹¹⁸Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose (eds.). Feminine Sexuality. (Hong Kong: Mac Millan,1992.),p.31

¹¹⁹ *ibid*, p.47

¹²⁰ Joyce Carol Oates. Marya: A Life. (New York. Berkley, 1988.), p.119

¹²¹*ibid*, p.125

¹²² *ibid*, p.121

to her sorority which is not “so claustrophobic.”¹²³ Marya thinks Imogene as an old student must have many friends, she is popular. She is at least doubtful for Imogene’s friendship, because Marya has her targets. When Imogene does not bother sharing the peasant shrewdness of Marya’s conditions, Marya explains to her that she has not time “wasting” on people. Imogene seems she really likes and cares for Marya. However, Marya gets the impression that Imogene is not very intimate. Marya thinks that Imogene’s closeness is “mysterious, puzzling and disconcerting.”¹²⁴

Imogene has a fiancé whose name is Richard. He was a law student and had graduated from Port Oriskany several years ago. Imogene talks about him, sometimes. As Marya and Imogene’s friendship flourish, Marya gets jealous about Imogene’s other boyfriends on campus as if she wants to protect her from them. Marya has some other clever friends whose marks are as good as Marya’s. She thinks. She thinks they are superior, however Imogene’s friendship is important for her that loss of Imogene will be a “powerful blow”¹²⁵ whereas she does not mind not seeing the others again. When Marya watches Imogene on the stage she thinks she is “perfect.”¹²⁶ Nevertheless, she writes in her journal that “friendship –a puzzle that demands too much of the imagination”¹²⁷ and “most enigmatic of all relationships”¹²⁸:

In a sense it flourished unbidden; in another, it had to be cultivated, nurtured, sometimes even forced into existence. Though she was tirelessly active in most aspects of her life she’d always been quite passive when it came to friendship. She hadn’t time, she told herself; she hadn’t energy for something so. . . ephemeral.¹²⁹

Once Imogene wants to give her camel’s hair coat to Marya. She does not bother of her talking from an upper tone and Marya is not uncomfortable with her

¹²³ Joyce Carol Oates. *Marya: A Life*. (New York. Berkley, 1988.), p.126

¹²⁴ *ibid*, p.126

¹²⁵ *ibid*, p.134

¹²⁶ *ibid*, p.135

¹²⁷ *ibid*, p.135

¹²⁸ *ibid*, p.132

¹²⁹ *ibid*, p.132

tone because she knows Imogene and her socio-economic condition. Yet, she hesitates to take it because Marya thinks maybe Imogene's mother will say something. However, Imogene persuades Marya. Thinking that her own coat is three years old, she accepts Imogene's camel's hair coat. Marya is so focused on her target and she cuts down on her expenditures, once she gives up her toothpaste to be able to pay her fees. She works in the library in her spare times. Nevertheless, she never gives up her Parker pen which is of great importance to a person who takes pleasure from writing. Anything under B is "failing"¹³⁰ for her. She does very well on her courses. Once she confronts a professor who gives her C because she ridicules him in front of the students. She thinks professor is so "predictable" and she is sure of herself to foil him. With her great imagination and qualification to make up stories, she visits professor and tells that her mother is cancer and she is not "expected to live much longer."¹³¹ Professor begins to "stammer his apologies, rising from his desk, flushing deeply—the very image of chagrin and repentance."¹³² In triumph, Marya leaves the room, pilfering his Parker pen, gets her revenge from him. One more time, Marya gets her revenge on the one who puts obstacle in her way.

