



# **Psychological Trauma's of Joyce Carol Oates's Heroines from the Selected Novels**

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### **Abstract:**

By examining the psychological traumas of Oates's heroines, the present research intends to excavate the difficulties of women in a first-world nation like the USA. Women are indeed portrayed as a satisfier whose primary objective are to satisfy the desires of the so-called first sex. Men remains a predator to her and he harrasses them both psychologically and physiologically to satisfy his greed and lust. This article intends to elucidates how men want women to be a subordinative thing and they find it hard to treat her as an equal being. Also, the present research intends to excavate the consequences women face as an outcome of this oppression. Also, it illustrates how men use their physical supremacy to harass women rather than protect them from other problems.

### **Key words:**

psychological, physiological, harass, subordinative, conflict

**Introduction:**

**“The conflict between the will to deny horrible events and the will to proclaim them aloud is the central dialectic of psychological trauma”**

**- Judith Lewis Herman**

Psychological trauma is a condition that engulfs an individual emotionally, physically, and socially. This condition is harmful and even ends a person's life tragically, and the situation occurs when a person gets forced physically and psychologically to the extent. Based on facts and reality, women remain victims of this mental and physical oppression. In general, men to please their needs and lusts, unleash their physical power over women and harass them, by rejecting their emotions and wishes. According to men, women are expressionless, free from desires and, their only aim is to satisfy the wishes of their family. The dominance of males over women supports the claim that God created mankind with flaws. Because of this defect, women are compelled to continue being physically and socially subservient to males. Men are compelled by this superiority to assume a more prominent role in society and to portray it as patriarchal.

To support this argument men preferably use their strengths to subordinate women in all aspects and ways. For instance, to prove this argument during the colonization era women from the Black community were traded as sex slaves to the European Nations, and throughout history, women remained a thing rather than being portrayed as object. She is emotionless and has no desire for anything. Like other nations, the United States of America shares the same scenario as well. During the progression of the Feminine Movement in America, Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* got the attention of various nations, and a liberation movement took place for emancipating women. Among the feminist writers, Joyce Carol Oates is one of the most dominating figures in women's liberation and emancipation.

Oates's writing predominantly relies on her childhood and neighbouring experiences. She is one of few to talk about the real hardship of women rather than relying on various feminist movements in America. Even though she never called herself a feminist, Oates's writing predominantly projects the difficulties of women during the post-war period in America. Her fabulous portrayal quality excavates the hidden dark nature of the American Patriarchal Society. One may question, what kind of suppression a woman could face in an independent country like America. Like most of the other nations, America has its history of degrading women mentally and physically. Joseph Heller an American writer, who is a dominant figure in war literature projects how men use women as a steroid to soften their wounds in the battle in his masterpiece *Catch 22*. Unlike most other writers Oates, takes characters from her real life and throws light on the suppressiveness imposed upon women in a nation like America.

### Physiological wounds of Karen Herz:

To continue the argument, women in society get oppressed in various scenarios and ways. For instance, they get subjugated by the family, by society, and even in working circumstances as well. Moreover, Oates pictures various incidents that have no literal meaning about the subjugation imposed on women. In Joyce Carol Oates's book *With Shuddering Fall*, a heroine by the name of Karen Herz experiences physical harassment from Shar, which lends credence to this claim. He ultimately forced Karen to make love to him to satisfy his yearning for her. He beats her father with a rifle butt and steals her virginity in an unexplained but dehumanizing manner. He even had savage sex with her that caused her to miscarry. Karen is forced to abandon her family and begin a new life with Shar to protect them from the evil man. Karen enters the Shar dungeon, which is considerably harsher than previously, in the hopes that her new life will be better. Because Shar gets more violent towards Karen as the day progresses. Shar is a fantastic representation of the male-dominated culture, which regards itself as the 'First Sex'. Towards the end of the plot, the reader can witness the traumatized condition of Karen. After long days of struggle and harassment, faced under the hands of Shar Karen eventually made her way back to her family after spending a few months in a mental health facility; the novel closes with Karen asking for forgiveness at Mass.

Before Shar's frenzy father and daughter stepped back. Karen could feel her father's trembling. She wanted to embrace him, protect him against Shar's violence, against the shame of what she had done, if only in her father's imagination. And I never asked her to come along, Shar said..... Herz you try to tell me what to do, you try to tell me a thing, I swear I'll kill you! I'll wring your buzzardly neck till your eyes pop out! (WSF, Oates, 61)

Karen from the very beginning of the plot has been dismantled by the male patriarchal society. For instance, even though she is seventeen her father holds the key to her freedom. Later Shar takes control over her and makes her life more miserable than before. She gets traumatized at every point of her life. Finally, towards the end of the story, the reader can see her spending time in the Asylum. Primarily, the present research intends to bring out the scenarios that men capitalize on to oppress women and also intends to excavate the reason behind the second-class citizenship in society.

