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ASPECTS OF THE GOTHIC  
IN THE NOVELS OF  
JOYCE CAROL OATES

DIPLOMA PAPER

AUTHOR: Kamil Pinta

SUPERVISOR: Michael Kaylor, M.A., Ph.D.

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PRVKY GOTICKÉHO ROMÁNU  
V DÍLE JOYCE CAROL OATESOVÉ

DIPLOMOVÁ PRÁCE

Autor práce: Kamil Pinta

Vedoucí práce: Michael Kaylor, M.A., Ph.D.

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## **Abstract:**

The aim of this diploma paper was to trace the influence of the Gothic novel in the novels of Joyce Carol Oates, and to describe how and to what purpose she uses the extinct genre.

The theoretical introduction analyzes the most important Gothic novels of the eighteenth and the nineteenth century with the focus on the breach between the past and the future - the primitive and the civilized - as reflected in dramatic settings, demonic villains and fantastic plots. After a short overview of the development of Gothic fiction and cinematography over the twentieth century, the attention moves to Oates and her contributions to the genre.

The central part of the paper is divided in two parts, each for one of the two Oates's novellas narrated in the first person by a serial killer. The first is Bobbie Gotteson in *The Triumph of the Spider Monkey*, inspired by Charles Manson and the monster in *Frankenstein*. The second is Quentin P\_ in *Zombie*, based on Jeffrey Dahmer and Count Dracula. Each chapter is further divided into three subchapters: the first shortly introduces the real-life models, the second explores their motivations and the motivations of their literary counterparts, and the third looks for analogies between the fates of these criminals and the mission of the artist/author.

The conclusion summarizes the findings and values Oates's achievement in the wider context of the psychological novel: comparing her serial killers to the murderers in Dostoyevsky.

## Souhrn:

Cílem této diplomové práce bylo prozkoumat vliv gotického románu na díla Joyce Carol Oatesové a popsat, jak a za jakým účelem využívá autorka prvky tohoto zaniklého žánru.

Teoretický úvod se nejprve soustředí na nevýznamnější gotické romány osmnáctého a devatenáctého století, zejména na rozkol mezi minulostí a budoucností symbolicky vyjádřený v dramatických prostředích, fantastických zápletkách i postavách démonických zloduchů. Po krátkém přehledu gotické literatury a filmu dvacátého století se pozornost obrací k Oatesové a jejím příspěvkům k žánru.

Ústřední část této práce se dělí na dvě části: každá z nich se zabývá jednou ze dvou knih Joyce Carol Oatesové vyprávěných v první osobě sériovým vrahem. Předobrazem hlavního hrdiny novely *The Triumph of the Spider Monkey*, Bobbieho Gottesona, byl Charles Manson a Frankensteinovo monstrum. Quentin P\_ v novele *Zombie* je fiktivním dvojčetem Jeffreyho Dahmera a hraběte Drákuly. Obě kapitoly se dále dělí na tři podkapitoly: první krátce představuje skutečné vrahy, druhá porovnává jejich motivace s motivacemi jejich literárních předchůdců a následovníků a třetí hledá souvislost mezi osudy těchto zločinců a posláním umělce/autora.

Závěrečná část shrnuje předchozí poznatky a hodnotí význam díla Joyce Carol Oatesové v širším kontextu psychologického románu: srovnáním jejích fiktivních zabijáků s postavami vrahů v románech Dostojevského.

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## 1. THE PREMONITION

It can be argued that the Gothic novel in its pure form exhausted itself even faster than the fevered visions of the Romantics of which it was a satellite. As a genre it was mocked already in its heyday. Even Jane Austen in her *Northanger Abbey*, written in 1803, less than forty years after Horace Walpole's genre-establishing *The Castle of Otranto* was published, parodied the shallow sensationalism of such works. But although the original genre was soon depleted - as perhaps every genre in its pure form is bound to - the trace it left in the history of art has been so influential that for some post-modern theoreticians the term "Gothic" has become "a new critical idiom" (Botting). In the popular culture, the rather vague label is also applied to horror movies and certain sub-genres of hard music; shortened to "goth" it even became an independent-lifestyle trademark sold to teenagers on MTV.