When Imogene tells her that she is trying too hard and not caring for her health, Marya replies her "my health isn't of any use to me...if I don't get anything accomplished. If I fail."¹³³ Imogene tells her to go on a double date once. Marya accepts but she does not even listen what the boy, Matthew, says while they are walking. She thinks he is not worth listening because she knows much and she is not interested in the boy's remarks on "infinity" and some remarks of "Pascal."¹³⁴ She sees Imogene kissing the other boy and all these seems nonsense to her and leaves the place. Later, Imogene starts degrading stories about Marya on campus corridors. At last they fight in a battle, cursing at each other. Imogene calls Marya "hillybilly bitch, thief." (162)

¹³⁰Joyce Carol Oates. *Marya: A Life*. (New York. Berkley, 1988.), p.139

¹³¹ *ibid*, p.141

¹³² *ibid*, p.141

¹³³ *ibid*, p.139

¹³⁴ *ibid*, p.153

What a sight, Imogene Skillman and Marya Knauer fighting, in front of the chapel, both in blue jeans, both livid with rage. Marya was shouting, ‘Don’t you touch me, you! What do you mean touching *me*! She was the better fighter, crouching with her knees bent, like a man, swinging at Imogene, striking her on the jaw. Not a slap but an actual punch: Marya’s fist was unerring.¹³⁵

In revenge Marya wears the earrings she steals from Imogene when she visits her after that night of date. Again in triumph she writes in her journal: “*And then the waters close over your head*”¹³⁶ she never lets the waters “suck”¹³⁷ her down and close over her head. Marya thinks Imogene will be all right that there will always be someone who will be around her to take care of her. “Imogene Skillman never approached her again, never pressed charges; nor did anyone dare bring the subject up to either of the girls.”¹³⁸ Marya’s record remains perfect, however, Imogene quits college. Later Marya hears that she lives in New York, she is broken up with her fiancé, Richard, and gets a role in a troupe of semiprofessional actors. Marya never gets interested in how Imogene moves on. Marya is so decided not to deviate from her objectives. It does not matter whoever relinquishes from her life, with a great enthusiasm she directs on her way. Imogene represents Marya’s antithesis, the thing that Marya resists to be. Marya prefers to be perfect instead. She never wants to be defeated to.

3.3 Lovers and Success in the Place of Lost Mother

Marya’s career prospers. She does very well for herself. She rarely returns to Innisfail- she describes the past as “profitless.”¹³⁹ Occasionally, she calls Wilma to get news from her family. She becomes the assistant of Professor Maximillian Fein who can be considered as another male mentor of Marya. Being very bright and being under Fein’s supervising Marya catches the chance to have one of her seminar papers published in a most distinguished of journals *Speculum*. Even though another assistant of Fein’s thinks Marya is on intimate grounds with the Professor, she

¹³⁵ Joyce Carol Oates. *Marya: A Life*. (New York. Berkley, 1988.), p.162

¹³⁶ *ibid*, p.142

¹³⁷ *ibid*, p.157

¹³⁸ *ibid*, p.163

¹³⁹ *ibid*, p.165

defends herself in a very natural tone of not having any idea of that kind and that she is not “that sort of a person.”¹⁴⁰ Although Oates says she is not a feminist writer, her regarding knowledge just on this point is so feminist. As soon as this dialogue passes between Marya and the assistant Ernest, Oates gives her views on knowledge being genderless by saying:

She hadn't intended to fall in love with Fein, or even to fall under his spell, as so many people, male and female, evidently did. That wasn't Marya Knauer's style, that wasn't quite the way she saw herself in this phase of her career. (Adulatory, calculating, subservient, “feminine.” She had learned to think of herself as genderless, just as knowledge itself was genderless; just as the scholarly life was genderless. In truth she had learned in graduate school to think of herself scarcely at all- she was too absorbed in her work.)¹⁴¹

Fein insists on working with Marya and it is true that their relationship turns out to be a sexual one- her first sexual relationship, because up to her this age, she is now twenty-five, Marya, having contradictory experiences with boys, is used to thinking that men are “idiotic, stupid and predictable.”¹⁴²