### Psychological wounds of Clara:

To uphold the investigation, another character that got scrutinized by society can be seen in the plot *A Garden of Earthly Delight*. Clara is the central character of the plot, who was forced to live like a parasite in a male-dominant society. Clara, the daughter of a drunkard struggles to catch a clod on the Earth but eventually falls to the patriarchal society towards the end of the plot. Her sustenance to raise her child tragically ends her life. Every step of Clara Walpole's journey from extreme poverty to Curt Revere's affluent house is marked by violence. Her admission into Revere's house is like her entrance into a grave. For her, this is the start of the end.

Clara experiences cruelty throughout her whole life, and the only way she can make it through is by subduing those who are stronger than her. To establish a name for herself in a patriarchal culture, she must either overcome or make use of her friends Rosie, Lowry and her sister Sharleen. Clara might be seen as a representation of a pitiful person as a result of the impacts of violence on people.

Her rejection of Lowry, who comes back to Clara acknowledging his errors and desiring to be back together with her and his son Swan, is a significant event that clarifies the phrase above. However, Clara rejects Lowry to protect Swan's identity and herself in society. In the book, this is the first instance that she fails. You may see her denial as a mother's devotion to her kid. ... order to raise her kid to be a well-respected member of the community. However, all of her hardships and sacrifices are for naught by the book's conclusion, much to her dismay.

In the narrative, Clara's obsession with men makes her a failure as a woman. because she gave herself over to men's dominance, she abuses Revere's affection and exploits him to support her financial situation. By preventing the disclosure that Swan is Lowry's son and not his boy, Clara betrays Revere. This incident highlights Clara's shortcomings as a wife. Clara conceals all of Swan's errors to protect his standing. She even conceals the facts about Swan's murderous deed. A common understanding is that maternal love is unfalsifiable, and Clara's love for her son Swan is no different. No parent raises their child to commit crimes. However, Swan ends because Clara's overindulgence in love turned her into a bad mother and sent her son down the wrong road. Even though Clara possesses negativity in general, all her behaviours are an outcome of the bitter experience that she came across. Throughout the plot, Clara remains a toy in the hands of the male-sophisticated society.

### **Oppressiveness of Natasha Romanov:**

Followingly, the article proceeds with Natasha Romanov the central character in *Expensive People*. Natasha Romanov is a successful novel writer, who shows no kind of emotion towards her family. Her attitude towards the family is an outcome of the oppressiveness in her mind due to some bitter experience in a patriarchal society. The scar in the mind of Natasha traumatized her and forced her to be emotionless in the entire plot.

The entire story revolves around Natasha's exploitation of her son and husband in her pursuit of sensual pleasure. Richard never felt her mother's kind touch; in the book, his father was his only comforter. For example, she asserts her dominance by having her son speak in French at a reception hosted by the Aristocratic society. Richard is turned into a puppet by Natasha. She never gave her son's wants any consideration, which ultimately caused her neglect to be projected onto the family's wish. The lack of emotional connection between Richard and Natasha reveals the distance in their relationship.

Natasha's passion for purchasing a Fernwood home is the ideal illustration of her desire for social status. She even bans Mr. Elwood Everett and Richard from entering her chamber, demonstrating the isolation Nada creates for herself. People always view Natasha as a suspicious person who frequently keeps things from them.



Nada's need for privacy and recognition in society drives her to take a meandering route that ultimately results in a horrible death. Because of her conceit and materialistic mindset, Natashya's affection for her kid is restricted. Richard contradicts himself by displaying no feelings for Nada, which ultimately represents his mother's developing animosity.

She was intoxicated with it. She was intoxicated with our house – with her new expensive furniture, her marble-topped table, and her exquisite bookshelf, given to her by father's great-aunt and worth oh let me tell you! – quite a bit. She was intoxicated with expensive tidbits ginger had unfrozen not half an hour before, she was intoxicated with her white, white dress. (Expensive People, Oates, 46)

Because of her attitude towards the family and her desire for fortune, Natashya was brutally killed by Richard. Due to her struggle to find her place in society and her desire to be given precedence above men, Natashya ends her life tragically. Additionally, Richard's choice to murder her mother demonstrates the dominance of men over women in society.

### **Conclusion:**

Oates clarifies the oppression that women in America endure via her portrayal of female characters. The patriarchal society traumatizes each of her female characters. For example, Karen suffers from mental oppression after being physically abused by Shar. Clara also loses her children and husband after the story as a result of her survival quest. She eventually passes away in the asylum. Likewise, Natashya loses her life while searching for her identity in a male-dominant society. Even though centuries progressed the condition of women is still in a state of crisis. Oates's portrayal quality culls out the psychological traumas experienced by women in a first world like America. The present research article concludes by expecting a better future for the women in a patriarchal society.



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