In America, short stories and novels of Gothic sensibility have always comprised a substantial part of the literary production, and many of them entered the literary canon: beginning with Washington Irving's *Sleepy Hollow* and continuing through the works of Edgar Allan Poe, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Henry James, or Howard P. Lovecraft, to the Southern Gothic of William Faulkner and Flannery O'Connor. As proved by the success of such writers of "dark fantasy" (Oates, "Art of Muder", *New York Review* 32) of the last decades as Stephen King, Ann Rice or Peter Straub, whose books sell millions of copies and have been frequently adapted for the movie and TV screen, the Gothic still remains "indigenous to American popular culture" (ibid 32). However, there are only a few authors able to pick up the threads of the genre for the sake of a more complex vision. Joyce Carol Oates, one of America's most prolific and respected contemporary "women



of letters" (Johnson 332), can be considered such an exception.

Perhaps it is true that any novel aspiring to more than a temporal significance must either transcend the boundaries of its genre or create a genre of its own - as *The Castle of Otranto* did at its time. Therefore, just as the above mentioned canonical authors, Oates would probably object to being pigeon-holed as a writer of Gothic fiction: she prefers to use the term "grotesque" to classify her more expressionistic and surrealistic prose. However, her kinship with the genre is evident: in the early 1980s she even wrote a series of "post-modernist Gothic novels" reclaiming the conventional "Victorian narrative modes" (ibid 303): the family saga in *Bellefleur*, the romance novel in *A Bloodmoor Romance*, the horror story in *The Crosswick Horror* (as yet unpublished) and the detective story in *The Mysteries of Winterthurn*, all set in the nineteenth century America. The author's aim was, in her own words,

to create a highly complex structure in which the individual novels [...] functioned as chapters or units in an immense design: America as viewed through the prismatic lens of its most popular genres. (ibid 304)

The aim of this paper is, perhaps, less ambitious, but no less complex: to illustrate how and to what purpose the author picks up the legacy of the extinct genre, recycling and updating its accoutrements in works based on sometimes even more terrifying reality of the twentieth century America as sifted through its mass media.

First, to anchor the analysis, this paper will try to identify the most important characteristics of the Gothic novel, to locate its descendents in the British-American culture, and to find its reverberations in Oates's works. Then, it will examine two exceptionally gruesome novellas by Oates, with a focus on their protagonists/narrators: Bobbie

Gotteson in *The Triumph of The Spider-Monkey* and Quentin P\_ in *Zombie*. They will be compared with their real-life models, Charles Manson and Jeffrey Dahmer, as well as the two most famous fiends of the literary Gothic: the Frankenstein's monster and Count Dracula. Finally, the paper will sum up the findings and draw conclusions about the significance of these works in the context of Oates's oeuvre and the significance of her vision in the melting pot of American culture.

## 2. THE HAUNTING: THE SHADOW OF THE GOTHIC NOVEL

The term "Gothic novel" contains, in itself, a contradiction of the two opposing forces that shape the genre since its beginnings. As Ellis noted: "while 'Gothic' implies the very old, 'novel' claims allegiance with 'the new'" (Ellis 17). The connotations of the word "gothic", when considered in the paradigm of the British tradition, which gave birth to the genre, acknowledge this paradox. The Goths, who helped destroy the Roman Empire and who must have seemed to the civilized Romans as barbarous hordes from the past, are at the same time "the ones who introduced what later developed into the tradition of British liberty and democracy" (Andersen, Christensen, Troest, *Gothic* Webpage).

In 1860s, when the Gothic novel entered the British literary scene, an analogous clash of ideologies was already brewing in Europe and America, soon to erupt in bloody conflict. Two absolute monarchies surrendered to the republicans: French bourgeoisie, with the help of an angry mob, sent their tyrannical king to the guillotine; American colonists, infused with the frontier spirit, wrenched themselves free from the shackles of their homeland. Whether the authors of the Gothic novels welcomed or deprecated this transformation, their works reflect the fears and anxieties aroused by its violent nature. "The decade of the French revolution [...] was the period when the Gothic novel was at its most popular" (Botting 5). In art as in life, strict Neoclassical values were shattered by Romantic excesses: the Byzantine battlements of reason were, again, undermined by the wild world of imagination.