Fein is an arrogant kind of person but he is very high-ranking in his intellectualism. His wife Else, who considers herself “superior to her American environment,”¹⁴³ is from German origin. Marya begins to help Fein in his study in his house. She is in a way one of the household and takes care of Fein's cats when he and his wife go on a trip to Europe. Marya respects him very much that she thinks how “one might have a sacred obligation to another person.”¹⁴⁴ One day when Fein is still on the trip, Marya finds in one of his dressing drawers a note which is written to her, saying:

My dear brazen Marya-

If you hold this in your hand, if you have ventured so far, I think it futile for us to keep up certain pretenses. I know you- I seem to have recognized you

¹⁴⁰Joyce Carol Oates. *Marya: A Life*. (New York. Berkley, 1988.), p.166

¹⁴¹ *ibid*, p.167

¹⁴² *ibid*, p.101

¹⁴³ *ibid*, p.173

¹⁴⁴ *ibid*, p.173

from the first- do not be frightened, my dear (do not be less brazen) if I shortly make my claim upon you.

- Maximillian Fein ¹⁴⁵

Marya gradually feels sure of her love to Fein. In her loyalty to Fein, she feels love to the intellectualism also and with his guidance she feels her future is in her own hands.

Marya was staring at him, no longer caring if he noticed. She did love him- she was greedy and exultant with love if him- it was absurd to pretend otherwise; as he himself had said, it was futile.

Don't be frightened ...if shortly make my claim...

The highly potent brandy went to Marya's head. She knew herself beautiful- indeed, she was beautiful- she believed herself absolutely free for the first time in her life, and absolutely in control of her future. It might be rigorous but she would be equal to it. ¹⁴⁶

When Marya is Fein's lover for less than a week, Fein tells her that she "must try to locate her mother before too much more time elapse(s)." ¹⁴⁷ This is also what makes him a real father figure for Marya, one of the mentors in her life who thinks for the real benefit of her. Fein, with his profound knowledge of human psyche and history of humanity knows the importance of Marya's finding her lost mother. "The loss of the daughter to the mother, the mother to the daughter, is the essential tragedy" ¹⁴⁸ as Marianne Hirsch points in her review essay "Mothers and Daughters." Hirsch explains: "It's both an evocation of the desire that connects mother and daughter, of the knowledge they share, a knowledge following between two alike bodies, one of which has spent nine months inside the other" ¹⁴⁹ she completes with a quotation from Adrienne Rich's words.

¹⁴⁵ Joyce Carol Oates. *Marya: A Life*. (New York. Berkley, 1988.), p.180

¹⁴⁶ *ibid*, p.184

¹⁴⁷ *ibid*, p.187

¹⁴⁸ Marianne Hirsch. "Mothers and Daughters." *Signs*. (1981)

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=00979740%28198123%297%3A1%3C200%3AMAD%3E2.0.CO%3B2-B> (11.01.2006) pp.200-222.

¹⁴⁹ *ibid*, p.202

Marya's career continues prospering. Another essay of hers, analyzing the relationship between the "perverse" and "normal"¹⁵⁰ in contemporary American society is accepted for publication at *The Meridian* "a New York biweekly of some distinction."¹⁵¹ Fein supports her very much. As a father figure, he cites her name "as having provided him with invaluable help in an article to appear in *The Journal of Philosophical Studies* – Marya Knauer in a footnote. . . praised."¹⁵² She becomes his research assistant now. Fein shares his most intimate subjects with her. He tells her how he loses his little daughter Ursula and her death in his arms. One night when they are in an anonymous hotel room to which Fein brings a bottle of whiskey, they have a sexual relationship, Marya thinks: "In this man there is the answer to the very riddle of my life, but I can't find it."¹⁵³ For days he does not call her and there comes Else Fein to pick Marya up to drive her to the hospital where Fein lies in coma, dying. Marya cannot believe as if it was a dream and the two women console each other hand in hand. After Fein's death, Marya completes her Ph.D. and her work, which is more than five hundred pages on mid-nineteenth-century American prose, gets the chance to be published at Yale. She discovers in herself "an almost too ecstatic passion for teaching." Fein's death is a sign for Marya that she remembers her mother more than before with his advice. As in Lacanian view noone's friendship will fill up the empty space of her/his mother's lack in her/his life. Her mother falls in her mind more than before. Staring at herself in the mirror, she wonders if Vera Sanjek would know her; "Marya wondered eyeing herself, raising her forehead into a pattern of light creases, would they even recognize each other, face to face?"¹⁵⁴ This point is what all the feminist writers talk about. The girl's being whole with her mother –one giving birth to the other. Here, there is also a fragmentation of self in her mirrored reflection. She becomes fixed again in finding her mother as she gets more mature. She begins to mourn for her mother. Her lack becomes a "profound sense of emptiness that marks the self"¹⁵⁵ in Lacanian view.

