

People's Democratic Republic of Algeria
Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research

08 MAI 1945 UNIVERSITY-GUELMA
Faculty of Letters and Languages
Department of Letters and English Language

جامعة 8 ماي 1945-قائمة
كلية الآداب و اللغات
قسم الآداب و اللغة الانجليزية



Option: Literature

Violence in Selected Short Stories by Joyce Carol Oates

A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of Letters and English Language in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master in Language and Culture

Board of Examiners

Chairwoman: Dr. LOUATI Hayat (MA/B) Université de 8 Mai 1945 - GUELMA
Supervisor: Miss MOUMENE Soumia (MA/A) Université de 8 Mai 1945 - GUELMA
Examiner : Mrs. AIOUNI Laila (MA/A) Université de 8 Mai 1945 - GUELMA

Submitted by:

BOUSSATHA Nardjis

NOUICHI Rayane

Supervised by:

Miss MOUMENE Soumia

June 2023

Dedication

First and foremost, I praise Allah for giving me the strength to accomplish this work.

I am thankful to my family for believing in me.

To my beloved parents, my sisters, my brother, and my nephews Lina, Salem, and Samy. No words can describe how grateful I am, thank you for helping me all along this path. I dedicate this work to all of you.

Boussatha Nardjis

Dedication

With boundless love and deepest appreciation, I pen this dedication to express my heartfelt gratitude to my beloved parents, you are my greatest treasure.

To my darling sister **Asma**, you hold a special place in my heart that no one else can ever fill. Thank you for being my confident, my companion and my best friend. I cherish the bond we share, and my love for you knows no bounds.

To my little nephew **Joude**, you are the sprinkle that has graced our lives. I love you so much.

To my dear brother **Badri**, I cannot thank you enough for always standing by me, ready to lend a helping hand. I am lucky that I have you.

Lastly, a special mention to my curious cat Mimi, our furry family member. Though you cannot understand the words I speak, thank you for being my companion in solitude, I am grateful for the happiness you bestow upon us **Dear Mimi**.

Nouichi Rayane

Acknowledgments

To our advisor, **Miss MOUMENE Soumia**,

we sincerely thank you for your thoughtful guidance and thorough feedback all along the process of writing this thesis.

Thank you for your kind words and motivation.

We would like to thank the jury members, **Mrs. AIOUNI Laila** and **Dr. Louati Hayat** for taking the time and effort to review our humble work.

Abstract

This dissertation examines the theme of violence in selected short stories from the collection, *The Museum of Dr. Moses: Tales of Mystery and Suspense* (2007) by the American writer, Joyce Carol Oates. This work will illuminate Joyce Carol Oates' dark aesthetic when writing short stories; as well as how she approaches the subject of violence with a sense of mystery and suspense. The chosen short stories for this study are "The Museum of Dr. Moses", and "Suicide Watch". Additionally, this dissertation attempts to shed light on the social issues that each short story keenly portrays. Therefore, the selected short stories will be analyzed through the lenses of psychological realism theory as well as gothic and grotesque in order to demonstrate the human psyche and the essence of violence in American society. Through an analysis of the selected short stories, this study demonstrates Joyce Carol Oates' determination to raise awareness about the prevalence of violence in America.

Key Words: Violence, psychological realism, gothic, grotesque, Joyce Carol Oates.

Table of Contents

Dedication.....	I
Acknowledgements.....	III
Abstract.....	IV
Table of the Contents.....	V
Introduction.....	1
Chapter One: Violence in American Society and its Representation.....	5
I.1. America’s Bloody History: An Overview of Violence.....	5
I.2. Representation of Violence in American Literature: An Overview.....	14
I.3. Theoretical Framework.....	23
Chapter Two: The Portrayal of Violence in Joyce Carol Oates Short Stories.....	30
II. 1. Exploring Joyce Carol Oates’ Vision.....	30
II. 2. Oates’s “Suicide Watch”: Observing the Bonds of Family (Dis)Connectedness.....	34
Chapter Three: Joyce Carol Oates' Mastery of the Short Story: A Reading of "The Museum of Dr. Moses".....	45
III. 1. “The Museum of Dr. Moses”: The Story of a Psychopathic Coroner.....	45
III. 2. Joyce Carol Oates: The Storyteller.....	58
Conclusion.....	67
Work Cited.....	70
French Abstract.....
Arabic Abstract.....

Introduction

Violence is a global dilemma that dominates every society from different perspectives. It is a serious issue that can manifest in the forms of aggressive behavior, torture, domestic violence, and child abuse. In addition, it results in weighty consequences such as posttraumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety, and even suicide. It has the power to ruin family relationships and threaten the safety of any individual in society. Furthermore, domestic violence is a frequent problem in America. It includes physical abuse, psychological abuse, and even death against children, adults, and elderly people. Violence in America has persisted along a protracted path of chaos and instability.

Joyce Carol Oates thoroughly investigates the problem of violence in her short stories. Oates demonstrates her exceptional writing style through storytelling; she delineates her short stories with violence, horror, and mystery. As an American, Joyce Carol Oates finds her inspiration in her own society; she wants to portray a realistic image of her surroundings without any embellishment or purification. In Oates' collection of short stories, *The Museum of Dr. Moses: The Tales of Mystery and Suspense* (2007), each one of her short stories draws attention to a divergent violent scenario that is currently occurring in American society. In the selected short stories, "The Museum of Dr. Moses" and "Suicide Watch," Oates seeks to critically interpret the theme of violence. The main reason behind this research is to showcase violence in American short stories and to limn the greater value and projection Joyce Carol Oates has given in order to bring to life such an abhorrent description of violence in American society.

The primary objective of this dissertation is to explore the theme of violence within American society as portrayed in two short stories from Joyce Carol Oates' renowned collection, *The Museum of Dr. Mose: Tales of Mystery and Suspense*. This study will thoroughly examine the techniques employed by Oates to address the subject of violence

while also investigating how her works reflect the reality of American society. As a result, the focal point of this research will be to present Oates as a realistic writer who adeptly captures the essence of realism, shedding light on the darker aspects of American life using the three pillars of psychological realism, gothic, and grotesque. Hence, this study strives to answer the following questions: How has violence manifested itself in America in the past and in the present? What made Joyce Carol Oates showcase such a dark and violent side of American society? How does Oates use the art of short stories to raise awareness about violence? How is the inner psychology of the characters represented through the lens of psychological realism in each short story? Why did Joyce Carol Oates use gothic and grotesque as techniques to impact her readers? And how did it mirror the vicious reality of American society?

Since more than 160 years ago, American literature has displayed a remarkable interest in violence. American authors such as William Dean Howells, Henry James, Edith Wharton, Sinclair Lewis, J.P. Marquand, Saul Bellow, Flannery O'Connor, and Theodore Dreiser have exhibited violent tendencies in their writings, as evidenced by Edgar Allan Poe's Tales. Therefore, it is not debatable to assert that the use of violence in American literature reflects on previous historical events and circumstances.

American writers and Violence have a unique connection since it occupies a distinctive position in American Literature. The 1991 novel *American Psycho* by Bret Easton Ellis is perhaps the deadliest work of American literature to date. Michael Kowalewski in his book *Deadly Musing* (1993) states, "Violence is always verbally mediated in novels and stories; it is not "there" in language except in the sense that it has been rendered, like a dress from a feed bag, out of it. Violence thus appears in fiction, like everything else with which it shares the page, as something styled" (4). In other words, violence in literature appears to have been meticulously planned by the author in order to portray a vivid image of how it is compelled,

the writer includes his or her own thoughts, opinions, and prejudices into the finished work and its representation as significant vision of violence.

In *Scars of Independence: America's Violent Birth* (2017) Holger Hoock portrays the events during the Revolutionary War with its wicked and horrific details of violence. Through literature, American writers found the prevailing way of revealing a vivid image on how violence was taking place in America. Furthermore, Allan Lloyd Smith demonstrates in his book *American Gothic Fiction* (2004) that "From the earliest period of America Gothicism- and some critics have seen almost the whole American writing as a Gothic Literature- differences in American circumstances led American Gothicists in other directions" (4). American gothic exhibits the realistic features of suffering and horror that actually take place in American society.

In terms of structure, this study comprises three chapters. The first chapter is divided into three sections. The opening section will provide a comprehensive overview of the turbulent history of American society, tracing the origins of violence from its early beginnings to the present day. The second section will explore the portrayal of violence in American literature, highlighting pivotal literary works that offer valuable insights into this theme. It offers a glimpse into pioneering works that have contributed to the depiction of violence in American literature. Finally, the third section will introduce a theoretical framework that encompasses the psychological realism theory, along with the examination of two specific genres, namely "Gothic" and "Grotesque". This chapter provides a comprehensive exploration of violence in American society, drawing from historical, literary, and theoretical perspectives.

The second chapter is structured into two distinct sections. The initial section will provide a comprehensive profile of the author, delving into her unique perspective on the craft of writing. It offers valuable insights into Joyce Carol Oates' personal visions. The second section of the chapter will provide an in-depth analysis of the short story "Suicide Watch,"

focusing specifically on the depiction of violence within its narrative. Additionally, this section sheds light on the theme of family disconnectedness that the story explores. Through this analysis, the section showcases Joyce Carol Oates as a writer with a keen eye for psychological realism, gothic, and grotesque in order to capture the vicious cycle of violence within dysfunctional families.

The third chapter is divided into two distinct sections. The first section will set out to depict the theme of violence and atrocities in the short story “The Museum of Dr. Moses” by presenting the events and the characters. The following section shifts the spotlight onto demonstrating the literary prowess of Joyce Carol Oates as a master of storytelling. It aims to demonstrate Oates’s adeptness in employing techniques of psychological realism, as well as elements of the gothic and grotesque, as narrative tools to skillfully address the center theme of violence.

The current study aims at analyzing Joyce Carol Oates’ short stories “The Museum of Dr. Moses” and “Suicide Watch” through the lenses of psychological realism, grotesque, and gothic. It will highlight the unique way Oates utilizes these techniques in order to reveal the core of violence in American society. Furthermore, this study seeks to demonstrate Oates mastery of storytelling in order to shed light on violence, raise awareness about the prevailing sufferings of Americans, and evoke a sense of reaction towards violence.

Chapter One: Violence in American Society and its Literary Representation

This chapter presents the theoretical framework of the study. The following three sections discuss the bloody history of America, violence in American literature, and the representation of psychological realism, gothic, and grotesque. The chapter displays the dilemma of violence that was prominent throughout American history, in addition to the emphasis of American literature on portraying the theme of violence. Furthermore, the chapter contains a theoretical framework where psychological realism, gothic, and grotesque are introduced as the main approaches through which the selected short stories will be analyzed.

I. 1. America's Bloody History: An Overview of Violence

Alongside his heroic route, the famous Christopher Columbus has always been renowned as the discoverer of the New World. To this day, Christopher Columbus is glorified with a federal holiday on the second Monday of every October. Nevertheless, historians have investigated more into Christopher Columbus' life; a debate has erupted over whether the Italian explorer should be hailed as a hero. Graham Keeley explains in his online article "Columbus exposed as iron-fisted tyrant who tortured his slaves" that: "The man who discovered America for Europe routinely tortured slaves and starved his subjects in colonies on the Caribbean Island of Hispaniola." (Keeley). He refers to an interview with Spanish historian, Consuelo Varela with EL PAÍS, she claims that, "We hear of a poor boy who was caught stealing wheat grain. They cut off his ears and nose and put shackles on him and made him a slave. Columbus ran the colony with an iron fist" (Keeley). She adds that, "Columbus's government was tyrannical, with no trials or anything similar" (Keeley). In other words, Christopher Columbus committed heinous acts of violence towards innocent people, he showed no mercy towards anyone.

As soon as Christopher Columbus set foot in what is now known as American land, he encountered indigenous residents whom he categorized as Indians and saw them as an obstacle that he needed to eliminate. Barry Lopez comments on Columbus's excessive violence in his work, *The Rediscover of North America* (1992) by stating, "his missteps and misconceptions are now sometimes used to portray him as an incompetent oaf" (15). Moreover, Dylan Matthews explains in his online article "9 reasons Christopher Columbus was a murderer, tyrant, and scoundrel," the monstrous acts of Columbus and his crew during their time in the Caribbean. On Hispaniola, a member of Columbus' crew, Alonso De Ojed, publicly cut off an Indian's ears in retaliation for the Indians' failure to assist the Spanish when fording a brook. Another monstrous act of Columbus is that he kidnapped and enslaved more than thousands of people on Hispaniola (Matthews).

In addition, Matthews highlights that Columbus followed an oppressive way of enslaving people either for labor or sale, arresting approximately 1.500 men and women, kidnapping others, and compelling them to be transported to Spain, where nearly all of them perished and were cruelly dumped into the Atlantic. Furthermore, Columbus adopted a harsh treatment of savagery in that his great desire to collect gold led him to require all Indians aged 14 and above to hunt for and provide an amount of gold dust every three months, although those who could not do so, their hands would be chopped. Under the severe rule and mistreatment that were imposed there, inhabitants decided to draw an end to their lives by committing a mass suicide instead of being interrogated or abided by the Spanish. So, with a large number, approximately 50.000 of Indians; started to ruin their stores of bread, they also plunged off cliffs, or poisoned themselves with what is known as cassava poison, while the others chose to starve themselves until death (Matthews). Columbus' true sense of brutality may be thoroughly discerned from his reaction to native discontent and uprising, where he

commanded a ruthless repression in which many Indians were assassinated and their bodies were exposed across streets as a warning against anyone who might seek to revolt.

The harshest critic of Spanish rule in the New World, Bartolomé de las Casas penned and published *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies* in 1542. The book details the maltreatment and genocide of the Americas' Indigenous Peoples during the colonial times. Bartolomé de las Casas shares:

They forced their way into native settlements, slaughtering everyone they found there, including small children, old men, pregnant women, and even women who had just given birth. They hacked them to pieces, slicing open their bellies with their swords as though they were so many sheep herded into a pen. They even laid wagers on whether they could slice a man in two at a stroke, or cut an individual's head from his body, or disembowel him with a single blow of their axes. They grabbed suckling infants by the feet and, ripping them from their mothers' breasts, dashed them headlong against the rocks. Others, laughing and joking all the while, threw them over their shoulders, shouting, 'Wriggle, you little perisher.' (51-2)

Christopher Columbus journey was filled with bloody crimes, he was a tyrant commander, who tortured and murdered people with no mercy. Columbus' vicious crimes proves that American land was rinsed with blood of innocent victims, and it takes hold that America was filled with brutal violence. Moreover, many indigenous were sold into slavery, and he severely punished them for even the smallest disobedience. Thousands of them perished through disease, exhaustion, or at the hands of Columbus and his soldiers. All of these factors outweighed the positive legacy that Columbus would have left behind and turned him into a villain.

Christopher Columbus' journey marks the beginning of violence in America, yet history carries a long-lasting memory of violence. Without hesitation, American history proudly

describes The American Revolutionary War, which lasted from April 19, 1775 to September 3, 1783, as an ideological and political revolution. That being said, no war can take place without the presence of violence, and no power can be acknowledged without violence. Over the years, Americans have sought to wage wars in order to safeguard their territory and to broaden their nation. The American Revolution arose when the 13 British's North American colonies revolted against its imperial rule, the British monarchy and parliament's enforcement of taxes without colonial representation served as the motivation for the protest to take place. The growing political tensions ignited a long-lasting pattern which inevitably resulted in an eruption of an epic war.

American Battlefield Trust explains in "Battle of Lexington and Concord Facts & Summary" that the Battles of Lexington and Concord in April 19, 1775 is the first battle of the American Revolutionary War, where the Massachusetts colonies held out against British authority. Thomas Gage was reappointed by British colonies as a Royal Governor of Massachusetts in 1774. By April 1775, Gage, confronting the possibility of complete rebellion, tried his best to prevent acts of violence from occurring, by commending the seizure of weapons and powder that were maintained in Concord, Massachusetts. However, Gage misjudged the colonist's spirit of bravery and on April 19, history witnessed the first shot of bloody eight years of war.

In *Scars of Independence: America's Violent Birth* (2017), the historian Holger Hoock portrays in his book the violence that took place in the Revolutionary War. American Nationalists tortured and killed loyalists. British forces raped colonial women and murdered enemy soldiers; prisoners were stored on disease-ridden ship. In both situations of opposing sovereignty or accepting it, African Americans have severely struggled, "For the most part, the British showed little loyalty to blacks when less than convenient, as when they abandoned a thousand dead or dying African-Americans on the Virginia coast following the

bombardment of Norfolk” (103). The American Revolution is known for its epic numbers of slaughtering. African-Americans were victims of horrific brutality throughout the war and they had to endure the repressive rule of both the American and British colonies. The brutal treatment of prisoners of war, the tragic killing of soldiers and civilians, and the agony of civilians at the hand of soldiers are just a few of the ways Hook paints a bleak and vivid image of the acts of violence which took place during that period of time.

The American Civil War started on April 12, 1861, between the north and the south and ended on April 9, 1865. One of the main reasons behind waging such war was slavery. According to Avery O. Craven in “Coming of the War Between the States: An Interpretation,” he explains that “The moral weaknesses of slaveholding would form a vital part of the understanding of a whole section” (36-7). Back at the time, the concept of attaining slaves meant gaining more working hands and empowerment for their owner. Even though black slaves did not have any kind of rights and were only seen as working machines, Americans saw the need to engage in a war because of them. Without the prevalence of violence, the American Civil War could not come to an end. The spread of violent acts committed by guerrillas, armed soldiers on the battlefield, or by people taking advantage of the anarchy of war evinces the substance of violence in the history of America.