In the preface to the second edition of *The Castle of Otranto*, Walpole describes these antagonistic concepts in terms of penecraft, claiming that:

[*The Castle of Otranto*] was an attempt to blend two kinds of romance, the ancient and the modern. In the former all was imagination and improbability; in the latter, nature is always intended to be, and sometimes has been, copied with success. (*Three Gothic Novels* 43)

Walpole "thought it possible to reconcile the two kinds" (ibid), and the immediate success of his work proved that he had, indeed, found what the readers had been waiting for.

The most trivial display of the authors' fascination with the past is their taste for monumental architecture of the Middle Ages: Walpole's Strawberry Hill or William Beckford's Fonthill Abbey are examples of such romantic sentiments made real. The latter with its sky-high tower which tumbled down several times and, finally, destroyed most of the complex also shows how slapdash these imitations used to be. If not by deserted castles, abbeys, ruins or dungeons, the writers of Gothic novels liked to arouse their readers' imaginations by descriptions of primitive landscapes: inhospitable deserts, impenetrable forests, inaccessible mountains. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* begins and ends in the frozen wasteland of the North Pole, and the scene in which the monster meets his creator for the first time is set against the backdrop of Alps - the most popular scenery among the Romantics. Similarly, Bram Stoker's *Dracula* is framed by scenes taking place in the picturesque Carpathians. The Count, however, being less visibly abhorrent, can move, unnoticed, from his ruin in the wilderness to the likewise crumbling houses in the heart of London. Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* is already entirely set in the gloomy labyrinths of the then industrial capital of the world: as the monster from without is revealed to be, in fact, the monster from within.

Oates too admits that setting plays an important part in her novels:

I'm a writer absolutely mesmerized by places; [...] and the settings my characters inhabit are crucial to me as the characters themselves. I couldn't write even a very short story without vividly "seeing" what its characters see. ("Invigorate", Times Webpage)

In both novellas discussed in this paper, obvious analogies to the above mentioned settings can be found. In *The Triumph of the Spider Monkey* the protagonist performs his violent acting routines at El Portal, a luxurious Californian residence with a "flagstone terrace" above a "fifteen hundred foot drop" surrounded by „circling buzzards" (25); and two of his revelations come to him in the middle of a desert. The narrator of *Zombie* is a caretaker of "an old faded-red brick Victorian [house] with a smudged look like somebody moved his thumb across it" (10), contemplating the night sky in the high attic, or conducting his experiments in the deep cellar. As in the Gothic novels, these settings both reflect and shape the nature of the protagonists.

Another plot device of most classical Gothic novels is "haunting", or "the disturbing returns of past upon present" (Botting 1), often presented as a supernatural phenomena: a family curse as in *The Castle of Otranto*, a ghost as in Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, or an evil twin as in *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. In Oates's works, this motif usually takes on a realistic form, but is often equally symbolic and has similarly dramatic consequences. For example, in her latest family saga, *The Falls*, two generations are haunted and divided by the mysterious suicide of the mother's first husband, who jumped into the Niagara Falls on their honeymoon. The image of the falls mirrors the unrestrained forces of nature in men: the heritage of their primitive past hidden in the unconscious.

The same instincts propel the famous villains of Gothic novels, such as Manfred in *The Castle of Otranto* or Montoni in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*: they are living anachronisms, relics

of the past threatening the innocent young, who should be the future of the society. In the worst case, the supernatural and the real blend to create truly satanic heroes, such as the lustful friar in Mathew Lewis's *The Monk*, the licentious caliph in Beckford's *Vathek*, the artificial giant in *Frankenstein*, the evil tempter in Charles Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer*, or the legendary vampires. The latter were introduced by John Polidori in his short story *The Vampyre*, popularized by James Malcolm Rymer in the thrashy *Varney the Vampire or The Feast of Blood*, perfected by Sheridan Le Fanu in *Carmilla*, and iconicized by Bram Stoker in *Dracula*. The vampires, in particular, are well-invented and long-tested combinations of the supernatural and the real, the dead and the living, the repugnant and the attractive, the savage and the aristocratic.