¹⁵⁰ Joyce Carol Oates. *Marya: A Life*. (New York. Berkley, 1988.), p.192

¹⁵¹ *ibid*, p.192

¹⁵² *ibid*, p.193

¹⁵³ *ibid*, p.204

¹⁵⁴ *ibid*, p.220

¹⁵⁵ Anthony Elliot. *Concepts of the Self*. Malden: (Polity,2001.), p.137

In another affair with a colleague from the university Marya goes on a bicycle trip which she experiences all the selfishness of her partner, Gregory. Marya has learned how to act according to the standards of the academy and never gives a hint to anyone what she works on. She publishes

. . . a well-received scholarly book, she continued to publish articles and reviews in her field, she had acquired the reputation for being a dedicated and exciting teacher, she was a woman whose womanliness was neither an issue nor restriction. She had become shrewd enough to say nothing at all about her nonacademic writing, or to allude to it in the slightly disparaging way in which such writing is generally alluded to, in her profession.¹⁵⁶

The bicycle trip does not finish very pleasurable however, Marya protects her position and gets tenure and her male companion does not. Then Marya resigns her academic career to become a professional journalist and a commentator.

Marya comes to age of thirty-four when she starts a new affair with Eric Nichols, who is a distinguished editor of a liberal journal. Eric represents another “symbolic father”¹⁵⁷ for her. Even after his death Marya acts according to his views, speaking in his tone at an international conference. Before his death, Eric considers himself as “a soldier in an undefined and undeclared war within the territorial boundary of the United States.”¹⁵⁸ Marya joins “his ranks as a woman warrior against human oppression, she discovers at the conference” and writes in her notebook: “*Death from without and death from within.*”¹⁵⁹ Some time after Eric’s death Marya, in her borrowed cabin in Quebec, feels more “independent and triumphant.”¹⁶⁰ She knows she can live alone without great hardship, she has her work, her friends and

¹⁵⁶ Joyce Carol Oates. *Marya: A Life*. (New York. Berkley, 1988.), p.230

¹⁵⁷ Marilyn C.Wesley. *Refusal and Transgression in Joyce Carol Oates’ Fiction*. (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1993.), p.132

¹⁵⁸ Joyce Carol Oates. *Marya: A Life*. (New York. Berkley, 1988.), p.259

¹⁵⁹ *ibid*, p.243

¹⁶⁰ *ibid*, p.259

acquaintances and her travel. “She had her *life*.”¹⁶¹ The periodic retreats after the deaths of her loved ones are “proof of her own strength and independence.”¹⁶²

Before Eric’s death Marya finds herself “thinking frequently about her mother.”¹⁶³

Poor Vera Sanjek.

Poor Vera Knauer.