William G. Thomas III demonstrates in his article, “On Violence and The American Civil War Part I” a profound real vision that may adequately explain the immense bloodshed that is seen through the eyes of Ephrain C. Dawes. His participation in the Battle of Dallas in Georgia (1864) left him with severe wounds and disfigurement. The pain was so intense that his entire lower jaw burst off, rendering him powerless and incapable of talking or even eating. On his way to the hospital, he states: “This trip was the most trying experience of all. Twenty-six hours on a hardboard seat over the rear trucks of a second-class car. My wound was sloughing freely, very painful and offensive. I was nervous and weak. People looking at

me annoyed me almost beyond endurance” (Thomas). Through the suffering of a participant in the combat, it becomes clear that the Civil War has left a trail of countless victims in its wake. By acknowledging this fact, the Civil War is regarded as solid evidence of violence that marks America’s history.

Indigenous people and black men and women were more likely to suffer vicious violence at the hands of soldiers or guerrillas. Therefore, race, place, loyalty status, and gender are the factors that commandeer the occurrence of violence during the American Civil War. Great attention should be given to the ambivalent concept of slavery at the time, numerous African Americans were victims of the harsh commanding system during the war, slaves knew only one way of treatment which was violence. Theodore Parker explains in his book, *Letter Touching the Matter of Slavery* (1848) that:

The Slave is not, theoretically, considered as a Person; he is only a Thing, as much as an axe or a spade; accordingly, he is wholly subject to his master, and has no Rights—which are an attribute of Persons only, not of Things. All that he enjoys therefore is but a privilege. He may be damaged but not wronged. ... The relation of master and slave begins in violence; it must be sustained by violence—the systematic violence of general laws, or the irregular violence of individual caprice. There is no other mode of conquering and subjugating a man. (28)

Slavery was widespread at the time, and the violent treatment of slaves is proof that they were severely oppressed and deprived of all rights. Slaves were considered working hands that only lived to provide for their masters. Parker emphasizes the normalization of violence against slaves, it was regarded as a prerequisite action in order to gain mastery over a man.

Violence and slavery go hand in hand; there is no miracle that could prove the opposite. During the Civil War, the issue of slavery got tense since it was one of the reasons the war

was taking place. Therefore, murdering or torturing a slave occurred on a daily basis. Such treatment has left a lasting scar for African Americans until the present day. The concept of slavery was replaced with that of racism, which is the contemporary problem African Americans face.

Nevertheless, the conflict between black people and white supremacy remains today. From slavery to racism, the cycle never ceased to guarantee violence. African Americans have suffered for centuries. *The Negro in Chicago: A Study of Race Relations and a Race Riot* (1922) by Chicago Commission on Race Relations, it focuses on shedding light on slavery and the hardships black people had to endure, "Centuries of the Negro slave trade and of slavery as an institution have created, and are often deemed to justify, the deep-seated prejudice against Negroes. They placed a stamp upon the relations of the two races which it will require many years to erase" (12). Yet, a great tension still exists between black people and white people; it dwells in their daily lives. The concept of forgiving and forgetting has not been established due to their bloody past and the ongoing violent incidents.

Racism prevented black people from leading regular lives. Kelly Carter Jackson in *The Story of Violence in America* states, "Throughout history, there is an unfair expectation that White men can employ violence to "defend democracy," but Black Americans, people of color, and women should always be nonviolent" (13). The conflict between black and white Americans revolves around discrimination; only violence committed by white citizens is accepted, "Too often historians have minimized or neglected altogether the role that violence played in the coming of the war. At some level, this is because Americans do not like to imagine that the war's moral compass—abolitionists—could have embraced violence as a necessary and justified means toward their goals" (Jackson 13). In other words, American history carries violence at the core of its creation, and it cannot be neglected that easily.

Gun violence has been an ongoing menace to American society. Such heinous acts of violence have been terrorizing Americans. The majority of people assert that owning a gun is a way to maintain safety. In addition, given the rife incidence of such crimes in America, pulling the trigger apathetically became an easy move. According to Washington (CNN), the US will have surpassed 100 mass shootings in 2023. CNN quoted Kris Brown, president of Brady: United Against Gun Violence, as saying, “Americans are tired of fearing if they or their families will be the next victims of a mass shooting. Our children are tired of being told to run, hide, and fight”

Gun violence has become America’s worst nightmare. Many changes have been demanded by the citizens, but no valid law prohibits the use of guns. The American nation has recently experienced widespread shootings in workplaces, movie theaters, houses of worship, nightclubs, schools, and shopping centers. Many Americans express worry about becoming victims of gun violence or a mass shooting. There are more and more demands for government action, such as adjustments to the gun control laws, as residents become more vulnerable. The most recent mass shooting occurred on February 13, 2023, at Michigan State University, where three individuals were murdered and five others were injured. As for the shooter, he was killed by a police officer's gunfire.

Mass shootings at schools have occurred often in the US for many years, profoundly traumatizing American society. In April 1999, thirteen people were killed and over twenty others were injured in a mass shooting at Columbine High School in Colorado. 32 students and faculty members were killed at Virginia Tech in a shooting that occurred in April 2007. 27 mass shootings at schools occurred in the US during the previous ten years, according to GVA data. In May of 2022, a gunman who was 18 years old invaded Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas, and massacred 21 people, including 19 children. This most recent

occurrence was the 27th school shooting in the United States in 2022. Further, it was among the most catastrophic events in recent years.

Gun violence has become one of the major threats in American society. This deplorable crime can affect anyone, including children, women, communities of color, and socially marginalized groups. In “Why number of US mass shootings has risen sharply” by Nadine Yousif reports Jaelyn Schildkraut, an interim executive director of the Regional Gun Violence Research Consortium at the non-partisan Rockefeller Institute of Government participated in an analysis by US Secret Service of 173 mass casualty assaults, of which approximately 75% involved a firearm. According to the report, 10% of attackers accountable for mass shootings between 2016 and 2020 committed suicide. It was discovered that approximately 93% of assailant’s attackers had dealt with a personal issue prior to their assault, such as divorce, health issues, or school or work-related problems. Furthermore, Schildkraut emphasizes that “toxic masculinity” may also be a factor, as nearly all mass shooters are male (approximately 98 percent).

Moreover, according to Schildkraut, “if we are trying to understand the root causes of gun violence, we need to start by understanding why people pick up firearms in the first place to inflict harm, regardless of the target of the harm” (Yousif). The accessibility of guns is one of the major reasons that gun violence is dominant in American society. Josh Horwitz comments “When you compare what is going on in the US to other countries, the one thing that they don’t necessarily have that we have is just such easy access to firearms” (Yousif). Gun violence is a serious menace that America faces in the present day, and it also pinpoints the bitter truth that violence is an ongoing process that dates back to its foundation until the present day.

Gun violence is the most recent violent act in United States history. The perpetual destiny that tragically occurs on a daily basis demonstrates another version of the vicious and bloody

side of America. No human being should ever have to go through such a heartbreaking catastrophe. The foundation of the USA provides a strong link between the present and past violent acts. Recalling back to Columbus 'arrival, which evoked the beginning of violence in American territory, to the current gun shootings demonstrates the structure and the cultural aspect that are extended throughout the use of violence. The rise of gun violence portrays the fundamental roots of America. In addition, this conundrum needs to be taken into account since innocent victims are the ones affected by the tragic event.

I. 2. Representation of Violence in American Literature: An Overview

The depiction of violence in literature is essential. Violence is depicted in innumerable literary works, but each author's choice of narrative structure offers a unique perspective on the violence that exists in society. Hence, violence is portrayed in literature as a symbol of greater suffering; it may convey a psychological, spiritual, historical, social, or political message. Violence in literature can be present in two kinds: when a character does harm to himself or others. As well, when a character experiences harm in the story, the reader needs to pay close attention to the significance of the violence since it may have a deeper meaning. Violence in literature serves as a stark reminder of humankind's harsh realities.

The history of writing about violence in American literature is noteworthy. American authors have greatly emphasized shedding light on violence; for that reason, a wide range of violent themes appear in their literary works. According to David Brion Davis in his essay, "Violence in American Literature" (1966), "For more than one hundred- and sixty-years American Literature has shown a peculiar fascination with homicidal violence" (29). Davis emphasizes that there is a significant connection between violence and American literature, and he argues that blood had already been shed even before the founding of the United States of America. Violence is prevalent in American literature as a means of showcasing the writer's perspective and creative abilities. Initially, American writers used The Revolution as

a prototype for the projection of violence in their works; they depicted the protagonist's role as a hero who was victorious over the tyrant's disobedience and massacres.

The tales of Edgar Allan Poe are a significant delineation of brutal and gruesome violence. Poe's use of violence marks almost all of his works, from "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" (1841) to "The Black Cat" (1843), Poe frequently employs the theme of violence in his narratives to demonstrate the pain of his early life and the prominence of his experience with death, which compelled him to express such dark and morbid understandings in his writing. Poe once shared "words have no power to impress the mind without the exquisite horror of their reality" ("Brainyquote"). Poe's representation of the horror of reality proves his fascination with violence, since he deliberates narratives that foster violence and horror. Poe's quote reveals as long as realities are not divulged, words have no significance.

American literature takes violence into consideration as one of the major themes to portray since violence is a common issue in society. Theodore Dreiser, Henry James, Sinclair Lewis, Edith Wharton, J. P. Marquand, William Dean Howells, and Edith Wharton are additional examples of American authors who infuse their literary works with glimpses of violence. Numerous American writers explore the topic of violence in their literary works in order to pinpoint the essence of violence.

From its earliest days to the present, the depiction of violence in American literature has taken numerous shapes. Some American authors have turned to literature as a way to demonstrate their own experiences, while others have sought to reflect on the violence that characterized the bloody history of America like: the Revolutionary War. Furthermore, writers like Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind* (1936) and Michael Shaara's *The Killer Angels* (1974) were interested in capturing the tumultuous ambiance and ferocious events of the Civil War.

American Psycho (1991) by Bret Easton Ellis, renowned for its vicious and violent narrative, is widely acknowledged as one of the most violent literary works. It is distinguished by its hedonistic and abhorrent visions. Till Neuhaus in his article, "Violence in American Psycho. Forms And Function," explains that "The committed crimes were motivated by the wish of cleaning himself mentally and his city physically while simultaneously causing further need for purification" (Neuhaus). The protagonist, Patrick Bateman, believes that "The cleaning of the city goes along with the cleaning of his soul" (Neuhaus). For him, the occurrence of such crimes against prostitutes and homeless people, it is important in order to redeem himself and the city. Bret Easton Ellis unveils the bohemian conditions of the rich upper class during the mid-to-late 1980s in the way that violence is justified, and its usage is determined according to social classes.

In his 1993 book, *Deadly Musings: Violence and Verbal Form in American Fiction*, Michael Kowalewski asserts, "Violent scenes in American fiction are not only brutal, bleak, and gratuitous (though they are all of those, often unrelievedly)" (16). Kowalewski explains further that "they are also, by turn, comic, witty, poignant, and sometimes strangely enough, even terrifyingly beautiful" (16). In other words, Kowalewski argues that writers shape their plots in such a manner that the imaginary and aesthetic elements are combined to project violence in a way that it is both imaginative and relevant to the readers' society. In addition, he contends that "The principles that dictate the representation of violence in fiction consist of nothing more nor less than what a given author can do with words and with the governing assumptions (literary, psychological, or social) that underlie those words" (5). According to one of Kowalewski's most prominent viewpoints, violence in literature is the depiction of violent scenarios through the use of language, which demonstrates a basic comprehension of violence in society.

Furthermore, Kowalewski believes that literary violence is only verbal. To put it differently, violence has always been a theme that writers evoke and build on in their own style. The way each author writes about violence comes from various angles, and since they include their own words and views, each literary work is unique.

In *Homicide in American Fiction, 1798–1860: A Study in Social Values* (1957), David Brion Davis states,

We may assume that Americans of 1800 inherited a set of traditional values concerning homicide, largely embodied in religion and law. These dominant values, such as the biblical doctrine of "blood for blood," were challenged during the next two generations by the beliefs and theories of special groups, including reformers, defenders of lynching, Abolitionists, phrenologists, and professional alienists. Inasmuch as works of fiction often tested accepted ideas (moral freedom, for example), mediating between contemporary theories and traditional valuations. (x- xi)

American history carries heavy weight of homicide, the depiction of violence in the earliest texts was justified by religious or legal justifications. Nevertheless, this conventional depiction of violence has been altered to highlight the destructive peculiarities that are occurring. American literature emphasizes on depicting the pertinence of violence, and linking it to the bloody history of the nation.

One of the best-known authors in the United States is Flannery O'Connor. She is renowned for her distinct narrating style and exceptional talent for character illustration. O'Connor frequently combines gothic, comedic, and violent elements in her writing. She was fascinated with the portrayal of religion and the turbulence of Southern society through incidents of shocking violence and psychological instability. O'Connor states in her book, *Mystery and Manners: Occasional Prose* (1969), "In my own stories I have found that violence is strangely

capable of returning my characters to reality and preparing them to accept their moment of grace” (112). O'Connor links the ties of both religion and violence; for her, when the characters are on the verge of collapse, they eventually embrace their fate. John Desmond points out, in *Violence and the Christian Mystery: A Way to Read Flannery O'Connor* (1997), that O'Connor's tales are meant to portray “the spiritual violence of inner thought and attitude engraved in the heart and from which acts of murder, deception, rivalry, and stigmatizing erupt” (130). For Desmond, psychical violence is indeed crucial in O'Connor stories; however, he emphasizes that they are meant to uncover the aggressive and evil state of man's heart.

O'Connor's short story, “A Good Man is Hard to Find” (1953), is regarded as one of her best works in her two collections of short stories. Other significant pieces include: *Wise Blood*, *The Violent Bear It Away* and *Mystery and Manners*. Flannery O'Connor unfolds the story of a family that opted to drive to Florida despite being aware that an escaped convict was still at loose. Given that O'Connor was a devout Catholic, the short story is rife with religious overtones, and as a result, it addresses issues of good and evil as well as the efficacy of divine grace. The Protagonist unnamed grandmother was traveling with her son Bailey, her daughter in law and her three grand-children JuneStar, John Wesley, and the Baby. They traveled from Atlanta to Florida for a vacation. The grandmother was feeling anxious about going to a city where a violent criminal known as ‘The Misfit’ is on the loose, so she tried to convince them to change their destination, however, none of them cared enough to listen to her. The grandmother secretly hid her cat in the car, and all along the road, the cat jumped off at her son as he was driving, causing them to have an accident in the middle of nowhere. The nightmare began when they encountered the Misfit, who shot each member of the grandmother's family, leaving her the last one to die.

In this short story, O'Connor projects a plot twist that makes her readers speechless at the end of the story; the amount of terror and anxiousness that escalates throughout her story is what vividly demonstrates the uniqueness of her writing. Linking violence with religion is one of the characteristics that makes her works stand out. O'Connor makes the protagonist of the short story a religious old lady who lives by the norms, and the Misfit a violent character who does not hold back when it comes to shedding blood.

The authors of "Violence In "A Good Man Is Hard to Find": The Faces of Marginality," Maria Cristina Pimentel Campos and Angela Barbosa Franco, explain that: "Flannery O'Connor presents, in her narrative, characters whose behaviors reflect the society in which they inhabit. The proper title of the story "A Good Man Is Hard to Find," which, by the way, entitles the work of a collection of short stories, is suggestive of the author's interest in unveiling human nature, related to the dichotomous vision of good and evil" (217). The use of violence was a deliberate choice by O'Connor to portray how good and evil are connected in American society. The violence in the story makes the readers realize the possibility of experiencing such violent crimes. The unexpected ending bears a resemblance to the precipitate and unforeseen attacks Americans witness from time to time.

Another American work that bespeaks violence in American literature is Truman Capote's journalistic fiction, *In Cold Blood*. It was initially published as four titled sections in the New Yorker Magazine in 1965, then as a book in 1966. In the article "In Cold Blood: A True Account of The Clutter Family Murder" clearly indicates that the novel is based on real events. The story revolves around the 1959 murders of the Clutter family, including Herbert and Bonnie Clutter and their two young children, Nancy and Kenyon. In the small farming community of Holcomb, Kansas, the four corpses were found dead in different rooms. Bonnie and her two children were bound, gagged, and killed by a shotgun in their heads, whereas Herbert was cruelly murdered by a knife to the throat. Sally J. Keglovits, in "In Cold Blood

Revisited: A Look Back at An American Crime,” argues that the book was commonly regarded as a borderline case in the national perspective of American violence; it is still represented as a masterpiece work in the literary domain (1).

In Cold Blood is a piece of literature that embodies numerous controversial themes; yet the novel’s dominant theme is violence. Capote evokes the essence of violence in the core of the novel, he depicts the characters of "Dick Hickock" and "Perry Smith," as murderers. He projects a detailed descriptions and consecutive narration, leading up to the reasons that led both of Hickock and Smith to heartlessly murder the entire Clutter family. On the one hand, Capote recalls the theme of violence by shedding light on Smith's difficult childhood and his unstable life as well, which were marred by years of abuse and domestic violence. “In The Story Behind a Nonfiction Novel” an interview by George Plimpton, Capote directly answers one of Plimpton’s questions about Perry Smith by saying: “I believe Perry did what he did for the reasons he himself states-that his life was a constant accumulation of disillusionments and reverses and he suddenly found himself in a psychological cul-de-sac” (Plimpton 8). Perry’s hard living conditions drove him to recreate violent acts that he once tasted as a child, which consequently transform him into a murderer.

