

## THE FATE OF WOMEN: EDEN COUNTY MOTIFS IN OATES'S RECENT NOVELS

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**Abstract:** In a recent interview, Joyce Carol Oates stated that her work is involved totally with the “ethical and social situations of her technology.”<sup>1</sup> Indeed, Oates has explored the existence of “her generation” in extra than 50 novels, which includes fiction for young adults, and greater than 30 brief story collections, novellas, dramas, essays, and volumes of poetry and literary complaint. Her opinions appear regularly in *The New York Times*, *The New Yorker*, *The New York Review of Books*, and in similar magazines and newspapers. She has additionally edited some of collections of short memories and anthologies. Finally, similarly to being a creator, Joyce Carol Oates is also the Roger S. Berlind Distinguished Professor of Humanities at Princeton University.

**Introduction:** In histories of American literature, Oates's name is regularly closely related to the ones of Norman Mailer, Saul Bellow, Joseph Heller, John Updike, John Cheever and Philip Roth, the so-known as literary traditionalists of the 1970s.<sup>2</sup> Some of Oates's paintings from the Nineteen Eighties, meanwhile, has been compared with postmodernist fiction for its variety of fashion and use of parody. During this period, Oates became “a sort of traditionalist John Barth, parodying the ancient novel in *A Bloodsmoor Romance* (1982), Hemingway or Mailer in an essay on boxing, and a whole array of paperwork and patterns in other works.”<sup>3</sup> The Oxford Encyclopedia of American Literature firmly states that, “no matter the previous proceedings of a few critics in opposition to her productivity and capacity to put in writing in so many literary bureaucracy, the variety and depth of her oeuvre have made her undeniably, and deservedly one of the maximum distinguished and celebrated American authors.”<sup>4</sup> The Encyclopedia of American Literature<sup>5</sup> asserts that Oates's first-class works encompass the radical them; *The Wheel of Love*, a group of quick testimonies that incorporates her maximum widely anthologized brief tale, “Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?”; the novels, *Because It Is Bitter*, and *Because It Is My Heart and Black Water*; and the essay, “On Boxing.” Judging from important reception of her most latest works, the novels *Blonde* and *The Falls* additionally stand a very good hazard of being ranked among Oates's nice works.

The first studies of Joyce Carol Oates's paintings seemed on the quit of the Seventies. Since then, students of her work have had one problem in not unusual: that of categorizing her paintings and assessing her achievements. Joanne V. Creighton, who has written two books on Oates's works, argues in her first eBook, *Joyce Carol Oates*,<sup>6</sup> that if Oates's depiction of mental and environmental barriers locations her within the lifestyle of American Naturalism, so her visionary perspective within the equal works counters this culture. In her second eBook, *Joyce Carol Oates: Novels of the Middle Years*,<sup>7</sup> Creighton claims that Oates's work belongs to

standard American Romanticism, due to her attention to personality and desire to transcend obstacles. Creighton therefore suggests the time period, “post-current romantic,” to represent Oates. Oates herself has made the subsequent touch upon her method: “My approach has constantly been to mix the „naturalistic“ global with the „symbolic“ method of expression, in order that I am constantly – or typically – writing approximately real humans in actual society, however the way of expression may be naturalistic, surreal, or parodic. In this manner I have, to my personal satisfaction at the least, solved the antique trouble – need to one be devoted to the actual international, or to at least one's creativeness?”<sup>8</sup>

An Oates's painting has been discussed from some of distinct views. Gary Frederic Waller<sup>9</sup> claims that Oates is writing approximately the opportunities of transcendence, even as Ellen Friedman in *Joyce Carol Oates*<sup>10</sup> argues that in her novels, Oates requires the problem and deflation of the ego and unreasonable ambitions. In an examination of Oates's tragic imaginative and prescient, Mary Kathryn Grant<sup>11</sup> concludes that Oates's tragedy, which arises from the absence of communal relationships and her characters' isolation, is a tragedy without catharsis, and that her characters are often superficial. Grant also predicates that Oates's strength as a creator on the whole lies in her exploration of persona and greater experimental modes of writing, in place of in her frequent use of nineteenth-century realist patterns. For Gavin Cologne-Brookes,<sup>12</sup> in the meantime, Oates's importance lies in her practical technique to art, which serves as a device for higher know-how of social problems and possibilities. He argues that Oates is a realistic creator. For Malcolm Bradbury,<sup>13</sup> Oates is especially important as a author of gothic novels and testimonies; while Harold Bloom<sup>14</sup> has claimed that simplest one novel, them (which addresses social issues, and is written in a naturalistic mode with some experimental functions), will stay a lasting success.