Was she alive or dead; was she living anywhere in the state; had there ever been any truth to the rumor (if what Wilma had said could constitute “rumor” that she’d spent some time in prison...? Perhaps she was in prison still. Or in a mental hospital.¹⁶⁴

During her relationship with Eric, in some of her day dreaming Marya fancies that something grows in her womb:

From time to time, in weak despondent moods, she could feel the tiny thing growing in her womb. But she ignored it. She ignored all notions that did not correspond to her knowledge of herself. She believed she was tough and shallow and unreliable, capable of total self-absorption (didn’t people say that of her?-complaining, chiding, admiring?), and consequently incapable of serious grief.¹⁶⁵

However, she thinks she will be restricted by gender to impotence, she refuses “feminine innocence to acquire powers of knowledge through language. Yet along with innocence, she has also rejected another trait restricted to women: nurturant love, the capacity to foster connection.”¹⁶⁶ Anthony Elliot’s view on Lacan’s helps to perceive Marya’s feelings:

According to Lacan, fragmentation, loss and mourning are at the heart of the psyche; and this means that, no matter how hard individuals try to find various emotional substitutes for loss, a profound sense of emptiness always

¹⁶¹Joyce Carol Oates. Marya: A Life. (New York. Berkley, 1988.), p.259

¹⁶² *ibid*, p.259

¹⁶³ *ibid*, p.261

¹⁶⁴ *ibid*, p.261

¹⁶⁵ *ibid*, p.262

¹⁶⁶ Marilyn C.Wesley. Refusal and Transgression in Joyce Carol Oates’ Fiction. (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1993.), p.133

marks the self. The ego, Lacan says, blinds the self to such loss; the ego covers over the fragmentation of the psyche through narcissistic illusions of perfection and completeness. Through immersion in the realm of images and representations, the ego is built upon various narcissistic identifications that defend against the painful and unsettling turbulence of the unconscious. The individual captivated by its mirror image, or the self treating other people as mirror to its own wants and desires: these are instances of imaginary misrecognition, a distortion through which the ego seeks to feel in the gap of emptiness, loss and longing at the level of unconscious desire.¹⁶⁷

In this sense everything is a misrecognition for Marya . With whatever she tries to fill the vacuum which is left by her lost mother, she cannot fill the void. The father figures, religious sentimentalism, educational success and her lovers are not satisfying for her to continue her life smoothly. Since in Lacanian view the lack of mother cannot be filled with anything, Marya's search for mother becomes her reason of existence.

In the denouement, Marya finally gets obsessed with finding her lost mother although throughout the novel she is seen in weak moods to find her mother. It is only in the conclusion of the novel that she finds herself strong enough to attempt toward wholeness by "trying to reintroduce the feminine potential in the form of the lost mother."¹⁶⁸ She goes back to Innisfail to visit her father's grave and to see her relatives. All through the novel Marya learns from her aunt Wilma how her brothers and the family is doing but now she asks Wilma where she may find her mother. Marya's mother Vera frames the novel. In the beginning she is a confusing figure for Marya. She is a combination of weakness and strength and blurring rage and love. She is yelling at her children that she wants them dead but at once she tells that she is sorry. She is scorning them and immediately hugging them tightly. As Marilyn C. Wesley quotes from D.W. Winnicott, the concept of "good-enough" mother. She is the one "whose success may be measured through her child's progress toward

¹⁶⁷ Anthony Elliot. Concepts of the Self. (Malden: Polity, 2001.), p.137

¹⁶⁸ Marilyn C. Wesley. Refusal and Transgression in Joyce Carol Oates' Fiction. (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1993.), p.133

autonomy.”¹⁶⁹ She continues, “[A]ccording to Winnicott, a good-enough mother is able to help her infant experience the capacity to manipulate people and objects. She is also able to support the infant’s attendant need to experience separation from the mother without the anxiety that genuine separation would create.”¹⁷⁰ Marya’s mother provides her daughter’s self sufficiency at a very early age with her lesson of not showing the tears. Therefore, she is a good-enough mother although for a long time she is not near her daughter.