The article “Sociological and Psychological Aspects of Crime in Truman Capote’s *In Cold Blood*” by Joawana Stolarek includes the revelation that the unfortunate victims in the book were subjected to a harrowing suffering, as stated in the testimony provided by the involved criminals. They were restrained, with their limbs tightly bound, and their mouths were forcibly gagged with tape. Subsequently, Mr. Clutter and his son were forcibly taken to the basement, where the perpetrators committed a heinous act. Tragically, Mr. Clutter's throat was gruesomely slit as a chilling precursor to the merciless shotgun blast that claimed his life. The vivid and disturbing details shared by the criminals shed light on the horrific nature of this crime as well as the abuse violence that occurred (5).

In her essay “Journalism as Artistic Expression: The Critical Response to Truman Capote’s *In Cold Blood*”, Sophia Leonard conducts a comprehensive analysis and synthesis of the critical reception to the “nonfiction novel”. Accordingly, the critical discussion that has persistently arisen among scholars revolves around the notion of Capote's own voice and the credibility of the events depicted in his novel. This ongoing debate examines the extent to which Capote's narrative accurately reflects the truthfulness of the events he portrays. In “Visions and Revisions: Truman Capote’s *In Cold Blood*,” Jack DeBellis, Chris Anderson, Allan Colet, and others, contend that Capote maintains a conspicuous silence throughout the text, he reinforces that Capote remains an outside observer, “removes all remarks which might draw attention to himself in order to provide more objective reporting” (qtd. in Leonard 524).

Similarly, John Hellman argues in “Death and Design in *In Cold Blood*” that Capote’s narration is “from the perspective of self-effacing omniscience,” refusing to enter himself into the story. Hellman continues and asserts that Capote “repeatedly moves ‘inside’ certain characters...a technique which enables him to retain an ‘objective’ overview while simultaneously providing the subjective views of a variety of characters” (66). Therefore, it is worth mentioning that Capote's meticulous research and immersive involvement with the real-life events lend credibility to his portrayal, emphasizing the inherent subjectivity of truth and the power of storytelling.

In the book *Understanding Truman Capote*, Thomas Fahy indicates that Truman Capote's novel, *In Cold Blood*, addresses the effects of violence that molded America in the 1950s, and examines the psychological characteristics of two murderers. Furthermore, Capote goes into the complexities of the American society, skillfully exploring the tensions wrought by the Cold War and demonstrating the violence that gripped the nation. In this regard, Fahy stresses, “the book offers a powerful commentary on American culture in its portrait of

poverty, violence, and Cold War fears” (7). Indeed, Capote’s exploration of the murder of the Clutter family can be taken as a great example that reflects the fears and damage that has occurred in that time, “... in some ways the Clutter murders served as a microcosm for these anxieties. It was a cataclysmic event for the town of Holcomb, and the unexpected brutality of it created shockwaves of damage” (Fahy115).

Capote himself accepted the comments received from readers that his work captured the reality of American society. In an interview in 1966, he asserted:

About 70 percent of the letters [I have received] think of the book as a reflection on American life—this collision between the desperate, ruthless, wandering, savage part of American life, and the other, which is insular and safe, more or less. It has struck them because there is something so awfully inevitable about what is going to happen...(Plimpton67)

In other words, growing tension highlighted the American society because of the privileged and the underprivileged classes. Poverty was the main reason that turned numerous individuals into desperate thieves, it drove to the extremes of violence in their quest for survival, the case of Dick Hickock and Perry Smith stands as a testament to the devastating consequences of such deprivation. Thus, the novel serves as a great example that mirrors the violence that categorized the American era for that time.

Another aspect covered by Capote in this work is the idea of reaching the American Dream, which was prevalent in American society at the time. The practice of using unlawful shortcuts to fulfill the American Dream became widespread in the 1950s. These illicit acts resulted in planting the use of violence in the American society; citizens found themselves living under the constant fear of either being robbed or getting murdered (“Idyllic Perception”). Accordingly, Dick and Perry, believed that the Clutter family possessed a vault loaded with money. By robbing the Clutters, they saw an opportunity to fast-track their

pursuit of the American dream. The murder that serves as the catalyst for the story – the murder of the Clutter family – appears to have been the result of the murderers Perry Smith and Dick Hickock's inability to realize the American Dream in their own lives.

In conclusion, the issue of violence is carefully projected in American literature from a variety of perspectives. American authors such as Edger Allan Poe, Flannery O'Connor, and Truman Capote examined the issue of violence in order to reveal the true nature of the American society.

I. 3. Theoretical Framework

The following section aims at introducing psychological realism, gothic, and grotesque. Each one of them will help in transcribing the phenomena of violence in the selected short story. According to Patrick, Kennedy in his article, “Characters' Thoughts and Motivations in Psychological Realism,” psychological realism is a particular literary genre that witnessed an emergence in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As it concentrates on the motivations and inner thoughts of individuals, it is a very character-driven form of fiction writing. Henry James, an American novelist, mastered the use of psychological realism in his literary works. James thoroughly demonstrated familial connections, romantic desires, and minor power conflicts. T.S. Eliot and Edith Wharton, who were among the most significant authors of the modernist period, were influenced by James' devotion to psychology in his works. His most widely recognized books—including *The Portrait of a Lady*, *The Turn of the Screw*, and *The Ambassadors*.

Furthermore, in “Psychological Realism,” the article explains that psychological realism deciphers characters that tend to be troubled individuals who are battling with the choices they make or being haunted by one particular act they perpetrated. Authors explore the motives behind a character's actions and make those the central theme of the narrative. This

might be connected to the story's main topic, which might be social or political in nature. For instance, Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* (1866) is one of the best-known works in psychological realism. The book stresses the protagonist, Rodion Raskolnikov, actions and mental state. He spends most of the narrative plotting the murder of a pawnbroker in order to steal her money. He believed that the money would save him from his misery and poverty; however, after committing the murder, he finds himself filled with guilt and disgust. This novel is renowned for how it portrays crime and how this action affects its perpetrator, which renders it as an excellent representation of psychological realism.

In "Research on Henry James and His Psychological Realism Novels" written by Jie Chen, psychological realism is represented as the inheritance and evolution of the tradition of realism. Although it resembles modernism, psychological realism persists realism at its core. By carefully examining the character's psychological state, it illustrates how the social spirit has developed in reality and how it differs artistically from modernist novels. Chen highlights three main characteristics of psychological realism: "first, although the psychological activities of the characters are used as the framework, and the mental changes and development of the protagonist are used as the main narrative clues and structural methods, the story plot is not completely abandoned; it focuses on revealing the mentality of the characters and at the same time expressing the emotion of the characters" (77). In simple words, psychological realism exhibits the psychological state of the characters as the main focus of the storyline.

Nevertheless, the story plot is not neglected. Both features harmonize with each other in order to portray an all-inclusive frame of the novel. Chen further explains "Second, although focusing on the evolution of the protagonist's self-consciousness and striving to display the subject's magnificent and subtle subjective world as a hub to perceive the external world, it does not ignore the objective reality of the external world" (78). It explains that psychological realism links subjective and objective realities; it is more that through the depiction of the

internal world of the characters, the external world is revealed in a truthful way. By demonstrating the tangible conditions of life, and manifesting the subjective emotions of the character with the objective reality. Additionally, Chen states the third characteristic, she explains that:

Third, absorb some modernist techniques, such as the use of stream-of-consciousness techniques, even including subconscious depictions, but always emphasize the role of writer's consciousness in creation. Therefore, the writer's psychological analysis of the characters is also a dialectical movement focusing on rationality and emotion, rather than advocating irrationalism blindly. (78)

In other words, the author's psychological analysis of the characters relies on employing modernists methods, however, the author gives prominence to his own consciousness.

The selected short stories are going to be analyzed through the lens of Gothic. Douglas Matus explains in his article, "10 Elements of Gothic Literature," that the genre of gothic literature originally appeared in the late 18th century and was one of the first to spark significant interest among the public. Gothic writers were fascinated with the past; they idealized the past, especially the Middle Ages. Historical settings were employed, such as the early 18th century Scotland of Sir Walter Scott's *Waverley* novels. As in Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), castles frequently play a significant role in literature. In addition, gothic literature frequently includes supernatural themes. Early 20th-century gothic ghost stories by M.R. James can be regarded as a response to the development of science and technology. Gothic poetry's use of the supernatural is best illustrated by Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (1798) which has a ghostly ship. Additionally, gothic literature makes extensive use of fear. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, with its graveyards, dismal castle, and famous monster, became a bestseller

because of its gothic elements and unique storyline. Other works of gothic horror include Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and Robert Louis Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*.

Jean-Francois Lyotard is a French writer who is interested in the postmodern period. In his work, *The Postmodern Condition*, which was published in 1979, Lyotard presented a vision of horror that was recognized as an abrupt transition to an unpleasant reality. In his work, he explains that:

The nineteenth and twentieth centuries have given us as much terror as we can take. We have paid a high enough price for the nostalgia of the whole and the one, for the reconciliation of the concept and the sensible, of the transparent and the communicable experience. Under the general demand for slackening and for appeasement, we can hear the mutterings of the desire for a return of terror, for the realization of the fantasy to seize reality. (81-2)

American gothic is different from British gothic. The projection of gothic when it first emerged was merely concerned with supernatural elements, castles, and hero/villain type of storyline. However, American writers gave gothic a new perception. Lyotard pinpoints the aspect of relying on fantasy to project realistic features.

In *American Gothic Fiction* (2004), Allan Lloyd Smith argues that "Rather than a simple matter of imitation and adaptation, substituting the wilderness and the city for the subterranean rooms and corridors of the monastery, or the remote house for the castle, dark and dangerous woods for the bandit infested mountains of Italy, certain unique cultural pressures led Americans to the Gothic as an expression of their very different conditions" (4). American writers use gothic in their literary work in order to project realistic dilemmas that take place in ordinary life. The shift from fantasy to reality showcases the concerns of American writers to depict the burdens of American society.

In addition, Lloyd-Smith maintains that “The Gothic deals in transgressions and negativity, perhaps in reaction against the optimistic rationalism of its founding era, which allowed for a rethinking of the prohibitions and sanctions that had previously seemed divinely ordained but now appeared to be simply social agreements in the interest of progress and civic stability” (5). In other words, gothic used to be considered as a subject that was not allowed to be discussed due to its sinister nature and how triggering it was during the optimistic founding period, nevertheless, nowadays gothic became not as restricted as it was, American gothic is used to uncover the violence, brutality, and cruelty of society.

Furthermore, Lloyd-Smith indicates that during the late nineteenth century, gothic was invested in the uncanny due to its investigation in the psychological areas. *The Turn of The Screw* (1898) by Henry James can be taken as a significant example. Early gothic was concerned with the depiction of oppressed women and children in a society that prohibited their rights. American gothic tackled issues of trauma, guilt, and slavery as a major theme, by shedding light on such problems. American gothic was successful in ensuring that the voice of the "other" was heard. Lloyd-Smith further explains that “Certain aspects of the American experience may be understood as inherently Gothic: religious intensities, frontier immensities, isolation, and violence; above all, perhaps, the shadows cast by slavery and racial attitudes” (25). American gothic projects the bloody history of America in order to reveal the suffering of its victims back at the time, and to portray the amount of discrimination and violence they had endured throughout that period. American gothic signifies the dark side of America.

With that being said American gothic communicates the struggling of individuals. In *Gothic* (2004), Fred Botting pinpoints the idea that American gothic shifted its setting to a mere realistic one to portray violence in American society, he explains that:

A major shift, as in North America, was evident in the domestication of Gothic styles and devices within realistic settings and modes of writing. The architectural and feudal

background, the wild landscapes, the aristocratic villains and sentimental heroines, were no longer, in a thoroughly bourgeois culture, objects of terror. Domestic, industrial and urban contexts and aberrant individuals provided the loci for mystery and terror.

Haunting pasts were the ghosts of family transgression and guilty concealment; the dark alleyways of cities were the gloomy forests and subterranean labyrinths; criminals were the new villains, cunning, corrupt but thoroughly human. Prisons, social injustice and rebellious individuals were not Romantic sites or heroes of gloomy suffering, but strange figures threatening the home and society... (80-1)

In other words, American Gothic portrays a vivid image of a morbid reality with its true characteristics. Botting stresses the transformation of Gothic from its traditional form which was only comprised of metaphysical and supernatural features, and this is what marks the deviation of Gothic to another dimension where the human is the main cause of the occurrence of violence, horror, and agony.

American Gothic can be an effective means of educating the public about the heinous crimes committed in its different states. Numerous victims' lives have been and will continue to be taken, and violence is so pervasive that it could be occurring right behind your neighbor's door. The use of this genre demonstrates the worthy position that it holds in literature in order to expose and raise awareness about the atrocities that are happening in American society.

The selected short stories will be analyzed through the lens of grotesque. Irma Perttula defines grotesque in "The Grotesque: Concept and Characteristics," as "a written form of expression which described that which could not be controlled by reason, was unnatural, and arose in opposition to the classical imitation of 'beautiful nature' and the rationalism and optimism of the Enlightenment" (22). In other words, grotesque portrays the deformed state of the character and exposes the vicious and evil side of the spectrum that rises the optimistic

and rationalist forms of the Enlightenment. Moreover, in the online article, “The Grotesque in Literature,” it highlights that Victor Hugo played a noteworthy role in the development of grotesque, in his work, *Manifesto of the Romantic Movement* (1827), he argued that the grotesque is an element of natural reality (Perttula 22).

In addition, grotesque represents the core of a dysfunctional society. In “Literary Terms: Gothic, Grotesque, and The Uncanny,” the main focus of grotesque in literature is to awaken our sympathy and antipathy all at once. It emphasizes the human body and all its unlike sorts, which can be deformed or exaggerated. The juxtaposition of the familiar and unfamiliar, or the familiar disfigured, gives the grotesque its lasting power. The grotesque is a recurring motif in gothic literature, as evidenced by Mary Shelley's Frankenstein monster or Flannery O'Connor's works with their off-kilter characters.

According to the article, “Grotesque Definition of Genre. Meaning in Literature, Franz Kafka’s *The Metamorphosis*” is the greatest example of grotesque. Kafka narrates a story of a man who wakes up one day to find himself turned into a giant insect. Besides that, Robert C. Evans explains, in “Aspects of the Grotesque in Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*” that Kafka’s grotesque is used to portray human anxieties, and fears about falling in situations that will make them face triggering thoughts, feelings, and behaviors (Evans 5). Grotesque is employed in literature in order to portray the deformed state of a character; it reveals the physical transformation in an unrealistic manner to amplify the narrative of the story. It is also used to display mystery and suspense to engage the reader.

In conclusion, violence in American society has planted its roots ever since its foundation until the present day. American writers saw the need to project such violent reality through their literary works by relying on numerous literary tools, techniques and theories like: psychological realism, gothic, and grotesque.

Chapter Two: The Portrayal of Violence in “Suicide Watch” by Joyce Carol Oates

This chapter examines Joyce Carol Oates’s biography and provides an in-depth analysis of her short story “Suicide Watch.” The second chapter is an analytical chapter comprised of two sections. The first section discusses Joyce Carol Oates’s writing career and her writing vision. In addition, the second section analyzes Oates’s use of psychological realism, gothic, and grotesque in the short story “Suicide Watch” to reflect on violence.

II.1. Exploring Joyce Carol Oates’ Vision

Joyce Carol Oates is a prolific American writer known for her compelling and often disturbing works of fiction. Born on June 16, 1938, in Lockport, New York, she began writing at a young age and went on to earn degrees from Syracuse University and Wisconsin-Madison University. Over the course of her career, Oates has published dozens of books, including novels, short story collections, essays, plays.

Oates’s first work was a collection of short stories called *By the North Gate* (1963). Besides, she wrote *With Shuddering Fall* (1964), *Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?* (1966), *In a Region of Ice* (1966), and *Garden of Early Delights* (1967). Oates’s works have been recognized with numerous awards, including the National Book Award for her fiction novel *Them* (1967), the PEN/Malamud Award for Excellence in Short Stories, the Norman Mailer Prize for Lifetime Achievement, two O. Henry Awards, and a National Humanities Award.

Beyond her literary achievements, Oates is also a respected educator. Throughout her career, she has taught creative writing at various universities, and she holds a position as a professor at the University of California, Berkeley. In addition to her impressive body of work as a writer, she has an eternal passion for reading, especially prominent authors such as

Flannery O'Connor, Thomas Mann, Henry David Thoreau, Ernest Hemingway, and Charlotte Bronte, also she was strongly affected by Franz Kafka and James Joyce.