In the twentieth-century Gothic fiction, the anti-heroes recruited from degenerated aristocracy, perverted clergy or mad scientists were gradually superseded by more commonplace evildoers. In 1918, Marie Belloc Lowndes, one of the first members of Women Writers Suffrage League, published *The Lodger*, possibly the first serial killer bestseller, inspired by the first widely medialized serial killer case: the murders of Jack the Ripper. Lowndes's elusive anti-hero, Mr. Sleuth a.k.a. "The Avenger", still retains some characteristics of the three types of villains listed above: he dresses and behaves as a gentleman, conducts unspecified experiments in his rented room and reads the Bible aloud. Nevertheless, despite all these outer signs, he is only "[a] criminal lunatic, as we must, of course, regard him," (*Lodger* Webpage 112) as the Head Commissioner of Police claims, unknowingly passing the killer in the climactic scene near the Chamber of Horrors at Madame Tussauds.

The readers had to wait another almost thirty years until the writers allowed them to enter the mind of such kind in

first-person narrations. In 1947, Robert Bloch's first novel, *The Scarf*, brought to life a serial strangler. In 1952, Jim Thompson refined this concept in *The Killer inside Me*, told from the point of view of a schizophrenic sheriff on a mission to rid his town of scum. In 1963, John Fowles's first published novel, *The Collector*, aroused interest with its story told twice, by the abductor and his female victim.

Since then, the popularity of serial killer narratives continued to grow, until, in the 1990s, unleashed by the success of Thomas Harris's Hannibal Lecter series, the books by authors who specialize in this sub-genre literally flooded the bookstalls. Some of these writers produce novel after novel, almost as if following the same repetitive pattern in which their antagonists produce corpses. A copybook example of such serial novelist is Robert W. Walker, "still going strong" (*Walker Webpage*) with his "Instinct" and "Edge" series, the first linked by a character of a female medical examiner, the latter by a male detective. Also, parallelly to this boom, a sub-genre of non-fiction called "true crime novel" flourished, often rather shamelessly exploiting the most recent tragedies.

Unsurprisingly soon, both the supernatural and fact-based serial killers found their way onto the silver screen as well. The first was F.W Murnau's silent *Nosferatu* in 1922, a gem of German expressionist cinematography, inspired by Stoker's *Dracula*. In 1931, another German director who later moved to Hollywood, Fritz Lang, released his "M", based on the story of the infamous child-murderer Peter Kürten a.k.a. "the Vampire of Düsseldorf", captured less than a year before the premiere. Meanwhile, in America, the movie theatres were taken over by Tod Browning's *Dracula*, James Whale's *Frankenstein* and Victor Halperin's *White Zombie*, the first three in the endless row of Hollywood's undead. Three years earlier, in 1927, *The Lodger* was adopted for the screen by young Alfred Hitchcock as the first in the series of his thrillers, crowned by the

adaptation of Robert Bloch's *Psycho* in 1960. After the rubbery mutants, tin can robots and costumed humanoids of the 1950s, naively subliming the cold-war atomic paranoia against the East, *Psycho* revived the character of a psychopath: a monster born and living right among us. In the same year Michael Powell released his British answer to Hitchcock, *Peeping Tom*, in which a "voyeur [shoots] his own private 'snuff' films" (Canby, "Peeping Tom", *Times* Webpage). Unlike *Psycho*, this movie was dismissed as "perverted nonsense" (ibid), although, or precisely because, it was ahead of its time in its post-modernist reflection on the role of the medium. During the 1970s and 1980s, the genre degenerated into so-called slasher movies with more blood than brains, with the exception, perhaps, of John MacNaughton's disturbingly detached and clinical *Henry: The Portrait of a Serial Killer*, inspired by the case of Henry Lee Lucas. In the first half of the 1990s, the genre underwent yet another short rebirth thanks to Jonathan Demme's Oscar-winning *Silence of the Lambs* and David Fincher's *Se7en*; but since then, the serial killer movies have been, again, losing in quality and depth, or moving to satire and parody as Mary Harron's satirical *American Psycho* based on the homonymous novel by Bret Easton Ellis.