From Vera’s point of view, abandonment of her children is a must. She does not have a chance but leaving her children. In a small town in United States, where macho tradition is in power, she is forced to do this because, she does not have any chance, but dating some guy. However, there are some complaints, a woman complains that there are kids at home even a baby when the men drop by. Thus, Vera promises her kids that she has a friend who “respect(s) her. . . and she wo(n’t) have to take any more shit from anybody”¹⁷¹ if their plans work out. As Elaine Tuttle Hansen depicts in her Mother Without Child, “motherhood offers women a site of both power and oppression, self- esteem and self-sacrifice, reverence and debasement.”¹⁷² Vera trusts herself very much that she will get her children from their uncle one day when the uncle comes to take the children away she treats him in a nasty way because her children are snatched from her. Women are seen not a real figure but only a complementary figure of men in patriarchal society order, however, Vera is not allowed to be a complementary figure even to the children’s uncle while rearing her children.

She does not give up her children completely and she is not a weak mother. From time to time she learns secretly from Wilma how her children are doing. However, Wilma does not tell anything to Marya about those days. As a result, Marya does not suffer from the feeling of revolt which emerges as a result of depressiveness of having a passive mother. Her mother in her mind is just the

¹⁶⁹Marilyn C.Wesley. Refusal and Transgression in Joyce Carol Oates’ Fiction. (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1993.), p.34

¹⁷⁰ *ibid*, p.34

¹⁷¹ Joyce Carol Oates. Marya: A Life. (New York. Berkley, 1988.), p.33

¹⁷² Elaine Tuttle Hansen. Mother Without Child: Contemporary Fiction and the Crisis of Motherhood. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997.), p.3

opposite: smoking, yelling, and cursing, that is to say not a passive one. On a car ride Wilma tells Marya that she knows where her mother lives with a new name. Not Knauer or Sanjek. It is Murchison. Marya repeats the new name of her mother and laughs at the café where they sit: “Marya’s laughter was louder and sharper than she might have wished.”¹⁷³ Marya does not go to her mother’s address but goes back to her apartment in New York City and writes a letter to her mother. She gets her reply after ten days from Vera Murchison. Marya thinks that that is going to “change”¹⁷⁴ her life. “Marya this is going to cut your life in two”¹⁷⁵ she says to herself. She realizes the snapshot attached to the envelope.

The snapshot showed a middle-aged woman with stiff-gray hair, shadowed eyes a taut suspicious expression, strong facial bones. Marya’s own cheekbones and nose. Her eyes. The woman’s mouth was tense but she might have been about to smile, summoning the strength to smile. She wore a dark dress with white trim, her shoulders were sloping and her bust rather heavy, her head defiant, erect.¹⁷⁶

Marya moves to the light to see the picture in perfect focus. “This ending implies the desirability of a renewed relationship of power and nurturance.”¹⁷⁷

The picture Marya finally receives from her mother is the glimpse of the mother’s vision in her life just like the mythological story of Demeter and Persephone. When Hades abducts Persephone, she lives three quarters of the year with her mother Demeter and one quarter with her husband Hades in the underworld. As Persephone reaches maturity, Demeter becomes an old woman and seasonal growth starts for humans. At the end of their story Persephone is both alive and death, both young and old, both above and below the earth. “She lives both symbiotically united to her mother and ineluctably distant from her. Her allegiance is split between mother and husband, her posture is dual.”¹⁷⁸ Marya and her mother’s

¹⁷³ Joyce Carol Oates. Marya: A Life. (New York: Berkley, 1988.), p.274

¹⁷⁴ *ibid*, p.275

¹⁷⁵ *ibid*, p.275

¹⁷⁶ *ibid*, p.275

¹⁷⁷ Marilyn C.Wesley. Refusal and Transgression in Joyce Carol Oates’ Fiction. (Westport:Greenwood Press, 1993.),p.133

¹⁷⁸ Marianne Hirsch . The Mother/ Daughter Plot: Narrative, Psychoanalysis, Feminism. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press,1989.), p.35

story is precisely indistinguishable from Persephone and Demeter's story. "Loss is presented as inevitable, part of the natural sequence of growth, but, since time is cyclical, mother daughter reunion forms a natural part of the cycle."¹⁷⁹ Mother-daughter union is celebrated from the mythological times "as the union of light and darkness, life and death, death and rebirth."¹⁸⁰ Reaching mother's picture is a rebirth for Marya. The "maternal silence" for Marya is so conspicuous to turn into "maternal discourse." With the picture, her mother gains a voice in Marya's life. The ending of the novel predicts a reunion of mother and daughter. Therefore the closing of the novel contains a resolution which plays a complementary role in Marya's psychic wholeness.