Being the remarkable writer that she is, Joyce Carol Oates has always sought to depict her vision in a way that leaves her readers wondering from where she got her inspiration. According to Gavin Cologne-Brookes in "Introduction: Humility, Audacity and the Novels of Joyce Carol Oates," Oates has clarified in an interview with him that "things that are 'easy' for me are not very tempting" (385). In other words, Oates strives to write about diverse characters, male or female, black or white, a psychopath, a widow bride, a brain surgeon, and so on; she is capable of walking in anyone's shoes. Cologne-Brookes points out Joyce Carol Oates artistic vision is the center of the interest of critics since she has been creating works in a variety of genres for many years, it could appear that the boundaries of that vision are clear. Undoubtedly, the answer is no. Timothy Schilling is one the critics, who describes Oates's fictional world as "incomplete" since he considers her "antipathy of Christianity", and her works have a lack of "affirmativeness" (23). For that reason, Schilling regards Oates as "a dark writer-sober, cynical" (23) who conveys a "message of Stoicism". However, for Cologne-Brookes, he does not believe that Oates did write for recognition or critical complaint, in fact, she advises younger writers in her later essay not to fall into the stereotype concept of seeking applause. Oates makes sure to shed light on such context in *The Faith of a Writer* (2003) where she declares:

What advice can an older writer presume to offer to a younger? Only what he or she might wish to have been told years ago. Don't be discouraged! Don't cast sidelong glances, and compare yourself to others among your peers! (Writing is not a race. No one really "wins." The satisfaction is in the effort, and rarely on the consequent rewards, if there are any) And again, *write your heart out*. (24)

Furthermore, Cologne- Brookes refers to *The Faith of a Writer* as a title that indicates Oates's perspective. She uses a statement of belief, the main aspect of which is "that art is the highest expression of the human spirit" (1). The saying unveils one of Oates's melioristic visions influenced by William James. He explains in his essay, "The Sentiment of Rationality," that "to believe in something concerning which doubt is still theoretically possible; and as the test of belief is willingness to act, one may say that faith is the readiness to act in a cause the prosperous issue which is not certified to us in advanced" (148). James's perspective on belief is that it is something that should be endeavored, it creates a cause that will be chosen by each individual. Cologne-Brookes explains that Oates's cause is art; however, her faith in art is not similar to the modernist view, Oates view can be exemplified in the words of Virginia Woolf's Lily Briscoe in *To the Lighthouse*, "the one dependable thing in a world of strife, ruin, chaos" (203). Cologne-Brookes explicates that faith is somehow the "solitary" occupation of writing, which "yields to the communal". This perspective fills Oates "with a prevailing sense of wonderment" (xiii). Additionally, she asserts that "the individual voice is the communal voice. / The regional voice is the universal voice" (1). Simply said, Oates faith in the power of art enables her to stand on ground where she represents both her own individual voice and communal voice.

In his work, in addition to discussing selected novels by Oates, Cologne-Brookes considers Oates writing vision and stresses that "there is always the possibility that her sense of her own work does not match the way others see it. Oates would accept this, and accept as inevitable not only that her fictional world is "incomplete" but also that her intentions might misfire and/or be misinterpreted" (387). He further explains that "many of her protagonists- from Nathan Vickery in *Son of the Morning* to Kelly Kelleher in *Black Water* to Pinch in *We Were the Mulvaney's*- have damaged vision" (387). Oates vision might be misunderstood; however,

her projection of reality lay under the representation of characters, she tends to portray an image of damaged character in order to manifest realistic struggles.

A way to understand Oates' vision can be found in her writings about her personal life. For instance, in an interview, she shares a story from her private life, "my father told of how his grandfather Morgenstern tried to kill his grandmother in a fit of rage, then killed himself- gun barrel placed under his chin, trigger pulled, with my grandmother Blanche close by" ("My Father, My Fiction"5). This exemplifies Oates' experiencing violence in her surroundings. Since her grandfather was an alcoholic who abandoned his family, this clarifies from where Oates gets her inspiration when she writes about violence and its repercussions in her fiction. Oates writes about violence in a way that reveals its traumatic effects on her characters; she usually makes the victims of trauma the narrators in her novels; these characters will sorrowfully reveal what happened to them, as a way of embracing their momentarily anger and hatred. In "Psychic Visions and Quantum Physics: Oates's Big Bang and the Limits of Language," Samuel Chase Coale argues that Oates' harrowing language portrays the character's condition and asserts:

These coruscating epiphanies viscerally affect the language Oates's characters employ to explain what has happened to them. Oates's well known breathless rush of words, her eruption of impressions, fears, and insights that suggests a kind of stream of unconsciousness- a flight from some crime or gothic secret-often links her to the dark musings of Poe and Faulkner. (428)

Oates has a fascination with humanity's darker side; thus, she typically writes about horrifyingly captivating topics. A quality that distinguishes Joyce Carol Oates as a master writer is her capacity to enthrall readers by writing about horrifying situations while still leaving them wanting more. Furthermore, Oates emphasizes standing on realistic ground when it comes to writing; she tends to depict the natural, social, and sociological aspects of

American society. Oates' depiction of violence tends to support her purpose of portraying morbid reality. Oates reveals:

I am always or usually writing about real people in real society, but the means of expression may be naturalistic, surreal, or parodic. In this way I have, to my own satisfaction at least, solved the old problem - should one be faithful to the real world, or to one's imagination (qtd. In. Hutcheon 6).

Joyce Carol Oates's writing reflects reality, and her depiction of a morbid society gives her satisfaction. Oates is driven by the need to shed light on societal violence; for her, writing about such issues is equivalent to solving them.

II.2. Oates's "Suicide Watch": Observing the Bonds of Family (Dis)Connectedness

The Museum of Dr. Moses: Tales of Mystery and Suspense is a collection of ten engrossing short stories written by Joyce Carol Oates. The book was published in 2007, it presents the writer's insightful observations regarding the human use of violence. Her unique voice and powerful storytelling create virtuous mysteries, and suspense tales that keep the readers on the edge of their seat, eagerly turning the pages to see how the story will end, and what are the outrageous surprises that lie ahead.

"Suicide Watch" is one of the short stories Joyce Carol Oates wrote in the collection titled *The Museum of Dr. Moses: Tales of Mystery and Suspense*. "Suicide Watch" is a 2007 National Magazine Awards finalist. The selected short story talks about the missing of a two years old child named Kenny and his mother, which leaves the father, "Seth," as the prime suspect. The twenty-eight years old man is under the Philadelphia House of Detention for Men, the psychiatric ward, suicide watch. Kenny's grandfather, Laurence C. Niorde, visits his son in order to figure out the truth about Kenny's whereabouts; however, Seth plays with his father's mind about whether Kenny is dead or alive.

Oates reveals her literary capabilities and uniqueness in this brief short story. She approaches a matter of a father and son's problematic relationship through the use of some disturbingly real and explicit violence. Whenever Joyce Carol Oates picks up a pen and begins to write, she highlights a problem in American society. However, this aspect can never be used as an excuse for a lack of creativity. In fact, Oates never failed to demonstrate her dark spirit and her seriousness in writing; she is inspired by reality and likes to vary and to shed light on different sufferings. Tanya L. Tromble explains in "Fiction in Fact and Fact in Fiction in the Writing of Joyce Carol Oates," that during Oates teaching experience she states that her characters "are invariably as 'real' as individuals in the 'real' world" (381). In "Suicide Watch," Oates portrays an image of a damaged character, which is a common feature that exhibits her works. Seth is the main protagonist who is under suicide watch since he was found with crudely slashed and bleeding forearms. It is clear that Oates use of psychological realism is a way of revealing the essence of violence and suffering. Seth's delusional episodes indicate that he is not mentally stable, foreshadowing the story's unexpected ending.

Oates highlights the relationship of Seth and his father; since at the very beginning of the story, it starts with "It was a matter of trust. He wanted to believe this: he was to be trusted. A father, a son in trouble. A father anxious to help his troubled son" (1). The relationship between Seth and his father drifted apart; the only connection they had was Kenny, the missing two-year-old grandson. The Father visited his son in order to figure out what exactly happened to Kenny and his mother; however, Seth's condition left Laurence in complete shock. In other words, Oates' portrayal of the Status of Seth and his father alongside their interaction manifests the disturbing aspect of a dysfunctional family.

Oates depicts the father's desperate situation; he was trying to convince Seth to tell him what happened to Kenny. Yet, Seth has kept his sarcastic personality even in the worst cases

since his response to Laurence's question about whether he was in danger or if anyone wants to hurt him “Hey Dad: who in hell’d want to hurt me?” (9) Seth states. The quoted statement unequivocally reveals that Seth possessed a violent personality, leaving no room for doubt. Seth's behaviors uncover that he was not stable mentally, “The son made a wheezing noise like laughter. The son was picking the sore on his upper lip. Thumped one of his bandaged arms against the edge of the table, soiled white gauze looking as if it was leaking blood” (9). Oates depicts the uneasy psychological condition of Seth as a way to elucidate the symptoms of a drug addict, since in the short story, Seth had a long history with drugs, “This time it was methamphetamine, the father had been informed. Previously it had been crack cocaine. In prep school, marijuana, cocaine. Later, heroin. Once the son had been a beautiful boy who’d taken clarinet lessons, had an interest in astronomy, a boy whose high grades came with a minimum of effort; this was official family history” (15-6). Oates relies on psychological realism in order to showcase the shift of personality of Seth from this bright smart boy, to a junkie who might have murdered his own son. Hence throughout his conversation with his father Seth was not making any sense at some point, his responses to his father about Kenny are triggering, Seth claims “Can I! How’d I know that, Dad” (14).

Moreover, Oates uses dream-like narrative to narrate what happened between Seth and his son, Kenny, all along the story. Oates evokes this aspect of consciousness and unconsciousness while narrating the events of what happened to Kenny; Seth does not stick to only one scenario. During the story, Seth’s hallucinations are the main example of dream-like narrative. Dream-like narrative is a part of psychological realism, also known as oneiric narrative. In “Oneiric narratives and the sharing of (extra)ordinary experiences,” Jaquelina Maria Imbriz and Adriana Rodrigues Domingues state, “Oneiric narrative works with figments of memories, with impressions and with affections, so it’s a way of not giving in to ready and quick explanations, on the contrary, it’s a process of assimilation that takes place in

deep layers of the psyche and demands a state of distension” (6). Oneirism is a state of mind in which the consciousness of human perception wanders between reality and dreams, and that is what Oates aims to project in her readers’ minds when they are experiencing her short story. She immerses them in surrealistic experiences so they can see the world through her characters’ eyes in order to give them the most realistic form of narrative that could be transmitted.

One of the aspects of dreamlike narrative are seen in Oates description of Seth’s delirium episode concerning the confessions he has given about his son’s disappearance. From the scenario of finding him burnt to death on the bathroom floor to the possibility of finding him hiding in the car’s back seat, readers find themselves torn between two different probabilities. Oates’s use of psychological realism proves her way of depicting the real as opposed to the subjective dream-like narrative. In "Introduction: Dream and Narrative Space," Yuan Yuan depends on Evelyn Schreiber's arguments to discuss what dream narratives are. Yuan believes that "Evelyn Schreiber's essay, "Dream Visions and Stream-of-Consciousness: The Conscious and Unconscious Search for Meaning," examines the function of dream by investigating difference and similarity of dream's representation between the medieval dream visions and the modern stream-of-consciousness novel" (1). Yuan further adds, "Schreiber believes dream-narratives reflect the timeless desire to test reality and search for meaning on both conscious and unconscious levels" (2). In other words, the use of dreamlike narrative is considered as a way to mirror both the conscious and unconscious aspects of the character’s reality and to transmit it to the readers.

“Suicide Watch” is a short story that portrays the dysfunctional relationship between Seth and his father. As for the subjective dream-like narrative, it lies in Seth’s hallucinations about his son Kenny, whether he was actually hiding in the car or if he inevitably let him burn in the boiling water. Interestingly, Oates’s psychological realism is unique since she states, “There

are in general two kinds of writers. The first—and older—kind wants to report incidents as if they were real, things that have already happened. The second is not content with ‘reporting’ events but wants to evoke either psychological reality for the reader, through the use of sensuous details and symbols” (“An Eye for Detail” 41). In other words, and according to Oates, when it comes to reporting crimes in the literary field, there are two types of writers: one would report the incident objectively and describe the scene biblically, while the other would shadow the events in order to evoke a vivid image in the reader's mind and affect their emotional state, an art that Joyce Carol Oates has mastered.

In “Joyce Carol Oates: Transcribing the Enigmatic,” Tanya Tromble argues, “These typographical, organizational and punctuation tools allow Oates to underline the communication difficulties, emotions and obsessions they gradually reveal and contribute to evoking Oates’s mysterious, frightening fictional realm of characters constantly, yet ineffectually, grasping at meaning” (2). The usage of italics, repetition, dashes, and ellipses contributes to demonstrating the intended message, which cannot be deciphered easily. Oates relies on such techniques to illustrate the psychological structure of her story, in order to evoke the hidden thoughts, and emotions of her characters. Her psychological realism manifests in revealing both the psychological aspects alongside realistic aspects.

Some of these techniques mark their presence in “Suicide Watch”. The use of italics contributes in revealing the inner thoughts of Seth and his father; for instance, when Seth’s father first sees him in his helpless situation, he is left in complete shock “oh god, Seth” (13). However, Seth's response is unclear, “With a twitchy smirk-smile the son acknowledged the staring father “ ‘Sme’ ”(13). It leaves his father wondering what he means, “It wasn’t clear what the son had mumbled. It’s *me*?” (13). The italicized word emphasizes the father's confusion; he is left questioning the response of his son. Oates’ employment of italics can be seen in another passage, when Seth is explaining where he hides his son and he states, “I *know*

this. I left Kenny in the car” (22). The italicized words reinforce the sense of belief, Seth is convincing himself that he does leave his son in the car. Throughout the short story, Joyce Carol Oates relies on italics to mirror her characters feelings and inner thoughts. Moreover, Tromble further explains the technique of italics in Oates narrative, by emphasizing, “Reading an Oates passage can often be quite a physical experience. The reader feels the emotion bursting forth from deep down, such as when an italicized expression surges up in the middle of a paragraph” (21).

Oates usage of ellipses in “Suicide Watch” refers to the missing words, which evoke the character’s difficulty in embracing, accepting, or understanding the situation being described. For example, in the passage “I . . . I didn’t believe it! As if I would believe such a...”(24); Seth’s father is left speechless after hearing about all the atrocities his son has been telling him. He proceeds by convincing himself that it is all a lie, “It isn’t true, then? Kenny isn’t. . .” (24). Oates glorifies the state of shock and disbelief of Seth’s father through the use of ellipses. Moreover, she depends on dashes in order to express the state of hesitancy. Such as, when Seth’s father declares, “Seth? Tell me about Christa. Were you quarreling with her, and is that why Christa took Kenny? And where would –” (17) Laurence cannot continue talking about Christa, since he knows how careless she is, even though he has met her only three times. Another illustration can be found in the passage of Seth’s father asking him about Kenny, he says, "But –did she take him? Kenny?" (15). The dashes used in the two quotes mentioned before pinpoint the uneasy situation of Seth’s father to sallow the agonizing events he is experiencing.

Joyce Carol Oates stresses the topic of violence in her writing, which she excessively tackles in numerous of her works. Oates interest in violence goes back to a young age since she herself has witnessed it. In her essay “Why is Your Writing So Violent?” Oates states “my "vision" as a "novelist" had been much influenced by the fact that I had lived for many years

in Detroit, Mich. (which appears to have the reputation throughout the world of being a “violent city””) (Oates). Furthermore, she touches upon the theme of violence as a way to project the dark side of human beings, and how cruel and heartless one can be. For Oates, there is no escaping from violence in her work; she makes sure to expose all her characters; males, females, and even children to violence. Mary Kathryn Grant, in *The Tragic Vision of Joyce Carol Oates* (1978), comments, “from violence, in Oates’ world, there is no escaping. Continuously, her fiction searches out and exposes the very root of violence: a sense of personal impotence. At the heart of violence...is the absolute and utter inability to affirm oneself” (32). Oates use of violence uncovers the struggles of the victims, alongside the inner thoughts of the abuser, she tries to portray the accurate state of mind of both sides.

Oates’ depiction of violence falls under the umbrella of her use of both gothic and grotesque; she emphasizes the use of both of them while developing her narratives. Oates grotesque alludes to madness, distortion, dismemberment, exaggeration, and loss of autonomy; her characters exemplify this. In *Winesburg, Ohio*, Sherwood Anderson argues, “It was the truths that made the people grotesques...the moment one of the people took one of the truths to himself, called it his truth, and tried to live his life by it, he became a grotesque and the truth he embraced became a falsehood” (25). Oates endeavors to portray her characters from their own unique perspectives, providing insight into their individual views. In “Suicide Watch,” Oates projects this aspect on Seth since he believes that his father abandoned him and that the only way to make his father notices him is by murdering his own son.

In “Suicide Watch,” Oates depicts violence in such a vivid and graphical way. For example, while Seth describes what might have happened to Kenny, he states, “And there’s the kid, there’s Kenny in the water! There’s Kenny in the bathroom, on the floor. Kind of wedged under the sink” (22). Seth continues: “the skin is all red and blistered and coming off

in my hands and the eyes are popping” (22). Oates portrays the grotesque picture of discovering Kenny's tiny body completely burned out with his skin falling apart. She portrays this picture in such a gritty, agonizing way which demonstrates how dedicated she is to violence. Oates exposes the atrocious act of Seth and Christa, who after getting high wraps their son's body in a garbage bag, wraps him with a wire, and places him in cardboard cartons in order to take him to the post office and mail him to his father. Through the short story “Suicide Watch,” Oates' use of gothic and grotesque demonstrate how humans are capable of committing such horrific and wickedness crimes.

Seth's madness extends beyond his own suffering, as he may have been responsible for his son's untimely death. Despite these horrifying acts, Oates manages to elicit compassion from her readers, highlighting the complexity and depth of her characters' experiences. Throughout the story, Seth's hallucinations and his shifting scenarios indicate that he has gone mad. All along the story, Seth goes from not knowing Christa “...know her name, Dad? Never met her” (18), to outright declare that she took Kenny “In a loud aggressive voice Seth was saying: “she took him!” (19). Seth's madness advocates that he is being consumed by forces outside of his control. In “Space, Property, and The Psyche: Violent Topographies in Early Oates Novels” Susana Araujo points out, “Violence and madness have maintained an undeniable presence in the Oates canon” (411). Violence and madness are two very important topics that Oates never shied away from representing, hence in the short story of “Suicide Watch,” the protagonist showed both of these characteristics, he was a violent father who displayed numerous symptoms of mental instability and madness.