As documented by the above list of books and movies, the popularity of serial killers has been gradually increasing throughout the twentieth century, although the term "serial killer" was coined by the FBI as late as 1970s - for a person who commits "three or more [murders] separated by a cooling-off period" (McNamara, *Frequency* Webpage). Although the statistics are questionable and their results may be overestimated, one figure is worth noting: 75% of all known serial killers are Americans (ibid). Joyce Carol Oates, who always "conceived her primary role as an artist who must dramatize the nightmarish conditions of the present, with all its anxiety, paranoia, and explosive conflict" (Johnson 10),



could not have remained silent to the phenomena plaguing her country. Typically, she ascribes it to the self-destructive Romantic individualism deeply rooted in American consciousness:

"Somehow it has happened that the serial killer has become our debased, condemned, yet eerily glorified Noble Savage." ("Thrill", *New York Review* 52).

Oates, in her novels, equally distributes the focus between the criminals and the victims, making them fatally connected. Many of her works featuring such characters are narrated from the perspectives of the abused, mainly women. For example, her first and her latest O'Henry Award-winning stories are told from the point of view of a serial killer's victim. In the frequently analyzed and anthologized *Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been* a vain teenage girl is cowed into submission by Arnold Friend, a killer who dyes his hair black to look younger and stiffens his boots with rags to look taller: inspired by an article in *Life* magazine about Charles Howard Schmid, "a tabloid psychopath" of the "pre-Manson time" (Oates, "Smooth", *Celestial* Webpage) nicknamed "The Pied Piper of Tucson". In the latter story, *A Girl with a Blackened Eye*, a middle-aged woman tells how she had been, at the age of fifteen, forcibly abducted by a strangler, raped and beaten, but spared, taken along for the next murder, and released, when she did not break the killer's trust. Oates's female characters are simply ideal counterparts to their male oppressors: they are passive victims or witnesses of violence who often find themselves drawn to the criminals. One cannot help but remember the fainting virginal heroines of the Gothic novels - from *The Castle of Otranto* to *Dracula* - overcome with fear, fascination and sympathy for the male oppressors.

In the 1980s, Oates developed a pseudonym, Rosamond Smith, under which she started to publish suspense and mystery novels dealing with the themes that seem to haunt her in a

lighter, less profound way. All of these plot-driven thrillers dramatize the issue of double identity: featuring antithetical twins and psychopathic killers in disguise. In *Starr Bright Will Be with You Soon* the author even gave voice, for the first and only time so far, to a female serial killer, a revenging exotic dancer, who returns home to visit her orderly twin sister (Pye, "Serial Mom", *New York Times* Webpage). The doppelgänger motif, common to many of her novels, peculiarly corresponds with the split between Oates's acknowledged and pseudonymous identity. Even the pseudonym itself, derived from the name of her husband, suggests a similar breach: between the role of "the wife whose words are like roses" and the role of a writer of such terrifying tales. Her obsession with antithetical twins undoubtedly springs from her own background: she has a severely autistic sister, who was born on the same day as she, although eighteen years later, and "has never spoken a coherent sentence". (Johnson 89). Considering that Oates is a Gemini, it is not surprising that she also frequently alludes to astrology.

In her essay, *Pseudonymous Selves*, Oates claims that it is the "the perversion, the instinct [...] for freedom and newness" (*Celestial* Webpage), what induces an author to acquire a pseudonym. In her case, the urge had been so strong that, in 1970-71, while writing her *Wonderland*, she also wrote a series of very short, abstract and surreal stories narrated by a Spaniard called Fernandes, claiming the experience to be "either real or imagined 'possession'" ("Poisoned", *Celestial* Webpage); and in 2004, she started to publish mystery/suspense novels under yet another female pseudonym, Lauren Kelly.