In her first eBook, the gathering of brief testimonies *By The North Gate*,<sup>1</sup> Joyce Carol Oates introduces the reader to the fictional region, Eden County, which is

modeled on her native Erie County. Situated in Upstate New York, Eden County more often than not consists of rural landscapes dotted with existing cities and cities, consisting of Buffalo, Lockport and Chautauqua, and the fictitious cities of Derby, Newville, Massena and Port Oriskany. Life is tough in Eden County; its population regularly need to combat to live on in dire financial conditions, and are difficulty to uncontrollable natural and social forces. They are simple, uneducated people, running tough in enterprise or agriculture to make ends meet. Commenting on the quick tales in *By The North Gate*, Greg Johnson states that "Oates is here [in Eden County] staking out her own postage stamp of earth, it's ironic call suggesting an allegorical microcosm of humanity in preferred and, especially, of an American paradise misplaced, its bewildered population spilled out right into a ruthless, barren global wherein mere survival is a sort of triumph."<sup>2</sup> He argues that in her depiction of Eden County on this collection, Oates attracts on the works of William Faulkner, Flannery O'Connor and Friedrich Nietzsche. Johnson perceives Faulkner's impact in each Oakes's idea of Eden County, which resembles Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha, and in Oakes's allegorical manner of storytelling. For example, the demonic discern of patriarch Rockland in "Ceremonies" echoes Faulkner's Thomas Suspend in *Absalom Absalom!* The first-individual plural narration of "Ceremonies" remembers Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily." Johnson discerns O'Connor's have an impact on, meanwhile, in Oakes's perception of the modern-day international in terms of "its random violence, symbolic of its lack of social concord or philosophical which means."<sup>3</sup> If O'Connor's characters ought to "collide" with divine grace, then Oakes's characters ought to face a "potentially overwhelming convergence of forces – natural, social, mental."<sup>4</sup> Lastly, Johnson acknowledges Nietzsche's influence in Oakes's depictions of struggles for strength, her subversion of romantic visions of nature and human love, and her ironic "vision of Christian civilization."<sup>five</sup>

Oakes's Eden County is ruled by using violence, ardor, poverty, monetary battle, brutality and mindless cruelty. In one brief tale, "Swamps," a mad, homeless woman kills her newborn infant. In "By the North Gate," three teenage boys viciously kill a dog, Nell, which had been an vintage farmer's handiest associate. "Boys at Picnic" features a gang of boys who power round, subsequently kill a young girl in a church, after which go to a picnic. All of those killings are completed in an impassive and often motiveless way. Another story, "The Census Taker," pix a census taker who's faced with poverty, a feel of disillusionment together with his work, and a boy and a bizarre (if no longer mad) woman. "Pastoral Blood," meanwhile, is focused on a woman who "had

never felt whatever,"<sup>6</sup> who in her search for feeling instigates a gang rape on herself. The most depressing issue of the gathering is the absence of any possibility of alternate and the characters' emotional deadness, as though their lives had been decided by higher powers and the activities depicted were fated to occur. Yet, every story is likewise approximately madness, with Oates exploring the blurred line among sanity and madness.

**The Nuclear Family and Family Values:** The family is a primary problem in Oakes's fiction: family values, girl and male roles inside the family, and the connection among families and groups. The novels that I actually have selected to speak about on this bankruptcy cope with American family life in the course of the second one half of the 20th century. In *We Were The Mulvane's*, Oates uses flashbacks to cover the period among the 1950s and 1993; *The Falls* opens in 1950 and finishes in 1978; *Mother, Missing* starts in 2004, but works its manner back to the Nineteen Sixties; and once more, *The Gravedigger's Daughter* is a chronological account (with the exception of its prologue, which is set in the Fifties) of a existence lived between 1936 and 1999; *What I Lived For* focuses on one weekend in 1992; and *My Sister, My Love* is about within the Nineties and within the first decade of the 21st century. Although Oates is quite particular approximately dates and intervals, and indicates how families are suffering from the times wherein they're dwelling, the outer global is not often authorized to intrude on her fictional settings. Thus, even as time passes and the cultural context of the nuclear family adjustments, Oakes's families do no longer live on modern-day politics and global activities, which includes the Vietnam War. A key recognition of these six novels is the idea of the nuclear own family and the function of conventional circle of relatives values, something that has been a arguable problem all through latest presidential election campaigns. Sources differ as to whilst the idea of the nuclear family turned into first conceived; some suggest the Twenties, others the duration following the Second World War.<sup>17</sup> Although the phenomenon changed into identified in 17th - and 18th century Europe, it turned into inside the United States that this manner of organizing society became the norm:

**Liberated Wives and Mothers:** As I actually have shown, Corinne Mulvane and Gwen Eaton, as well as Helene Cady and Mary Pederson from an in advance narrative, completely be given traditional own family values and do not project to assume their lives without husbands. Corinne sacrifices her own properly-being and that of her daughter which will shop her husband. Gwen Eaton, in the meantime, suppresses her individuality that allows you to seem like the correct housewife, caring mom and locally

involved woman. In *The Falls*, but, Oates examines the options that are open to a woman who does no longer suit the photo of a submissive housewife. For the 1950s, at the least, Aria Littoral is an “emancipated” woman. She refuses to live along with her allegedly untrue husband, Dirk Burnaby, and after his demise, she refuses to simply accept the life coverage cash, despite the fact that this indicates giving up all comfort and transferring to a working-class neighborhood. Unlike Gwen Eaton, Aria guards her independence; she shuns her in-laws, and carefully manages her dating along with her very own mother and father: “Chandler and Royall [Mariah’s sons] want grandparents, and these are devoted grandparents. So I think we need to hold to peer them, for the lads” sake,” 77 she explains to her husband. In short, she is “intelligent, bookish, high-strung... inclined to impatience and exasperation.” seventy eight Aria jokes mockingly that “all that became correct in her, sentimental and gentle-hearted, became embodied in Zero,” 79 Mariah’s dog. For certain, Aria does now not have the person traits that are liked in the conventional perfect of motherhood.

**Charlotte and Betsy: Contemporary Women:** Oates examines but any other measurement of motherhood in recent satiric parodies, *What I Lived For* (1994) and *My Sister, My Love: The Intimate Story of Skylark Ram pike* (2008). The mothers supplied – Charlotte Drummond and Betsy Ram pike, respectively – offer excessive examples of other-directed American personalities, to use Riesman’s terminology. Riesman defines such human beings as adaptable and manipulative. In the sector of the other-directed character, “social mobility...maintains to exist. But it relies upon much less on what one is and what one does than on what others think about one – and the way able one is in manipulating others and being oneself manipulated.” 120 Common characteristics of other-directed human beings consist of having shifting desires in life, and adjusting to the “moves and wishes of the others” 121 – these being their buddies, the mass media, and people who count number. In this phase, I awareness on modern moms, even as a extra specified analysis of *What I Lived For* and its periodic factors may be provided in chapters and five, and the style of *My Sister, My Love* could be discussed in bankruptcy five.

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**The Importance of Memory and Tradition:** All six narratives deal with, in a single manner or every other, the relationship among being a fulfilled individual and memory. In *Mother Missing*, Nikkei’s rediscovery of her mother’s (Gwen Eaton’s) beyond brings her maturity and balance. She turns from being a cool and careless teen into a mature younger female, who could make better picks in her companions. The sons of Aria in *The Falls*, in the meantime, rediscover and reconstitute their father’s beyond; and on the give up of the unconventional, Aria herself becomes open to the fact about her husband’s demise. After many years, Rebecca Schwartz additionally establishes a hyperlink along with her beyond thru corresponding along with her cousin, although she by no means tells her husband and son who she certainly is. Charlotte’s portrait in *What I Lived For*, with the aid of assessment, has no associations with memory or the past; and Betsy’s “Heaven Scent Products” line in *My Sister, My Love* is a mockery of something that is sacred about memory, the past or motherhood.

**Conclusion:** In her latest novels, Oates has focused on the placement of girls, and the relationship among family lifestyles and society more normally. An analysis of her girl characters genuinely shows that Oates, within the first location, has an inclination to re-envision and reinvestigate beyond styles of family existence. The narratives that are set in rural and small-city America dispute the popular, idealized photograph of postwar family values that has been promoted in neoconservative ideology. Although Oates herself has more sympathy for the 1950s rural American way of life than for current suburban existence, she does now not embrace conventional values without first reconsidering them. In Oates’s view, conventional Protestant values, together with stability and power of man or woman, should be cherished, whilst she is essential of the strict division of male and woman roles within the circle of relatives unit. Oates exposes the constricting patriarchal patterns that ruled and still govern women’s lives, the violence that they’re subjected to, and the difficulty that some ladies enjoy in finding enjoyable and creative existence. In this respect, it is super that none of her cutting-edge lady characters grow to be excessive-flying professionals, including legal professionals or medical doctors.

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