Oates grotesquely emphasizes the unexpected empathy towards Seth in “Suicide Watch”. Seth becomes the center of the readers' compassion with his persistent reminders to his father regarding his absence, as he states “See Dad, I called you. Never called back” (18). Seth keeps on insisting that he has called Laurence, “That night. That it happened” (18). He keeps

pointing fingers at dad to make him feel responsible for what happened, “I’d be jiving about my own son! Not like you, Dad, that doesn’t give a shit about your son” (23). He further declares “See, Dad: it’s a test” (24). Seth's signs subtly reveal his underlying desire for his father's presence. As he speaks to Laurence, he cannot help but blame him for the unanswered call. In defining Seth’s grotesqueness, Oates stresses Seth’s struggle with feelings of abandonment which makes the readers feel somewhat sorry for him and to draw this sense of sympathy towards the character.

Oates is an expert at creating a gothic atmosphere in her stories, and she consistently achieves this through the setting she creates. This is evident in Seth's chilling account of the events unfolding in his house, particularly within the confines of the bathroom,

The overflowing tub in the bathroom on the second floor, water so scalding in hot steam had caused paint to blister and peel the ceiling and walls, plastic fixtures to melt. On the landing outside the bathroom, on the stairs, scalding-hot water had done more damage, and in the kitchen raw garbage floated in puddles. Police officers reported drug paraphernalia, broken glass and broken toys, sodden clothes. Bloodstains, vomit.

Cockroaches. (10-1)

Throughout this intense, atmosphere where the presence of steam seeps out from under the door, accompanied by the unsettling sight of brimming and scalding water that continues to flow, broken toys, and cockroaches, Oates highlights her gothic setting. This gothic atmosphere is heightened by Seth's disturbed comment, “It's a wild scene” (20). Oates’ mastery lies in her ability to skillfully manipulate the setting to evoke a pervasive and unsettling sense of dread, leaving readers haunted by the surroundings she so vividly portrays. She relies on gothic elements in her narrative in order to evoke this sense of mystery and suspense. Oates captivates her readers by deliberating bits and pieces about the events happening to her characters. In the case of “Suicide Watch,” Oates crafts a story that is

disturbingly captivating; likewise, she holds onto one of her gothic treats of having an open ending when Seth claims “Hey Dad: if the carton shows up where I mailed it, then you’ll know. If not, you’ll know too” (24).

Oates’ “Suicide Watch” approaches the theme of domestic violence in an attempt to refer to similar cases that are occurring in America. In his article “Filicide in the United States,” Philip J. Resnick points out that the United States stands out with the highest rate of child murder among developed nations, which is a deeply troubling statistic. Alarming, the most common perpetrator in cases of child homicide is a parent. Furthermore, he discusses the conception of “acutely psychotic filicide,” which reflects individuals who exhibit a combination of psychosis and parenthood, leading them to commit acts of homicide without any discernible motive. This category encompasses those who are driven to kill as a result of command hallucinations, epilepsy-induced episodes, or periods of delirium.

Accordingly, J. Resnick exposes the harrowing case of Andrea Yates, who tragically drowned each of her five children, aged 6 months to 7 years, in her bathtub due to her overwhelming feelings of depression. Similarly, in a recent and deeply tragic incident, an epileptic mother exhibited extreme confusion after a seizure and mistakenly placed her baby on a burning fire and the kettle in the cradle, while in another distressing case, an epileptic woman in Sacramento, placed her infant inside a microwave oven.

Indeed, Seth and Christa, his girlfriend, are excellent examples of these behaviors. The heartless way in which they decide to get rid of their two-year-old baby after leaving him burning in boiling water to death evokes Oates’ vision of the dark side of human beings. Oates pays close attention to the portrayal of violence, which proves that she is an excellent observer; she seeks to expose the violent reality. American gothic is directly linked to American society and its projection of its flaws, Oates emphasizes on this perspective to illustrate that violence is not fictional through the use gothic. In *American Gothic*, Alan Lloyd

Smith explains, “American Gothicists participated in a wider literature tradition, the circumstances of their own history and the stresses of their particular cultural and political institutions meant that a series of significant inflections determined a Gothicism that differs from considerably from British or European versions” (29).

In “Transformations of Self: An Interview with Joyce Carol Oates,” Oates states, “the moral need to instruct readers concerning the direction to take, in order to achieve happiness (or whatever: maybe they don't want happiness, only confusion). So, I feel the moral imperative to chart the psychological processes of someone. . . who has gone through suffering of one kind or another, but survives it (or almost survives)” (57). As a realist writer, Oates aims at changing the world; this is what all realists aspire to do: make the world a better place by writing about its reality to the readers. When Joyce Carol Oates writes, she does not just describe an event; she makes sure to get inside the readers' heads, leaving them not only informed about the violence that is escalating in American society but also deeply shaken by the graphic details of the suffering that the victims witness, leaving them dead or in a devastated state of mind for those who survive.

Every reader who has the slightest grain of empathy can be triggered by this type of writing; it targets their subconscious mind in order to evoke a reaction from them by stroking the motivational intensity and stimulating a direct or indirect impulsion that leads the readers to react and act against violence. In “Suicide Watch,” Oates raises awareness on the topic of domestic violence regarding Seth and Kenny’s relationship and how monstrous and devoid of humanity it can be. Therefore, Joyce Carol Oates knows exactly how to plant the seed of change in her readers’ minds through her unmerciful storytelling.

Chapter Three: Joyce Carol Oates' Mastery of the Short Story: A Reading of "The Museum of Dr. Moses"

The third chapter provides a reading of Oates' short story, "The Museum of Dr. Moses," and examines further Oates' writing skills. The following chapter is divided into two sections; the first will provide an analysis of "The Museum of Dr. Moses" by Joyce Carol Oates, focusing on its psychological realism, gothic, and grotesque features. The second section introduces Joyce Carol Oates as a master storyteller and examines the various techniques she employed in her short stories to depict the dilemma of violence.

III.1. "The Museum of Dr. Moses": The Story of a Psychopathic Coroner

Oates is regarded as the representative of psychological realism because of her skill at probing into the "subjectivity" of human nature to show them as they really are. Her characters' psyches reflect their physical and mental struggles and endurance. Oates' keen desire to uncover a broader realm of reality draws attention to exposing the core of emotions and lived experiences. Oates has always been driven by the use of techniques of psychological realism; since the very beginning of her career, she has referred to herself as a "psychological realist". Hence, she also claims that she is a writer of "psychological mystery and suspense" (qtd.in. Tromble 1). Oates relies on reality, mystery, and suspense in the process of portraying her vision of violent crimes.

"The Museum of Dr. Moses" is a short story that centers around Ella, a young girl determined to reach her mother in Oriskany, New York. However, upon arrival, Ella's hopes are shattered when she discovers her mother's new husband, Dr. Moses, is a deranged murderer. Fearing for her mother's life, Ella courageously resolves to free her from Dr.

Moses's clutches and save her. With a gripping narrative filled with unexpected twists and intense suspense, Ella confronts perilous obstacles while striving to protect her mother. The outcome remains uncertain as the story ends, leaving readers on edge, questioning whether the two women successfully escaped Dr. Moses or if they will forever be haunted by his pursuit.

According to Tanya Tromble in "Joyce Carol Oates: Fantastic, New Gothic and Inner Realities," reality is reflected in Oates' use of psychological realism. Tromble states, "thus, for Oates, psychological realism involves recounting a story from the rational view of a coherent (realistic, because believable) personality, meaning that developing the unconscious depths of the characters is as important as positing them in an authentic and believable exterior world" (3). In other words, the shaping of characters for Joyce Carol Oates goes back to emphasizing on their psychological state both conscious and unconscious features which contribute in portraying a realistic image of the world. Ginny's character in "The Museum of Dr. Moses" can be taken as a great example. Oates projects an image of a mother who has struggled throughout her life. The psychological state of mind of Ginny is restricted by the traumas she has witnessed, from her abusive first husband to her son who is a chronic alcoholic to her psychopathic second husband. Ginny suffered from Stockholm syndrome. According to the Cleveland Clinic in "Stockholm Syndrome: What it is, Symptoms & How to Treat," Stockholm syndrome is "a coping mechanism to a captive or abusive situation. People develop positive feelings toward their captors or abusers over time." Ginny is submissive to Dr. Moses' abuse; for her, it is okay to be treated in such a violent way, and she finds refuge in such treatments. She informs Ella, "Dr. Moses calls me his 'helpmate.' Oh, I was afraid at first, but he gave me a potion to drink, and my fear dropped away-or almost. His first wife, he said, disappointed him. She had no *imagination*, and she had *no courage*" (219).

In "The Museum of Dr. Moses," Oates portrays the characters of Ella and her mother, Virginia, also called Ginny, in order to highlight the distinctive feature of the mother-daughter

relationship. Throughout the beginning of the story, Oates shows that Ella and her mother were on good terms; they got along well, and Ginny risked her life to save her four-year-old daughter from wasp stings. Until high school, Ella lived with her mother and her careless alcoholic brother, Walter. However, the puzzle has always been missing a piece; her abusive father was always absent, Ella mentions him when she was recalling their family picture, as she reminisces:

In a typical picture, Mommy would be brunching between Walter and me, her arms tightly around us to steady us, or to prevent us from squirming faces; face blurred, eyes averted shyly from the camera. (Which had probably been held by Daddy, who likes mechanical things, and did not like his picture taken, at least with his young family)

(188)

Ella's father was never concerned with his children; he drifted away ever since her mother's first pregnancy; he was not present even when Ella needed him the most. While recalling her story of getting stung, Ella comments "There was no Daddy in my story, and never had been" (187).

Nevertheless, Ella's relationship with Ginny became complicated during her time in high school. Ella struggled to support her mother financially while Walter, being a chronic drinker, was further drowning them. Ginny was so understanding and forgiving. In fact, Ella gave up on her for the exact same reason. Ella explains, "but Ginny is so devoted. So, forgiving. Forgiving! That was the primary reason I'd become estranged from my mother" (188). Ella ceased talking to her mother; she felt like she had been abandoned, "you've chosen between us. Good!" (189) Ella comments. Furthermore, Ella started a new life; she attended the State Teacher's College at Oneida, successfully became a teacher in a private school, and lived an independent life. She expresses, "I had friends, and I had lovers—to a degree. (No one has ever gotten too close to me. Except for my mother, which is the reason I don't entirely trust

anyone.) If the subject of family came up, I explained that I was estranged from mine" (189-190). Ella's split from her mother made her develop a shielded barrier when it comes to trusting people, but she nonetheless retained a few of the knitted clothes Ginny had made for her, and while she was showing them to her friend, she got emotional and decided to take a trip to her old town to visit Ginny. No matter how hard Ella tried to separate her world from her mother, she found herself going back to her. She discovered that Virginia got married to Dr. Moses without informing her; however, Ella was determined to visit Ginny and her new stepfather. Unexpectedly, Ella finds her mother stuck with a psychotic coroner who was abusing her. In the end, Ella rescued her mother, just like her mother rescued her when she was a child.

Oates exemplifies Ella's relationship with Ginny in order to reveal the unraveling of motherhood and daughterhood in America. Through her two characters, Oates emphasizes the close relationship that mothers and daughters can have, regardless of how far apart they may be; they still share a strong connection. Joanne V. Creighton and Kori A. Binette, in "What Does It Mean to Be a Woman? The Daughter's Story in Oates's Novels," argues that "The freighted mother-daughter relationship is at the core of Oates's intensive exploration of what it means to be a woman in contemporary America" (440-1). The view Oates wants to depict in the story is Ella's refusal to accept the assumptions society has towards women. She expresses that:

Poor Ginny. She hadn't been well...Because, it was vaguely said, of the miscarriage; because she'd never gotten over giving birth to the little girl, a thirty-hour labor; because of certain "Female weakness" Meaning what? In the era in which breast, cervical and ovarian cancer as well as more ordinary menstrual problems were mysteriously alluded to as "Women's shame," ... (188)

Oates conveys the message of how women were seen in the American society, Ella's character proclaims the resistant the writer wants to demonstrate "for what is sentiment, but weakness, and usually "female weakness"? I am not one of you" (189).

Joyce Carol Oates use of psychological realism is guided by certain techniques that she consistently utilizes in favor of portraying a realistic representation of the experiences her characters carry throughout the story. In the short story "The Museum of Dr. Moses," Oates employs ellipsis, dashes, Italics, and repetition to express communication difficulties, feelings, and confusion. Each technique plays an important role in capturing the state of mind of the characters in the story.

Oates' usage of italics in "The Museum of Dr. Moses" demonstrates interruptions in the flow of the story, as if it connects two different worlds, or it can be an inner thought that the character could not express loudly. The use of italics and its description cannot fall under the same umbrella since each passage in the story transmits a different message. For instance, When Ella is narrating to her new friends about the wasp incident, she thinks, "*I was so loved once. I was a lucky child*" (186). Here Ella is expressing a sorrowful message while recalling her childhood. Other examples of the use of italics to represent the inner thoughts of Ella include Ella's reaction to the latest news about her mother. She is surprised and outraged, "*Wife of Dr. Moses!*" (191). "*Mother, how could you?*" (191). Ella is in disbelief as she receives the news that her mother is married to Dr. Moses. In addition, once Ella is driving to see her mother she contemplates, "*Why am I here? She doesn't want me. If she wanted me ...*" (192). She conveys her confused thoughts and how she is torn apart by her mother's absence. The excessive use of italics in "The Museum of Dr. Moses" projects Oates mastery of such technique; she takes her readers on a roller coaster ride of emotions, and she gives us a glimpse of the interior monologue of each character.

After a long drive, Ella encounters her mother: “Mother stared at me with exposed, lashless eyes. *Ella, please. Don't judge me harshly. Help me*” (203). Although her mother’s voice cannot be heard, Ella understands that her mother is in danger. Here Oates tries to manifest the connection that a mother and a daughter have. Ella is suspicious about her stepfather once she meets him because of his strange behavior and his devotion to collecting human skulls and organs, “*But you've retired, Dr. Moses, aren't you?*” (210). As illustrated, the use of italics shows that Ella is trying to convince herself that Dr. Moses is not monster that she thinks he is.

Throughout the story, Oates showcases Elle’s mixed feelings through the use of Italics. Ella states that “*wherever my mother goes, she brings herself. It was wrong of me to leave her*” (213). The passage conveys Ella’s regret about leaving her mother. Oates' reliance on italics illustrates the character’s inner thoughts and private emotions, and uncertainties. Rosie Marie Burwell in "The Process of Individuation as Narrative Structure: Joyce Carol Oates' Do with Me What You Will," discusses a comparable method by saying, "italicized sections permit individuals to reflect upon, to amplify, or to force rhetorical analysis of what the detached narrator reveals about them" (94).

Another technique Oates uses in the short story is repetition. In “The Museum of Dr. Moses,” Oates employs repetition in order to convey the crucial aspect of crying for help and the pleading of Ella’s mother. In numerous passages, Oates emphasizes the calling for help, whether it was expressed as an inner thought of Ella or an unspoken message, “*Help me, Ella! take me from this terrible place*” (214). “*Ella help me! don't judge me*” (221). The repetition written in italics appears numerous times in the story. Through repetition, Oates claims the psychological state of Ginny; it also initiates a sense of mystery and suspense since most of Ginny’s calls are unspoken, but Ella can hear them.

Additional techniques Oates utilizes are ellipses and dashes. The hesitancy in the story's progression is conveyed using ellipses and dashes. In a 2005 interview with Susana Araujo titled "Joyce Carol Oates Reread," she states, "I feel that my characters are alive in some way. And that they are not just characters in a story. And that they have a livingness and a psychology that overlaps the formal constraints of the fiction. So, the characters can still keep on living" (96). Indeed, Oates succeeds at portraying the violence happening in the story through such simple formal techniques.

With the use of dashes and ellipses Oates illustrates the environment that the characters inhabit. Ginny states, "I never did recover, I guess! But I love you Ella, and I love Walter, and I-I don't regret having my babies, I don't. And I don't regret marrying Dr. Moses except I am afraid of . . ." (218). The use of ellipsis here indicates that words are omitted from the narrative which is a sign to clarify that Ginny cannot continue talking because she is in danger. As for the dashes, they express hesitation, the use of dashes in the story gives voice to numerous sensations. "He would follow us, and hurt us both. You don't know Ella-"(227) Ginny claims. The dashes show that there is something hidden that Ginny knows about, the secret of Dr. Moses; his monstrous secret of being a psychotic murderer.

Joyce Carol Oates is known for her unflinching exploration of violence in her literary works. Oates does not shy away from graphic depictions of violence, but she also never glorifies it. Instead, she presents it as a complex and often tragic aspect of the human experience, always striving to shed light on the darkest corners of the human psyche. And that is exactly what she offers in this short story. In order to provide her readers with a vivid portrayal of how violence can occur in American society, especially at the familial level, Oates relies on elements of gothic and grotesque. In Oates's narrative, gothic and grotesque go hand in hand. In "Gothic Fiction and the Grotesque" (1979), Maximillian E. Novak explains that "the term grotesque is sometimes used interchangeably with the term gothic.

Both have in common themes of vice and disorder and deviation from harmony and right morals” (36). Furthermore, Douglass H. Thomson, Jack G.Voller and Frederick S. Frank comments in *Gothic Writers* that “Oates charts the terrors of the self under threat from a dehumanizing and disintegrating world” (304). Trough grotesque and gothic Oates emphasizes on describing horrific details in order to exalt the essence of violence.

What sets Oates's Gothic apart is her ability to create a deeply unsettling atmosphere without relying on otherworldly elements. She crafts narratives that delve into the human condition, often examining the darker aspects of society and humans by doing so, she reveals the true terrors that exist within our own minds and the complex reality that shape our lives.