It is the same "instinct for freedom and newness" which causes the downfall of most Gothic protagonists. They all bring about evil by trying to defeat their fates: Beckford's caliph sells his soul to Satan in his quest for pleasure, Frankenstein strives for immortality, Dracula raises the dead,

Dr. Jekyll tries to get rid of his animal self. The frequently mentioned inspiration to these tales of corruption is Blake's and Coleridge's Romantic interpretation of the Satan's fall in Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Evans even calls Satan "a prototypical colonist" and interprets

the fallen angels as malcontents purged from heaven-England and placed within the penal colony of hell-America, and Satan as a conquistador expanding his empire into Eden-America to ultimately colonize the naked Indians, Adam and Eve. (Blake, "Evans", Milton Review Webpage)

Oates herself, in an article on a project in which famous writers were asked to dress up as their favorite literary heroes, commented on Michael Cunningham's costume of the angel Lucifer:

"He [Milton's Satan] demonstrated, on an epic scale, that reprehensible behavior tends to be more interesting than admirable behavior. Literature has never been the same."  
("Character", *New York Times* Webpage)

The image of jealous and greedy, but admirably brave and unyielding Satan is perhaps the model for most tragic overreachers portrayed by America's greatest authors. Significantly, Oates ends her article by quoting Norman Mailer, who dressed up as Melville's captain: "Many a novelist has a touch of the monomaniac and Ahab is the monster of us all" (ibid).

In *Pseudonymous Selves* Oates also mentions one of her earliest inspirations, Charles Lutwidge Dodgson a.k.a. Lewis Carol<sup>1</sup>, noting that "pseudonymous works are often playful; experimental; 'entertainments'", and that "in its earliest manifestations, in childhood, art is play". The same can be

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<sup>1</sup>The little known mathematician, Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, entered literary history as Lewis Carol, one of the most imaginative writers ever. His *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* has been Oates's favourite book since childhood, and later inspired, both structurally and motifically, her own *Wonderland*.

said about Gothic novels: although they so often take place in ancient settings and feature ghosts from the past or characters driven by primitive needs, their authors do not hesitate to employ latest narrative methods to achieve the desired effect upon the reader. Already in *The Castle of Otranto* Walpole consciously attempted at a more contemporary, novelistic style than was usual in medieval romances of his time, deliberately avoiding the "bombast, [...] similes, flowers, digressions, or unnecessary descriptions" (*Three Gothic Novels* 40). To conceal his authorship and increase the impression of authenticity, he also presented himself, in the preface to the first edition, only as a humble translator of an old Italian story, "printed at Naples, in the black letter, in the year 1529" (*ibid* 39). Similarly, the three most famous English Gothic novels of the following century conform to the epistolary convention to authenticate their narratives: *Frankenstein* is entirely composed of letters, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* uses two to reveal its secrets in the end, and *Dracula* is a collage of letters, diary entries and newspaper clippings.

In Oates's prose countless narrative methods mingle in a truly post-modern manner to the same purpose: to create convincing points of view. However, in her case, the carefully constructed perspectives are usually very self-reflective, adding a further level of meaning to the whole design. For example, the fake editor notes in the *Triumph of the Spider Monkey* not only stress that "all remarks in this strange document are the Maniac's" (12), but also advertise that:

Homonovus Paperbacks and not Antioch will handle the unexpurgated *Confession*. Fritzie Del Blanc will play the lead in the film, produced by Vladimir Jastsky, for Mega World Studios. The film is scheduled for release December 26 at major movie houses across the continent. (81)

Such comments, apart from adding a documentary feeling to the text, also remind the reader, ironically, that the story is already being sold to him: exploited by the same show business people to which the Maniac so desperately aspired.

However, although Oates's real-life-based portraits of criminals are often chillingly convincing, the method she uses to re-create them is never a documentary one, as, for example, Capote's aspired to be. The famous dandy of American literature even said about Oates: "To see her is to loathe her. To read her is to absolutely vomit" (Vanderbilt, "Connected", *Page One* website). Oates herself admits that the way in which she transforms the factual into the fictional is very subjective. Real persons and events serve as a lens focusing the author's own memories and visions into an authentic image with universal connotations.