¹⁷⁹ Marianne Hirsch . The Mother/ Daughter Plot Narrative, Psychoanalysis, Feminism. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press,1989.), p.5

¹⁸⁰ *ibid*, p.5

CONCLUSION

Joyce Carol Oates writes Marya: A Life with a sense of drawing strong female character in response to the hegemony of the enduring masculine codes in United States of 80s. Oates' former novels were picturing the weak, the trapped individual in the hands of harsh capitalistic order, the abused and tortured female characters, rape, mutilation, grotesque scenes from the streets of ghettos, turmoil in the United States and the power politics which keep going for the benefit of the powerful. She never lets us to forget the sheer amount of violence in America. Her vision in her novels in those years was tragic to convey her ideas to her readers. She wanted to call attention of her readers to the inequalities in social order of society. After the second wave of feminist movements, in 80s she began to portray stronger female characters in her novels keeping her style tragic. During those years her female characters began to gain their independence from the capturing households which patriarchal system had imprisoned them, they started to have their own work, money and their own rooms to produce. Their husbands or boyfriends shifted from brutal characters to the understanding fathers or husbands. Marya: A Life is one of those novels in which Oates is very much concerned about showing the strong side of the female sex.

The novel is mainly concerned about a parentless young woman's struggle to build herself an adorable career. When she reaches this goal, she begins to struggle for a bigger necessity than her career in her life. That is to find her lost mother. Therefore, from the pre-Oedipal plot of mother-daughter symbiosis, the novel first of all moves to a disconnection of mother and daughter and finally a reunion of this inseparable two. The mother-daughter relationship is very important for Marya to understand her own self. According to psychoanalytical theory of Freud the mother remains an important figure for the daughter and it determines the nature and quality of her marital relationships. Since the story of individual development of a daughter rests on a separation from the mother, in this thesis, I tried to show the affiliations between Freud's psychological theories of child development and the individuation process of Marya. I also referred to Lacan's views on the psychic development of the

child and her/his integration into culture and society by entering the masculine symbolic order in the example of Marya's experiences from her childhood. Besides, Freud's and Lacan's theories, in theoretical background, I also referred to Melanie Klein and her theories on the psychology of the child development since her theories revolve around the figure of mother.

In the first part of the theory chapter I referred to Freud's views on ego psychology, because it focuses on pre-Oedipal experiences of the child which contribute to the formation of the psychic structure of the person. I also referred to his views of conscious and unconscious mind and his structural model which paves the way to understand the ego and superego formation of Marya and her relationship with her environment. Lastly, in this chapter, I tried to give explanation of the Oedipus complex and its resolution period in a daughter's life since it helps to lay interpretations on Marya's relationships with her adopted family, her comradeships and her lovers in the future. In the second part of the theory chapter, I wanted to show Lacan's phases that an infant goes through to integrate into language and by this means becomes a cultural being. His three phases of the Real, the Symbolic, and the Imaginary were referred to in order to understand the meaning of Marya's entering into the male symbolic order. Her endeavors to enter into the Law-of-the-Father and into paternal domain could be understood by Lacan's theories. The lack which she felt all through her life because of the absence of her mother and the "irreparable wound" of hers as a result of this lack and her fragmentation could be explained by referring the mirror stage of Lacan's. The reflections of this stage on Marya's personality at her mature years were also examined. In this chapter, lastly, I referred to Melanie Klein's views to stress on the developmental process of Marya in the adopted family. Since Klein's views have been considered as extension of Freud's, her observations on the process of pre-Oedipal development stage of children were also referred to in this part. According to Klein, mother remains an essential psychic presence throughout life. Marya's relationship with her mother surrogate Wilma. Wilma's representation of both bad and good breast and their reflections on Marya was evaluated in the light of Klein's paranoid-schizoid and depressive stages of psychological development of the child.