By depicting the character of Moses Hammacher, a charming and creepy old man who runs his museum, Oates masterfully draws vivid imagery of how a psychopath doctor can be so violent. Under the fourth section of the story that is titled “Museum of Dr.Moses: First Visit”, the narrative unfolds with a gradual progression of mysterious and suspenseful incidents, gradually unveiling the secret of Dr. Moses and ultimately exposing the harrowing reality of true violence.

As a result of the items on exhibit in his museum, Dr. Moses becomes increasingly suspicious. Ella tours the museum and she is appalled by the items in display: a jar of human eyeballs that seems to follow you around the room, the mummified remains of a stillborn fetus, a preserved heart that has been cut in half to show the chambers and valves, and countless other items that are difficult to describe. Each object is displayed with a sense of pride and care by Dr. Moses. In the opposite end of the museum, stands a row of shelves that appears to hold great significance to the old man. Upon closer inspection, it becomes evident that the shelves are lined with an assortment of bottles, each bearing a distinct label. The labels are adorned with rubber figures, some of which are shaped like human organs, while others are more abstract in form. The sight seems both fascinating and unsettling for Ella.

“Ella, dear: meet cousin Sam” (210) Dr. Moses declares; he keeps skulls of his own relatives. Ella describes: “It appeared to be the skeleton of a man of modest height; its bones discolored with age and its skull dented; the eyes sockets were enormous. The skull seemed to be listening to us with a monkeyish air of mock severity. Stands of cobweb drifted between the skeleton’s ribs; something scuttled inside one of the eye sockets: a spider? I looked away, unnerved” (211).

Dr. Moses has spent a lifetime accumulating his collection, he is not a man who is easily shocked or disturbed by the strangeness of his finds, but rather his joy is palpable as he shows off his wares to Ella, Dr. Moses’ joy shocks Ella as she remarks, “...he was smiling, taping at bottles” (210). The grotesque aspects of collecting human organs and creating a museum out of them showcases the madness of Dr. Moses, hence, readers cannot but think he is a psychopathic coroner.

Moreover, in the description of the story's setting in the museum, each piece glorifies its grotesqueness. Ella describes a small bottle, no larger than a quarter of a liter, yet it holds macabre and mysterious contents within. At a close review, it becomes clear that the bottle contains a strange creature, or rather, what is left of it. The creature appears to be decapitated, with its limbs haphazardly arranged in the bottle. What's more, there is another peculiar thing present, whose form is equally difficult to discern (Oates 210). It could be a heart, or perhaps a head, emerging from the creature's chest cavity. Yet, to call this aberration a mere creature would be misleading; it is a fully abused and tormented entity, and it's unsettling how much it looks like an actual helpless baby. As Ella horrifically states, “I felt faint, and looked away. *Not a fetus, an actual baby*” (210). Nonetheless, despite the uncertainty, this strange and frightening object remains a testament to the demonic acts of Dr. Moses.

Additionally, what makes it even stranger is the dedicated section to childbirth, showcasing anatomical charts and preserved fetuses in the wombs of decapitated females. However, the

overpowering scent of blood that hangs in the air has made it nearly impossible to bear witness to such macabre displays. Rows of human skulls are in glass cases; when Ella asks Dr. Moses where he got the skulls, he responds with a mysterious smile, “death is plentiful, Ella. There is no lack of specimens of the genus *Death*” (212). Moreover, the sharp tools and scalpels on display, modern and razor-sharp, are almost too terrifying to approach, let alone touch. The museum is a chilling reminder of the fragility of life, the gruesomeness of the grotesque, and the gothic setting filled with unsettling exhibits that makes it difficult to ignore the sense of unsettling, dehumanizing, and gloomy side of Dr. Moses and his museum.

Accordingly, as one delves deeper into the enigmatic character of the Dr. Moses, it becomes clear that his eccentricity knows no bounds. His idiosyncratic obsession with all things bizarre and unusual is well-known, but it appears that his fixation extends beyond mere objects and curiosities. Indeed, his infatuation with his own wife is a matter of concern, as he seems to be fixated on her youth and beauty. The mother, on the other hand, is a picture of misery, with her face visibly swollen and deformed at the jawline. Her expression suggests that she is in pain, but she never speaks up for fear of retribution from her husband. Her face is a testament to her suffering, covered in wounds, cracks, scars, and unsightly stitches. It is painfully evident that Dr. Moses’s desire to keep his wife looking young and fresh is the driving force behind this disturbing situation. Ginny attempts to calm Ella's concern by stating the following:

Dr. Moses wanted simply to ‘restore my youth’ to me. He’d seen me and remembered me, he said, from years ago, when I was younger, and – well, he wanted that woman as his wife. Ella, don’t frown so, I agreed, of course! And it hasn’t been terribly painful, really. Dr.Moses gives me pills. I’ve been able to sleep, most nights. And I do look younger, I think. Don’t I? (217)

Hence, the situation of what transpired is both alarming and disturbing. The doctor, without a second thought, carries out the operation on his wife's face within the confines of his own home. The very notion that he treats this complex procedure as if it is a casual matter, devoid of any potential danger or risk, is unsettling to say the least. The manner in which he approaches the situation is reminiscent of someone who is detached and indifferent, as if the wellbeing of his spouse is inconsequential, his wife's face is simply an object to be tinkered with at his leisure in order to keep her pretty in his eyes. Through this narrative, Oates suggests that what happens behind closed doors between family members can be shocking.

In the face of a traumatic and reprehensible experience, the mother in question demonstrates a remarkable ability to conceal her agony and disapproval. It is evident that she is struggling to cope with the aftermath of a violent and heinous act, yet she does not allow her pain to be visible to those around her. Ella explains: "Her face was swollen and discolored at the jawline; she walked slowly, favoring her left side; she appeared to be in pain" (217). Ginny tries to hide her pain; she is determined to keep it a secret to save her loved daughter from the horrors that have befallen her, even though it meant suppressing her emotions and opinions. The mother's behavior hints at a deep-rooted fear of the doctor who has forced her to live under a regime of excessive fear and tyranny, "mother was trembling, and could not speak. Her eyes pleaded" (217) Ella states. Despite the enormity of her suffering, the mother appears to be resigned to her fate, unable or unwilling to speak out against the injustice that has been inflicted upon her, "Ella, no. If I am not healing well, it's my own fault. This lumpiness by my ears, I should be messaging it, Dr. Moses says. I'm not a good healer, sick for months" (218) Ginny explains.

In addition, Dr. Moses expressly warns Ella not to approach the "Red Room" in the museum, as he asserts, "A new wing of the museum, the Red Room—not ready yet for

visitors. Another time Ella” (212). This ominous room is a veritable chamber of horrors; its setting was different than the museum. Ella describes that:

The Red Room: so-called because the walls were covered in a crimson silk wallpaper. Once it had been elegant, now it was rather tacky, yet still striking, attractive. The elaborately molded ceiling had been recently painted while, there was even a chandelier, antique, once beautiful but now somewhat tarnished, its cut-glass ornaments glazed with grime. This room was smaller than the other part of the museum and the exhibits were crowded together, most of them not labeled. (222-3)

The presence of ‘the Red Room’ and its setting portray the gothic features Oates wants to keenly depict the mystery of it being non-accessible, the way Dr. Moses has embedded it from its furniture to its paint. What is perhaps even more grotesque is what the room holds, Ella states: “I was staring at a large, rectangular Plexiglas case in which luxuriant coils of lustrous, glossy hair were displayed. There must have been a dozen hair samples, ash blond, russet red, dark brown, dark blond, wheat colored, silvery gray, black threaded with gray...” (223-4). Furthermore, Ella explains: “Several of the samples were prettily braided with satin ribbons. Others were bow-tied with ribbons. The effect was festive, mesmerizing, as Christmas decorations. I wondered: did these locks of hair belong to girls I’d once known in Strykersville? Was it possible two of the matched braids had been mine?” (224). Ella has come to realize that Dr. Moses is a monster. She states that: “*He is a murderer. A demon. These are his victims*” (224). As if to further reinforce the grotesque nature of the scene, another box contained a collection of severed fingers, toes, noses, and lips that are laid out in the ghastliest manner imaginable. The overall effect is one of intense horror and grotesque, a terrifying tableau that will haunt anyone who witnesses it for a long time to come.

Therefore, In the harrowing depictions of the museum, it becomes shockingly evident that Dr. Moses possesses a deeply disturbed and psychopathic character, characterized by dark

psychological tendencies and a penchant for abusive acts of violence. The sheer fact that he collects severed body parts of human beings not only reveals his twisted fascination with such grotesque objects, but also signifies his sadistic pleasure derived from these horrifying actions. This individual exudes an aura of extreme violence, suggesting a propensity for inflicting harm on others without remorse or empathy. Oates exhibits the gothic and grotesque grim details while painting an outrageous portrait of a truly disturbed and dangerous individual, emphasizing the depths of his psychopathy and the alarming extent to which proves that such acts of barbaric violence actually take place in reality. The detailed description of Dr. Moses' Museum and what he is capable of can symbolize the violence women in America have been subjected to. Like, Ginny, women are victimized and silenced for centuries and have no other option but to endure all of that.

America holds evidence of similar crimes. In his article "True Crime Blog: Stories & News," David Horspool unveils the chilling case of the infamous psycho killer Ed Gein. Set in the autumn of 1957, the narrative unfolds as police officers from Plainfield, Wisconsin venture into the desolate farmhouse that served as Gein's sinister lair. Inside, they stumble upon a gruesome sight—a lifeless carcass suspended by its heels from a rafter, none other than a headless corpse of a woman. Further investigation reveals that Gein had mercilessly shot the 58-year-old widow at a local shop before transporting her lifeless body to his property, in which she was subjected to become part of his grisly collection.

As the detectives meticulously searched through every inch of the house, their shocking discoveries grew increasingly bizarre and macabre. They came across chairs crafted from human skin, ghastly bowls made from skulls, faces preserved and mounted on the walls, and even a vest tailored from a gruesome torso. Adding to the horror, they stumbled upon a box containing a heart carefully bagged, as well as a chilling sight—a pair of lips disturbingly attached to a light shade-pull. Astonishingly, most of these horrifying objects were traced

back to grave-robbing rather than actual murder. However, after Gein's arrest, he did confess to another heinous crime—the killing of Mary Hogan, a tavern keeper. He meticulously planned this murder, targeting a victim whose body, weighing over 200 pounds, he calculated would be large enough to fashion a skin suit.

Joyce Carol Oates is concerned with the projection of violence, however when she writes about it, she does not only tackle it as an issue but also, she is invested on the motive which drives humans to commit such violent, she explains in an interview with Cologne Brookes “Written Interviews and A Conversation with Joyce Carol Oates,” that:

I don't see that there's any other way you can do it. I don't think you ever write about anyone other than yourself. You have to be moved by something, otherwise you couldn't write about it, so you have to find that point of identification. Take *Zombie* for instance. I don't know any psychopaths—at least I don't think I do— but I think what I identify with there is fact that the psychopath is very consumed by his obsession. He become very involved in his crimes, very involved with his victims and in the narratives he builds up around them. (560)

Joyce Carol Oates's inspiration is invoked in a way that molds her characters; she depends on facts to develop an ideal representation and paint a vivid image of her personae.

III.2. Joyce Carol Oates: The Storyteller

The 1820s and 1830s marked the birth of the short story in America. American writers introduced the short story to the world; they paved the way for the flourishing of short stories. Numerous masterpieces written during the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries have followed the structure of short stories. A few of the most memorable American short stories include: Washington Irving's *Rip Van Winkle* (1819) and *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* (1820), Edgar Allan Poe's *The Black Cat* (1843), Stephen Crane's *The Open Boat* (1897),

Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg Ohio* (1919), Ernest Hemingway's *Hills Like White Elephants* (1927).

American writers relied on short stories to project their perceptions of reality. For instance, Washington Irving raised underlying questions about American democracy, he is considered as the first short fiction writer to cover both the manner of telling and the subject matter of the story. In his work, *Letters to Brevoort* (1915), he comments:

I fancy much of what I value myself upon in writing escapes the observation of the great mass of my readers, who are intent more upon the story than the way it is told. For my part, I consider a story merely a frame on which to stretch my materials. It is the play of thought, sentiment, and language; the weaving in character, lightly, yet expressively delineated; the familiar and faithful exhibition of scenes of common life; and the half-concealed vein of humor that is often playing through the whole—these are among what I aim at, and upon which I felicitate myself in proportion as I think I succeed. (185-6)

While writing short stories, Washington Irving displays realistic issues in order to convey to his readers his perception of the world through the characters he creates, the language he uses, and the message he wants to convey. All of these details contribute to support the purpose Irving wants to accomplish.

In *A Companion to the American Short Story* (2010), Bendixen Alfred and Nagel James argue that: “the short story as Irving fashioned it was clearly a work of conscious literary artistry with vivid characters, a carefully delineated setting, and a mastery of stylistic nuance, and it was also a form ideally suited for the exploration of the meaning of democratic life in the newly formed United States” (6). The American short story, since its beginnings, has portrayed American society in a certain way. Moreover, Poe and Hawthorne made sure to shed light on the psychological patterns in the development of the characters by using a form of unusual psychology in such a way as to make the Gothic style an everlasting component of

American short story tradition. Although Edgar Allan Poe's motto is "Art for art's sake" and dismisses didacticism, critics view his literary works as a mirror to his surroundings.

Over and above this, the advent of realism, which predominated American fiction for most of the time following the Civil War, was the fundamental change in the development of the American short story during the second half of the nineteenth century. It marks one of the major characteristics of the American short story, which conveys a vivid image of dilemmas like violence.

Joyce Carol Oates is an American short story writer. She paved her way in the short story literary field with her outstanding storytelling. Oates shares in her book, *Telling Stories: An Anthology for Writers* (1998), that:

The love of storytelling—to hear stories, and to tell them—is universal in our species. Those with an apparent talent for writing. . . are not of a special breed but simply mirror the common human desire. [If] you have a natural talent for writing, and a love of the imagination, you risk lifelong deprivation if you fail to cultivate it as vigorously as you can. Write your own 'great American novel' . . . you're talented, you're intelligent, you have the driving passion, and you know as much as anyone about American life. Your story belongs uniquely to you. (6)

Oates passion for storytelling makes each one of her short stories unique in its own way. Throughout her prolific storytelling, whether it is the psychology of the characters, or the setting, Oates makes sure that she does not miss a spot. She tends to get influenced by the world in which she is living; she took inspiration from sleazy incidents in her own family's past while writing *The Gravedigger's Daughter* (2007). Being the realistic writer that she is, Oates reveals the bitter truths of her own family, just like she wrote about her abusive grandfather and her father's relationship in *My Father, My Fiction* (1989). However, her use

of personal family secrets can result in controversy, like when a victim's family vehemently protested the use of his story in "Landfill (Dear Husband: Stories)" (Tromble 1).

For Joyce Carol Oates short stories hold a special place, as it is mentioned in Greg Johnson's *Joyce Carol Oates: A Study of the Short Fiction* (1994): "Unlike most, I worked my way back to, or into, the short story as a prose work complete in itself" (131). Her short story is a whole, despite its economic language and restriction to a certain number of pages. Oates storytelling reveals her essence of imagination; she tackles violent issues through storytelling, which makes her the master of American short stories. Oates vision has always been concerned with the dark essence of humankind. For her, "the short story, as it is one of the manifestations of the human spirit, simply cannot be defined" (134).

In the process of writing her short stories Oates tends to emphasize on certain techniques in order to create a coherent and powerful tale. Oates first stylistic feature is psychological realism, she utilizes it as a way to uncover reality through the psychology of her characters. In Oates introduction to *Best New American Voices 2003*, she discusses what is meant by the term psychological realism:

By "psychological realism" we mean, usually, the establishment of a central consciousness through whose perspective a story is narrated or unfolds; our involvement in the story depends largely upon the plausibility and worth of this central consciousness. Do we believe in him or her? Is the fictional world convincing? Unlike fantasy, realism derives much of its power from a skillful evocation of time and place. (qtd.in. Tromble 3)

Oates psychological realism depicts realistic features about her characters and her storyline, while writing she tries to evoke this sense of portrayal of psychology in both her plot and structure in order to portray the picture of accurate and relatable stories. However, Oates

emphasize was on serious issues that took place in the American society. Oates deliberates in an interview named “An Interview with Joyce Carol Oates” with Leif Sjöberg that:

The short story is the form in which I have worked most with experimentation. Virtually each story is an attempt to do something different -consequently it is extremely difficult for me to speak of my short stories in general terms. They proceed from a basis of psychological realism; however, often they take place in an individual's mind. I have become more and more interested in recent years in developing stories that are really miniature novellas: stories that deal with a person's entire life, greatly condensed and focused. (283)

Joyce Carol Oates has a keen interest in short stories; her focus on writing short stories opens the door for her to focus on the entire life of her character, shedding light precisely on the utilization of psychological realism in order to project the interiors of the character's mind and to provide diversity in her storytelling line.

In her short stories, Oates tends to rely on the use of interior monologue to uncover her characters' inner thoughts. Guangwei Wu describes interior monologue in “A Study on Oates's Gothic Short Stories from the Perspective of Psychological Realism” as:

a direct and objective narrative approach to represent the content of character's psychology. It is borrowed from the drama where characters use interior monologue to reveal one's feelings and thoughts. Writers are not directly involved in their characters' psychology; instead, they let their characters speak their feelings out straightforwardly in first-person narrative. (85)

Oates unveils the psychological state of her characters through interior monologue, it helps the readers sympathize and have a better understanding of the context it is used in. It also gives a realistic support to the dilemma Oates wants to shed light on. For instance, in both

short stories, “The Museum of Dr. Moses” and “Suicide Watch,” each character’s inner thought reinforces the understanding of how the characters reacted towards violence and other social issues.