Oates has used this approach to fictionalize famous events or personas several times throughout her career. For example, in *Black Water*, the novella inspired by the Chappaquiddick scandal - a car-accident in which Senator Ted Kennedy, drunk driving, caused the death of one of his brother's campaign aids - the story is told from the point of view of the dying girl, narrated in the third person as a delirious stream of her consciousness. The newspaper story is thus transformed into an almost mythical tale about an "innocent maiden" seduced by a older man of power. The more recent *Blonde*, a "posthumous narration by the subject" (Oates, "Blonde", *Celestial* Webpage), who is none other than Marilyn Monroe, also resigns from being autobiographically correct. Based on the premise that our perception of history is always an interpretation, and always a story-telling, Oates "aspires to a spiritual/poetic truth" (ibid) instead of historical accuracy. Her justification for writing *Blonde*, against the critics who accuse her of exploiting famous people's tragedies, is following:

"I was trying to give life to Norma Jeane Baker, and to keep her living, in a very obsessive way, because she came to represent certain 'life elements' in my own experience and, I hope, in the life of America" (ibid).

Certainly, the same can be said about all her characters, whether they are inspired by celebrities or not. Similarly, the monsters of the Gothic novels personify the desires and fears of the society their authors lived in, although they still externalize the evil by describing it as a supernatural phenomena.

Establishing of a narrative voice is one of the crucial, and often longest, phases in Oates's writing process (ibid). During her career, she has tried almost every narrative style, but typical for her remains the third person authorial-figural narration (Jahn, "Narratology", *Jahn Webpage*) in which the point of view of the narrator often mingles with the point(s) of view of the character(s). First-person I-as-protagonist narration is her second most frequent technique, usually assigned to characters whose tragedy is caused by their desperate need for self-definition, such as Nathan Vickery in *The Son of the Morning*, a young evangelist preacher turned local messiah who gouges one of his eyes out in a religious fit.

Already in 1968, in her third novel and the first written in the first person, *Expensive People: the Confessions of a Minor Character*, Oates presented a confession allegedly composed by a murderer: a young man who, as a child, committed matricide. Preceded by *A Garden of Earthly Delights* and followed by the 1970 National Book Award-winning *them*, this book was the second part of what Oates, in an afterword, called:

[...] an informal, thematically (but not literally) integrated trilogy of novels [...] conceived by the author as critiques of America - American culture,

American values, American dreams - as well as narratives in which Romantic ambitions are confronted by what must be called 'reality'. (Oates, "Expensive", *Celestial Webpage*)

She also recalls that it was the most fluidly written of the three novels "with its relaxed first-person narration, its characteristically succinct and chatty chapters" (ibid), and remarks that:

[...] the 'I' of my protagonist Richard became so readily the 'eye' of the novelist that, at times, the barrier between us dissolved completely and the voice in which I wrote was, if not strictly speaking my own, an only slightly exaggerated approximation of my own. (ibid)

The narrator of *Expensive People*, Richard Everett, kills his emotionally distant mother because he refuses to play a Minor Character in her life. And he writes about it to become the Main Character of his own confession, so that he can finally "exhibit [his] anguish, pain, tedium" (271), but also his precociousness, erudition and eloquence. He is very self-conscious about his writing, commenting upon it, "I could never talk about myself in the third person" (6), addressing the reader, explaining his motives. The confessional mode, similarly as, for example, in Nabokov's *Lolita*, compels the reader to accept, with a mixture of sympathy and revulsion, the biased vision of the narrator. The purpose of such experience is to challenge the reader's own limited vision: to show that the protagonist's fatal narcissism is a fault to which everybody is susceptible. As Oates suggested in an interview, "it's just the way the human species is constructed, to be very myopic. Each person thinks he is the centre of everything else." (Birnbaum, *Morning News Webpage*).