Under the light of these theories, before analyzing the novel, I tried to exemplify Joyce Carol Oates' themes, her concerns on art and her incentives on writing. In the third chapter, which I tried to analyze the novel, Marya: A Life, I put the examples from the protagonist's life to shed light on how these theories pave the way for the reader to interpret on Marya's dilemmas in life. Marya's being brought up in an adopted family, her friendships, her camaraderie with her English teacher and the priest who served as father figures for her, and her lovers who were male mentors for her and also served as late father figures in her life, all, crossed at the roundabout of her lost mother. Her mother, who remained lost throughout the novel, was the knot which Marya tried to undo all her life. In this sense Marya and her mother's unification at the end of the novel points to a resolution which seems to end up Marya's pains. Therefore, the theme "loss of mother" was examined with the light of some feminists such as Nancy J. Chodorow, Luce Irigaray, Marianne Hirsch, Jane Gallop and Juliett Mitchell.

The theme of "loss of mother" and its complementary effects of reuniting with the mother for a daughter was evaluated throughout this study since they held crucial importance both on the side of mother and daughter. The theme of "loss of mother" is important, because as feminists refer to a central hypothesis that mothers have "symbiotic" relationship with their daughters. This mutual relationship serves as glue because as feminists argue that if this bond is broken and the mother and daughter are separated, their definitions of themselves become confused. Their separation is important because if there is no mother around for a daughter, it is hard for her to define herself as a woman since there will not be any role model in her life during the process of ego building. Thus, automatically its reflections will occur in her future life in her relationships with the other sex. She will be unable to define her position in her relationships. It is a natural fact that every woman is born as a daughter and they can only define themselves perfectly by looking at their relationship with their mothers and daughters. If a strong bond is built up among this two, it will have a strengthening psychological effect on women. This will provide them with the power to fight with the repressive effects of a patriarchal society on women. For the protagonist Marya it is important to find her mother, because only

then will she be able to fix her fragmented self. The maternal silence, which starts with her separation from her mother, is likely to shift into a maternal discourse with the snapshot of her mother she receives at the end of the novel.

In this thesis I tried to emphasize the importance of the place of the mother in a daughter's life. Since everyone is in love with their mother, the mother's place cannot be fulfilled neither in son's nor in daughter's life. The son tries to fix this situation by seeking a wife who resembles his mother, however, the daughter's trauma, because of this vacuum, is harder to fix. It is hard for her to fall in love with a man, because shifting from a situation in which she was in love with her mother to the situation of falling in love with a male is a more painful process than the son lives through. There is a "twist" in the daughter's experience which is hard to cope with. If our mothers are not with us with their existence, they remain in our deepest memory. The daughter sees "herself in the future" in her mother. If the mother is lost or if there is no mother model for a daughter, she starts to seek her mother in some other institutions as success, school, religion or marital relationships as in the example of Marya.

I infer from the novel that women become more powerful if they have a strong and well-developed relationship with their mothers. Mothers are the most complementary figures in their daughter's lives. Daughters learn how to guard themselves further relationships in their lives from their relationship with their mothers, because they define themselves in relation to their mothers. They can find the power in themselves to fight with the devaluing repressions of male centered social order only by a strongly-built-up-relationship with their mothers.

As a last word, my initial incentive to write something on Joyce Carol Oates was because of her views that criticize the social order of today's American life, which drags many different cultures to its defeatist destiny. I knew Oates had problem with this order and had words to say on its derailed social system. Therefore, once I got more into her writings and writing aims, my readings of Oates became much more exciting as I saw her profound talent to describe the human soul

and subtleties of human mind to deal with the pessimistic life issues. I hope this thesis will cause new reading horizons for the ones who are interested in her issues.

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