Moreover, Oates exerts dreamlike narrative and stream of consciousness in order to display the psychological figure of her characters and their way of thinking it can be rational or irrational just like in the case of Seth in “Suicide Watch”. Oates depend on such techniques to lay bare human psyche and how far humans thinking can go and what they are capable of in the processing of following such inner thoughts. Oates underpins the techniques of interior monologue, dream like narrative and stream of consciousness by the use of italics, ellipsis, dashes, and repetition which supports the psychological structure and plot of her short stories. In “Joyce Carol Oates: Transcribing the Enigmatic,” Tayana Tromble explains, “Oates’s use of italics, repetition, dashes and ellipses are discussed in depth to show how Oates uses them to evoke the psychological reality of her characters and oppose the notion of appearance to that of psychological experience” (1).

Another technique Joyce Carol Oates brings into her storytelling is non-linear narrative. In “Non-Linear Storytelling: Non-Linear Writing Tips and Examples,” non-linear narrative is defined as “a narrative technique in which the storyline is told out of chronological order. That can take many forms: by using flash-forwards, flashbacks, dream sequences, or foreshadowing, non-linear plotlines can mimic the recall of human memory, or weave in fantastical elements like time travel or clairvoyance” (masterclass). Oates applies it as a way to project different events; she takes her readers back and forth to establish the essence of the psychology of her characters and to further explain the plot of her stories. Non-linear narrative is exemplified in “Suicide Watch” and “The Museum of Dr. Moses”.

In her writing of short stories, Oates gives great importance to the format, and since she is restricted by a certain number of words and pages, she still produces extraordinary works. In

the afterword to *Sudden Fiction*, Oates states, “The form itself is sometimes mythical, sometimes merely anecdotal, but it ends with its final sentence, often with its final word. We who love prose fiction love these miniature tales both to read and to write because they are so finite; so highly compressed and highly charged” (246). Oates worships the short story because she is able to project a whole world in only few numbers of pages while tackling serious realistic issues.

In addition, Oates relies on gothic as a technique to showcase the mystery and suspense in her stories, and to project the dark side of reality. In *Gothic* by Fred Botting, he argues that:

Much of the writing linked to Gothic in the early part of the twentieth century is carried over from later nineteenth-century styles. Objects of anxiety take their familiar forms from earlier manifestations: cities, houses, archaic and occult pasts, primitive energies, deranged individuals and scientific experimentation are the places from which awesome and inhuman terrors and horrors are loosed on an unsuspecting world. (103)

As an American writer, Oates makes use of gothic as a means of projecting realistic dilemmas and imbuing her writing her writing with a sense of mystery and suspense. Oates usage of gothic manifests at different levels, from her setting to the message she tries to convey; she masters gothic in reflecting on violence.

Furthermore, Oates relies on grotesque as a technique in her storytelling. In “A Serious Writer”: Various Literary Techniques and Devices in the Selected Short Stories of Joyce Carol Oates from the 1960s and the Early 1970s,” Daniela Rydlová explains:

Oates herself is very difficult to categorize. Firstly, she is a contemporary writer who belongs to the tradition of female writers writing in the second part of the 20th century. Secondly, she uses techniques that are ascribed to American realism and naturalism but

her fiction has been discussed from the perspective of surrealism, the grotesque and the gothic as well. (16)

Joyce Carol Oates typically projects a more realistic image of America in the short stories that she writes. In “The Short Stories of Joyce Carol Oates,” Samuel F. Pickering Jr. explains that “over the past decade the world of Joyce Carol Oates’s stories has shifted from a comparatively objective, albeit oftentimes mysterious, reality to a subjective reality and a heavy emphasis on psychology” (225). In other words, subjective reality and psychology are the main features Oates preserve in her short stories.

Joyce Carol Oates is a perfectionist when it comes to shaping her storyline, her will to put the psychology of her characters under the spot light creates a dominate sense of understanding of reality, “Even on the occasions when the consummations in Miss Oates's stories occur offstage, the events so occupy the minds of the main characters” (Pickering 224). The labyrinth characteristic Oates extolls in her short stories is violence, for her portraying the vicious side of reality is something crucial. Pickering explains that: “Oates’s suburbanites live lives of quiet vulgarity, punctuated only by demons descending from without or rising from suppressed psychological urges within. As a result, the stories flow smoothly from breakdowns and rapes to suicide and murders” (221). The privilege that Oates offers lies within her exploration of the darker side of humans, she submerges deep in the psychological features of her characters in order to precisely paint the picture she wants to unfold to the world.

In an interview with Leif Sjöberg, Oates explains her perspective on her writing about violence, stating:

I don't accept charges that I am unduly violent in my writing. Most of my novels and stories are explorations of the contemporary world interpreted in a realist mode, from

what might be called a tragic and humanistic viewpoint. Tragedy always upholds the human spirit because it is an exploration of human nature in terms of its strengths. One simply cannot know strengths unless suffering, misfortune, and violence are explored quite frankly by the writer. (272)

Throughout her writing, Joyce Carol Oates focuses on violence in order to illuminate the other side of American society. To many, America is viewed as the land of opportunities, where anyone can achieve the American Dream. To Oates, however, American land is no exception; it still has its darker side, which she endeavors to portray. She explains to Cologne Brookes that: “Certainly, yes. I’m an American writer keenly attuned to the world in which I live, its seismic shudders and more subtle” (550).

In Conclusion, Oates is a master at depicting realistic issues in her writing. Violence has always been a part of her narratives, and she wants to move her readers and make them aware of the atrocities and gloomy atmosphere that prevail in America. Through the use of psychological realism, gothic, and grotesque, Oates successfully conveys a vivid picture of violence. On one hand, her psychological realism helps her in transcribing the human psyche, and on the other hand, her gothic and grotesque style opens the door for her to create a sense of mystery and suspense in order to captivate and move her readers.

Conclusion

Violence has long been an unfortunate reality in American society, permeating various aspects of life and leaving an indelible impact on its people. From street crime to mass shootings, from domestic abuse to systemic injustice, the manifestations of violence have shaped the collective consciousness of the nation. Hence, as a response to this social phenomenon, American authors have consistently turned to literature as a medium for reflection, critique, and exploration of violence within their society.

In the world of literature, it is fascinating to observe how writers approach this topic in their own distinctive manner. This is evident when examining the works of Toni Morrison, Richard Wright, and Chuck Palahniuk, who have all delved into the subject of violence in their writings. Others, such as Cormac McCarthy, who often explore the theme of violence by shedding light on its consequences in works like *Blood Meridian* and *No Country for Old Men*, vividly portray the brutal and unforgiving nature of violence.

Joyce Carol Oates is widely regarded as one of the most prominent authors who has embarked on a profound journey of addressing and examining violence through her literary works. Throughout her extensive career, Oates has fearlessly delved into the darkest corners of human nature, exploring the complexities and repercussions of violence in its various forms. Her compelling narratives often expose the raw emotions, psychological turmoil, and societal implications that accompany acts of violence, making her an unparalleled voice in the realm of literature. With unwavering dedication, Oates has consistently challenged readers to confront uncomfortable truths, provoking introspection and fostering a deeper understanding of the human condition within the context of violence.

Indeed, in her popular collection of short stories, *The Museum of Dr Moses: Tales of Mystery and Suspense*, Joyce Carol Oates examines the theme of violence, highlighting it as a

significant issue that demands attention. However, Oates goes beyond merely presenting violence as a theme; she explores the underlying factors that drive individuals to engage in such behavior. Specifically, she directs her focus towards family relationships, shedding light on the intricate dynamics that lead people to act violently. By delving into the motivations and circumstances surrounding violence, Oates emphasizes the importance of understanding not only the acts themselves but also the complex factors that contribute to them. Therefore, Oates's exploration of this theme underscores the importance of addressing violence as a serious societal concern that needs to be tackled.

It is worth mentioning that violence has undeniably shaped American history, tracing its existence from the earliest discovery of the American land to the bloodiest wars that were fought to the gun shootings that are dominating today's society. Recognizing the profound impact of violence, many writers have turned to literature as a powerful medium to confront this issue and portray its realistic complexities in works of art; as Flannery O'Connor in her short story, *A Good man is Hard To Find*, as well as the nonfiction novel, *In Cold Blood*, by Truman Capote. Such commitment to write about violence aids Americans to contemplate their truth and consider a new path to define themselves.

Joyce Carol Oates, a prolific writer, delves into the theme of violence and its profound impact on American society. Being a psychological realistic writer, she provides valuable insights into understanding her characters and their motivations, though she relies on adapting both gothic and grotesque elements to create an atmosphere of heightened intensity and emotional impact. By exaggerating certain aspects of violence or presenting them in a distorted manner, she amplifies their effect on the reader. One exemplary short story that exemplifies this is "Suicide Watch". Oates focuses on Seth's psychological state, leading him to commit the horrific act of killing his own son. By highlighting this distressing narrative, she sheds light on the prevalent issue of child abuse, which has become alarmingly pervasive

in American society. Through her storytelling, Joyce Carol Oates enables her readers to gain a deeper understanding of the grim realities plaguing American society.

“The Museum of Doctor Moses” is another short story that delves into the theme of violence, exploring its other forms. In this chilling tale, the narrative centers around a psychopathic doctor whose propensity for violence knows no bounds. The story unveils the doctor’s sinister obsession with collecting the remains of his victims, making his actions all the more gruesome and macabre. Through this narrative, the author highlights the disturbing reality of psychopathic individuals who inflict unimaginable harm on others.

Joyce Carol Oates is widely acknowledged as a true master of storytelling. With a deft hand, she profoundly explores the theme of violence that permeates her society. Remarkably, even while tackling such a weighty subject matter, Oates refuses to forsake her stylistic prowess. Instead, she artfully employs a multitude of narrative techniques, most notably psychological realism, to explore and confront this theme. Additionally, drawing from her deep understanding of gothic and grotesque elements, she weaves intricate tales that not only captivate readers but also effectively convey her invaluable messages.

To conclude, violence remains a pressing global dilemma, one that has profoundly shaped American society throughout its history and continues to exert its influence today. Comprehending the seriousness of this issue, the prolific writer Joyce Carol Oates humbly investigates into its depths in her captivating collection of stories. Through her effective narratives, Oates mirrors the stark realities of American society, unflinchingly portraying the profound impact of violence on individuals and how it affects in the others. By shedding light on these harrowing tales, she aims to provoke a collective awakening, emphasizing the urgent need to take action and break the damaging cycle of violence that persists within American society.

Work Cited

- . "Battle of Lexington and Concord Facts & Summary." *American Battlefield Trust*, 7 July 2017, www.battlefields.org/learn/revolutionary-war/battles/lexington-and-concord.
- . "Why Is Your Writing so Violent?" *Archive.nytimes.com*, 29 Mar. 1981, archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/books/98/07/05/specials/oates-violent.html.
- . *Joyce Carol Oates's "Slow": Sudden Detective Fiction?* LERMA E.A. 853, Aix-Marseille Université.
- . *The Museum of Dr. Moses*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2007.
- . *Violence in American Psycho. Forms and Function*. *Www.grin.com*, Forms And Function, Munich, GRIN Verlag, 2015, www.grin.com/document/704192.
- "Psychological Realism." *Poem Analysis*, 6 Dec. 2021, poemanalysis.com/genre/psychological-realism/.
- "American Revolution Facts." *American Battlefield Trust*, 30 Mar. 2017, www.battlefields.org/learn/articles/american-revolution-faqs#When%20did%20the%20American%20Revolution%20begin?
- "Columbus Exposed as Cruel Tyrant Who Tortured His Slaves | History News Network." *Historynewsnetwork.org*, historynewsnetwork.org/article/28513.
- "Edgar Allan Poe Quotes." *BrainyQuote*, www.brainyquote.com/authors/edgar-allan-poe-quotes#:~:text=Words%20have%20no%20power%20to.
- "Grotesque Genre in Victorian Era- Deifinition and Meaning in Literature." *Victorian Era*, victorian-era.org/victorian-authors/grotesque-definition-of-genre-meaning-in-literature.html.
- "Gun Violence in the United States: Truth and Facts." *Www.fmprc.gov.cn*, 16 Feb. 2023, www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjbxw/202302/t20230216_11025874.html.

- “In Cold Blood by Truman Capote, an Animated Summary.” *W*www.youtube.com,
www.youtube.com/watch?v=sJfT9h5zQ_k.
- “Joyce Carol Oates | Biography, Books and Facts.” *W*www.famousauthors.org,
www.famousauthors.org/joyce-carol-oates?fbclid=IwAR2OCt8IbNnn_-98BIZVlXoFuEstC6SNRDucrT8c_l8yCEQYDDXjAYjTSHw. Accessed 17 June 2023.
- “Joyce Carol Oates Writes her Characters from the inside OUT.” *The Morning Call*, 26 Nov. 1994, www.mcall.com/1994/11/26/joyce-carol-oates-writes-her-characters-from-the-inside-out/. Accessed 1 June 2023.
- “Literary Terms: Gothic, Grotesque, and the Uncanny - the Masters Review.” *The Masters Review*, 14 Oct. 2015, mastersreview.com/literary-terms-gothic-grotesque-and-the-uncanny/.
- “Review Of: Scars of Independence: America’s Violent Birth, by Holger Hoock.” *Regarp Book Blog*, 4 Feb. 2017, regarp.com/2017/02/04/scars-of-independence-americas-violent-birth-by-holger-hoock/. Accessed 23 May 2023.
- “Scars of Independence: America’s Violent Birth | Department of History | University of Pittsburgh.” *W*www.history.pitt.edu, www.history.pitt.edu/publication/scars-independence-americas-violent-birth.
- “The American Civil War (1861–1865)- Terminale- Anglais.” *MAXICOURS*,
www.maxicours.com/se/cours/the-american-civil-war-1861-1865---terminale--anglais/. Accessed 23 May 2023.
- “The Grotesque in Literature - Home for Fiction - Blog.” *Home for Fiction - Blog*, 8 Mar. 2018, blog.homeforfiction.com/2018/01/17/grotesque-in-literature/.
- “The Violence and Terror of Poe.” *W*www.lotsofessays.com,
www.lotsofessays.com/viewpaper/1682531.html. Accessed 25 Mar. 2023.

- “Why Columbus Day Courts Controversy.” *HISTORY*, 7 Oct. 2019, www.history.com/news/columbus-day-controversy?fbclid=IwAR16kcsT3ndqukEh93X1eWur7jI5KO_4Jd8v603vgFIgVJK2fjE3bRR3sIY.
- American Battlefield Trust. “American Revolution — FAQs.” *American Battlefield Trust*, 17 July 2018, www.battlefields.org/learn/articles/american-revolution-faqs.
- American Battlefield Trust. “Battle of Lexington and Concord Facts & Summary.” *American Battlefield Trust*, 7 July 2017, www.battlefields.org/learn/revolutionary-war/battles/lexington-and-concord.
- Amnesty International. “Gun Violence - Key Facts.” *Amnesty.org*, Amnesty International, www.amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/arms-control/gun-violence/.
- Araújo, Susana, and Joyce Carol Oates. “Joyce Carol Oates Reread: Overview and Interview with the Author.” *Critical Survey*, vol. 18, no. 3, 2006, pp. 92–105, www.jstor.org/stable/41556184. Accessed 17 June 2023.
- Araújo, Susana. “Space, Property and the Psyche: Violent Topographies in Early Oates Novels.” *Studies in the Novel*, vol. 38, no. 4, 2006, pp. 397–413, www.jstor.org/stable/29533782. Accessed 12 June 2023.
- Aster, Hannah. “The Two Kinds of Violence in Literature.” *Shortform Books*, 9 Apr. 2021, www.shortform.com/blog/violence-in-literature/.
- Barnhorst, Amy. “Hate Is Not a Mental Illness | Psychology Today.” *Www.psychologytoday.com*, 9 Nov. 2018, www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/in-crisis/201811/hate-is-not-mental-illness.
- Bendixen, Alfred, and James Nagel. *A Companion to the American Short Story*. 1st ed. Wiley, 2010.

Bobby. "In Cold Blood: A True Account of the Clutter Family Murders – Tagari.com."

Www.tagari.com, 14 Nov. 2022, www.tagari.com/in-cold-blood-a-true-account-of-the-clutter-family-murders/.

Botting, Fred. *Gothic*. London ; New York, Routledge, 2004.

Campos, Maria and Ângela Barbosa Franco. "VIOLENCE IN "A GOOD MAN IS HARD TO FIND": THE FACES OF MARGINALITY." 2007.

Chen, Jie. "The Frontiers of Society." *Science and Technology*, vol. 3, no. ISSN 2616-7433, pp. 77–81, francis-press.com/uploads/papers/AAK7B6kdOPWW8QaR2Y4jVnztGzErXrmZY8VzxlJX.pdf, <https://doi.org/10.25236/FSST.2021.030412>.

Chicago Commission on Race Relations. *The Negro in Chicago*. University of Chicago Press, 1922.

Cleveland Clinic. "Stockholm Syndrome: What It Is, Symptoms & How to Treat." *Cleveland Clinic*, 14 Feb. 2022, my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/22387-stockholm-syndrome#:~:text=Stockholm%20syndrome%20is%20a%20coping.

CNN, Alicia Lee. "Why Christopher Columbus Wasn't the Hero We Learned about in School." *CNN*, 12 June 2020, edition.cnn.com/2020/06/12/us/christopher-columbus-slavery-disease-trnd/index.html.

Coale, Samuel Chase. "Psychic Visions and Quantum Physics: Oates's Big Bang and the Limits of Language." *Studies in the Novel*, vol. 38, no. 4, 2006, pp. 427–439, www.jstor.org/stable/29533784. Accessed 17 June 2023.

Cologne-Brookes, Gavin, and Joyce Carol Oates. "Written Interviews and a Conversation with Joyce Carol Oates." *Studies in the Novel*, vol. 38, no. 4, 2006, pp. 547–568, www.jstor.org/stable/29533792. Accessed 12 June 2023.

- Cologne-Brookes, Gavin. "Introduction: Humility, Audacity and the Novels of Joyce Carol Oates." *Studies in the Novel*, vol. 38, no. 4, 2006, pp. 385–394, www.jstor.org/stable/29533780. Accessed 17 June 2023.
- Craven, Avery. "Coming of the War between the States an Interpretation." *The Journal of Southern History*, vol. 2, no. 3, Aug. 1936, p. 303, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2191911>.
- Creighton, Joanne V, and Kori A. Binette. "'What Does It Mean to Be a Woman?': The Daughter's Story in Oates's Novels." *Studies in the Novel*, vol. 38, no. 4, 2006, pp. 440–456, www.jstor.org/stable/29533785.
- Cristina, Maria, et al. *Violence in "a GOOD MAN IS HARD to FIND": The faces of Marginality*. No. 1, 2007, pp. 216–229, www.educadores.diaadia.pr.gov.br/modules/mydownloads_01/visit.php?cid=43&lid=4309#:~:text=In%20%E2%80%9CA%20Good%20Man%20Is%20Hard%20to%20Find%2C%E2%80%9D%20the. Accessed 15 June 2023.
- Davis, David Brion. "Violence in American Literature." *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 364, no. 1, Mar. 1966, pp. 28–36, <https://doi.org/10.1177/000271626636400104>.
- Davis, David Brion. *Homicide in American Fiction, 1789-1860*. 1957.
- Desmond, John F. "Violence and the Christian Mystery: A Way to Read Flannery O'Connor." *Literature and Belief* 17.1-2 .1997.
- Douglas, Matus. "10 Elements of Gothic Literature." *Pen and the Pad*, 2011, penandthepad.com/10-elements-gothic-literature-8104633.html.
- Douglass H. Thomson, Jack G. Voller and Frederick S. Frank, eds. *Gothic Writers*. London: Greenwood Press, 2002.
- Duke, Selwyn. "Killing Columbus: Seeking the "Undiscovery" of America." *New American* (08856540) 33.19 (2017): 33-38. Academic Search Complete. Web.

Evans, Robert C. "Aspects of the Grotesque in Franz Kafka's the Metamorphosis."

ResearchGate, Oct. 2015,

www.researchgate.net/publication/282661070_Aspects_of_the_Grotesque_in_Franz_Kafka's_The_Metamorphoses.

Flannery O'Connor, et al. *Mystery and Manners : Occasional Prose*. New York, Noonday Press, Printing, 1969.

Fowler, Doreen. "Flannery O'Connor's Productive Violence." *Arizona Quarterly: A Journal of American Literature, Culture, and Theory*, vol. 67, no. 2, 2011, pp. 127–154, <https://doi.org/10.1353/arq.2011.0011>.

Frevert, Marianne. "*The Arsenal of Grace*": *Understanding the Role of Violence and Redemption in Flannery O'Connor's the Violent Bear It Away*. 2012.

Gabor, Thomas. *Confronting Gun Violence in America*. Cham, Springer International Publishing, 2016.

George, Plimpton. "The Story behind a Nonfiction Novel." *Archive.nytimes.com*, 16 Jan. 1966, archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/books/97/12/28/home/capote-interview.html?_r=2&fbclid=IwAR0T4KwnHZfY9m7cps2Jwckt7zPvhM_s0s9StXNIwINMvRgWDRrD0s0REhg.

Hagist, Don N. "Scars of Independence: America's Violent Birth." *Journal of the American Revolution*, 30 May 2017, allthingsliberty.com/2017/05/scars-independence-americas-violent-birth/.

Hagist, Don N. "Scars of Independence: America's Violent Birth." *Journal of the American Revolution*, 30 May 2017, allthingsliberty.com/2017/05/scars-independence-americas-violent-birth/.

Hook, Holger. *Scars of Independence : America's Violent Birth*. New York, Crown, 2017.

- Horspool, David. "Ed Gein: The Skin-Suit-Wearing Serial Killer Who Inspired Psycho's Norman Bates." *A&E*, 10 July 2017, www.aetv.com/real-crime/ed-gein-the-skin-suit-wearing-serial-killer-who-inspired-psychos-norman-bates?fbclid=IwAR3KZKeMq8qeq0Qk4FaCWhb3-Gauwk8XuzDzfeoIxmLPSOUcrOKfU_EeawU.
- Hutcheon, Linda. *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms*. Urbana, University Of Illinois Press, 2000.
- Imbrizi, Jaquelina Maria, and Adriana Rodrigues Domingues. "Narrativas Oníricas E a Partilha de Experiências (Extra)Ordinárias." *Preprints.scielo.org*, 29 Jan. 2021, preprints.scielo.org/index.php/scielo/preprint/view/1741. Accessed 2 June 2023.
- Irving, Washington. *The Letters of Washington Irving to Henry Brevoort*. 2 vols. Ed. George S. Hellman. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1915.
- Jackson, Kellie Carter. "The Story of Violence in America." *American Academy of Arts & Sciences*, 2022, www.amacad.org/publication/story-violence-america.
- James, William. *The Sentiment of Rationality*. London: Dent, Selected Papers on Philosophy, 1961.
- Joanna, Stolarek. *Sociological and Psychological Aspects of Crime in Truman Capote's in Cold Blood*.
- Johnson, Greg. *Invisible Writer : A Biography of Joyce Carol Oates*. New York, Plume Book, 1994.
- Johnson, Greg. *Joyce Carol Oates*. 1994.
- Jude, Webre. "Flannery O'Connor: Literature, Violence, and the American Gothic." *Brooklyn Institute for Social Research*, 15 Sept. 2021, thebrooklyninstitute.com/items/courses/new-york/flannery-oconnor/. Accessed 25 Mar. 2023.

- Keeley, Graham. "Columbus Exposed as Iron-Fisted Tyrant Who Tortured His Slaves." *The Independent*, 21 July 2006, www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/columbus-exposed-as-ironfisted-tyrant-who-tortured-his-slaves-6094870.html.
- Kennedy, Patrick. "What Is Psychological Realism in Writing?" *ThoughtCo*, 20 Sept. 2019, www.thoughtco.com/psychological-realism-2207838.
- Kowalewski, Michael. *Deadly Musings*. Princeton University Press, 26 July 1993.
- LeBlanc, Paul. "One Nation, under Gun Violence: America Tops 100 Mass Shootings in 2023 | CNN Politics." *CNN*, 6 Mar. 2023, edition.cnn.com/2023/03/06/politics/america-mass-shootings-2023-gun-violence/index.html.
- Leifer, Michael. "The Role of Violence in the American Literary Canon." *The Observer*, 2 Feb. 2021, [fordhamobserver.com/60340/recent/opinions/the-role-of-violence-in-the-american-literary-canon/](https://www.fordhamobserver.com/60340/recent/opinions/the-role-of-violence-in-the-american-literary-canon/). Accessed 26 Mar. 2023.
- Lisa.R, Schneider. *The Gothic in the Fiction of Joyce Carol Oates*.
- Lloyd-Smith, Allan. *American Gothic Fiction*. A&C Black, 8 Oct. 2004.
- Lopez, Barry. *The Rediscover of North America*. Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1990.
- Lopez, Barry. *The Rediscovery of North America*. Vintage, 1 Sept. 1992.
- Lyotard, Jean-François. *The Postmodern Condition : A Report on Knowledge*. Minneapolis, Minn. Univ. Of Minnesota Press, 1979.
- Mary Kathryn Grant. *The Tragic Vision of Joyce Carol Oates*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1978.
- MasterClass. "Non-Linear Story: Non-Linear Writing Tips and Examples." *MasterClass*, 9 Sept. 2021, www.masterclass.com/articles/non-linear-writing-tips-and-examples.
- Matthews, Dylan. "9 Reasons Christopher Columbus Was a Murderer, Tyrant, and Scoundrel." *Vox*, 13 Oct. 2014, www.vox.com/2014/10/13/6957875/christopher-

columbus-murderer-tyrant-scoundrel?fbclid=IwAR1HMgy9Thqn-cvqE4D70JOHTQWviQjuJLG71uUzcDvuberOFtUpdhQ1Xo4. Accessed 23 May 2023.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China. "Gun Violence in the United States: Truth and Facts." *Www.fmprc.gov.cn*, 16 Feb. 2023, www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjbxw/202302/t20230216_11025874.html.

Neuhaus, Till. *Violence in American Psycho. Forms and Function*. *Www.grin.com*, 2015, www.grin.com/document/704192.

Novak, Maxmillian E. "Gothic Fiction and the Grotesque." *Novel: A Forum on Fiction* 13.1 .1979.

Oates, Joyce Carol . "*An Eye for Detail: The Lessons of Balzac, Flaubert and O'Connor.*" *the Writer* (2005).

Oates, Joyce Carol .*Transformations of Self: An Interview with Joyce Carol Oates*. In the *Ohio Review* Volume XV, Number 1, Fall, 1973.

Oates, Joyce Carol. *Telling Stories : An Anthology for Writers*. New York, W.W. Norton, 1998.

Oates, Joyce Carol. *The Faith of a Writer: Life, Craft, Art*. New York: Ecco, 2003.

Parker, Theodore. *A Letter to the People of the United States Touching the Matter of Slavery*. 1848.

Perttula, Irma. "The Grotesque : Concept and Characteristics". *The Grotesque and the Unnatural*. Edited by Markku Salmela, and Jarkko Toikkanen. Amherst : Cambria Press, 2011.

Pickering, Samuel F. "The Short Stories of Joyce Carol Oates." *The Georgia Review*, vol. 28, no. 2, 1974, pp. 218–226, www.jstor.org/stable/41397080. Accessed 12 June 2023.

Resnick, Phillip J. "Filicide in the United States." *Indian Journal of Psychiatry*, vol. 58, no.

Suppl 2, 1 Dec. 2016, pp. S203–S209,

www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5282617/, [https://doi.org/10.4103/0019-](https://doi.org/10.4103/0019-5545.196845)

5545.196845.

Ryan, Cathy. "Villain Columbus | Christopher Columbus : The Good, the Bad and the Ugly."

U.osu.edu, u.osu.edu/posterchildchristophercolumbus/villain-columbus/.

Rydlová, Daniela. "'a Serious Writer : Various Literary Techniques and Devices in the

Selected Short Stories of Joyce Carol Oates from the 1960s and the Early 1970s."

Dspace.cuni.cz, 4 Sept. 2018, dspace.cuni.cz/handle/20.500.11956/103488. Accessed

12 June 2023.

Salahieh, Holly Yan,CarollAlvarado,AmandaWatts,MichelleWatson,Nouran. "The Gunman

Who Killed 3 Michigan State Students and Wounded 5 May Have Planned to Attack

New Jersey Schools, Police Say, as Heroes Helped Classmates Flee." *CNN*, 14 Feb.

2023, [edition.cnn.com/2023/02/14/us/michigan-state-university-shots-fired-](http://edition.cnn.com/2023/02/14/us/michigan-state-university-shots-fired-tuesday/index.html)

[tuesday/index.html](http://edition.cnn.com/2023/02/14/us/michigan-state-university-shots-fired-tuesday/index.html).

Sally J, Keglovits. "In Cold Blood Revisited: A Look Back at an American Crime." *United*

States Courts, June 2004, [www.uscourts.gov/federal-probation-journal/2004/06/cold-](http://www.uscourts.gov/federal-probation-journal/2004/06/cold-blood-revisited-look-back-american-crime)

[blood-revisited-look-back-american-crime](http://www.uscourts.gov/federal-probation-journal/2004/06/cold-blood-revisited-look-back-american-crime).

Schneider, Lisa R. *The Gothic in the Fiction of Joyce Carol Oates*. 1982.

Scofield, Martin. *The Cambridge Introduction to the American Short Story*. Cambridge, U.K.,

Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Shapard, Robert, and James Thomas, eds. *Sudden Fiction : American Short-Short Stories*. Salt

Lake City : Gibbs M. Smith, Inc. 1986.

Sheehan-Dean, Aaron. "The Violence of the Civil War in Comparative Perspective." Oxford

Research Encyclopedia of American History. 15. Oxford University Press. Date of

access 23 May. 2023,

<https://oxfordre.com/americanhistory/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199329175.001.0001/acrefore-9780199329175-e-236>.

Sherwood Anderson, Winesburg, Ohio (B. Huebsch, 1919; New York: The Viking Press, Inc., 1958, a Viking Compass Book), P. 25.

Sjoberg, Leif, and Joyce Carol Oates. "An Interview with Joyce Carol Oates." *Contemporary Literature*, vol. 23, no. 3, 1982, p. 267, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1208155>

Sophia, Leonard. *Journalism as Artistic Expression: The Critical Response to Truman Capote's in Cold Blood*. 2015.

THE CHICAGO COMMISSION ON RACE RELATIONS. *The Negro in Chicago*. The University of Chicago, 1922.

THOMAS III, WILLIAM G. *On Violence and the American Civil War, Part I – William G. Thomas III*. 12 May 2008, railroads.unl.edu/blog/?p=23. Accessed 23 May 2023.

Thomas, Fahy. *Understanding Truman Capote*. Columbia, South Carolina, The University of South Carolina, 2014.

Thomson, Douglass H., Jack G. Voller, and Frederick S. Frank, eds. *Gothic Writers*. London: Greenwood Press, 2002.

Tremlett, Giles. "Lost Document Reveals Columbus as Tyrant of the Caribbean." *The Guardian*, The Guardian, 7 Aug. 2006, www.theguardian.com/world/2006/aug/07/books.spain.

Tromble, Tanya. "Fiction in Fact and Fact in Fiction in the Writing of Joyce Carol Oates." *Bearing Witness: Joyce Carol Oates Studies*, vol. 2, 2015, www.academia.edu/75067688/Fiction_in_Fact_and_Fact_in_Fiction_in_the_Writing_of_Joyce_Carol_Oates. Accessed 1 June 2023.

- Tromble, Tanya. "Joyce Carol Oates: Fantastic, New Gothic and Inner Realities." *Journal of the Short Story in English. Les Cahiers de La Nouvelle*, no. 62, 1 June 2014, journals.openedition.org/jsse/1433.
- Tromble, Tanya. "Joyce Carol Oates: Transcribing the Enigmatic." *Résonances, Revue Bilingue Français-Anglais et Pluridisciplinaire Sur Les Femmes.*, 2020. Ffhal-03213705.
- Tromble, Tanya. *Joyce Carol Oates's "Slow" : Sudden Detective Fiction ?* LERMA E.A. 853, Aix-Marseille Université. <https://hal-amu.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-03968607/document>
- Wu, Guangwei. "A Study on Oates's Gothic Short Stories from the Perspective of Psychological Realism-Haunted: Tales of the Grotesque as an Example." *Proceedings of the 2016 International Conference on Humanity, Education and Social Science*, 2016, <https://doi.org/10.2991/ichess-16.2016.19>. Accessed 19 Oct. 2022.
- Yousif, Nadine. "Why Number of US Mass Shootings Has Risen Sharply." *BBC News*, 26 Jan. 2023, www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-64377360.
- Yuan, Yuan. "Introduction : Dream and Narrative Space." *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts*, vol. 7, no. 4 (28), 1996, pp. 1–3, www.jstor.org/stable/43308264. Accessed 12 June 2023.

Résumé

Cette thèse examine le thème de la violence dans une sélection des histoires courtes de la collection *The Museum of Dr. Moses: Tales of Mystery and Suspense* (2007) de l'écrivaine américaine Joyce Carol Oates. Ce travail illuminera l'esthétique sombre de Joyce Carol Oates lors de l'écriture des histoires courtes; ainsi que la façon dont elle aborde le sujet de la violence avec un sens du mystère et du suspense. Les histoires courtes choisies pour cette étude sont "The Museum of Dr.Moses" et "Suicide Watch". De plus, cette thèse tente de mettre la lumière sur les problèmes sociaux que chaque histoire dépeint avec acuité. Par conséquent, les histoires courtes sélectionnées seront analysées à travers les lentilles de la théorie du réalisme psychologique ainsi que du gothique et du grotesque afin de démontrer la psyché humaine et l'essence de la violence dans la société américaine. À travers une analyse des histoires courtes sélectionnées, cette étude démontre la détermination de Joyce Carol Oates à sensibiliser à la prévalence de la violence en Amérique.

ملخص

تتناول هذه الأطروحة موضوع العنف في مجموعة مختارة من القصص القصيرة من مجموعة متحف الدكتور موسى: حكايات الغموض والتشويق (2007) للكاتبة الأمريكية جويس كارول أوتس. سوف يسلط هذا العمل الضوء على الجمال المظلم لجويس كارول أوتس عند كتابة القصص القصيرة ؛ وكذلك الطريقة التي تتعامل بها مع موضوع العنف بشعور من الغموض والتشويق. القصص القصيرة المختارة لهذه الدراسة هي "متحف الدكتور موسى" و " ساعة الانتحار". بالإضافة إلى ذلك ، تحاول هذه الأطروحة إلقاء الضوء على المشكلات الاجتماعية التي تصورها كل قصة بحددها. لذلك ، سيتم تحليل القصص القصيرة المختارة من خلال عدسات نظرية الواقعية النفسية وكذلك القوطية و غرتسك من أجل إظهار النفس البشرية وجوهر العنف في المجتمع الأمريكي. من خلال تحليل قصص قصيرة مختارة ، توضح هذه الدراسة تصميم جويس كارول أوتس على زيادة الوعي بانتشار العنف في أمريكا.