In the two serial-killer novellas investigated hereinafter, the narrative concept introduced in *Expensive People* is only driven to extreme. The point of view is even more limited, the first-person narration even more relaxed and fragmented. With this method Oates as if anteceded the findings of narrative psychology, a new branch of developmental psychology, interested in "the storied nature of human conduct" (Sabrin, 1986, Webpage). For example, David Canter, in his insightful study, *Criminal Shadows: the Inner Narratives of Evil*, applies this approach specifically to violent offenders:

Their dominant narratives are confused and sensitive to episodes that most people would ignore; their plots can be set off course by experiences that their friends might never notice. This may give violent criminals the experience of living a number of separate lives. Their narrative does not have any coherence, so it is experienced as many stories not just one. (307)

[...] violent personal narratives are those in which there is an inability to create private dramas in which others share the central stage. (321)

[...] but the meaning and significance of [our] experience derives from how we are treated by other people; the part we are told that we play in their dramas. (324)

Both anti-heroes we are going to discuss, Bobbie Gotteson and Quentin P., compose their confessions in accord with these remarks. They write in chapters so "succinct" that they sometimes consist of only one paragraph, and so "chatty" that their endless sentences riddled with digressions have almost the quality of an ad-lib speech. They are solitary heroes, with little empathy for and from those around them; but the very fact that they are telling their stories suggests that they need audience: they need to confirm their existence by being adored, or feared.



### **3. THE HUNT: THE KILLERS OUTSIDE/INSIDE/REDEEMED**

#### **3.1. FRANKENSTEIN'S CREATURES: RAGING REBELS**

##### **3.1.1. Outside: Charles Manson**

Charles Manson was born in Cincinnati, Ohio, 1934. His mother was Kathleen Maddox, a sixteen-year-old unmarried alcoholic, who grossly neglected him. Brought up by his religious grandmother, young Charlie soon learned to sing, but also succumbed to stealing and, consequently, spent most of his childhood in juvenile institutions and most of the 1950s and 1960s in jail. There he got acquainted with scientology and learnt to play the guitar, dreaming about becoming a star greater than "The Beatles" he worshipped. In 1967, he was released, even albeit his wishes: "No, I did not want to go out into a world of uncertainties" (Manson 78). However, he was pleasantly surprised by the state of the society he entered: "It was a different world than I had ever been in and one that I believed was too good to be true. It was a convict's dream [...]" (ibid 81). He decided to go straight to San Francisco, where he blended in with the already decaying hippie subculture.

Though his attempts to break into the entertainment industry failed, Manson succeeded in gathering followers among naive and troubled young people. Soon, he became a leader of a small commune called "The Family", which later settled in Spahn Ranch, an abandoned Western movie set in the Santa Susanna Mountains. With music, mind games, spiritual babble, free love and psychedelic drugs he gradually turned the community into a cult possessed with "total paranoia" or "coyotenoia" (Sanders 89). He preached that the black man was going to rise and wipe out the corrupted white race. The Family would survive in a "Bottomless Pit" underneath Death Valley, and, after the war, when the blacks would not be able

to rule themselves, they would ride out with an army of dune buggies to take over. During the summer of 1969, in order to unleash the Armageddon, several members of the Family, on Manson's command, ritually murdered at least nine people, five of them at 10050 Cielo Drive, the residence of Roman Polanski and his pregnant wife, actress Sharon Tate, who was also killed in the massacre. When the killer hippies were finally caught and put on trial, the case became such a feast for the tabloids that even president Nixon felt the need to comment on the uproar, unethically presuming Manson's guilt:

Here is a man who was guilty, directly or indirectly, of eight murders without reason. Here is a man, yet, who, as far as the coverage was concerned, appeared to be rather a glamorous figure [...] to the young whom he had brought into his operations [...]. (Sanders, 400)

On March 29, 1971, after a ten months trial, Charles Manson was sentenced to death without being directly convicted of murder. However, capital punishment in California was abolished before the sentence could be executed, and so he escaped the gas chamber. He is now serving life imprisonment in a maximum security facility. Still adored and defended by some, he uses his fame to publish his writings and songs. (Sanders 104-113; Bardsley, "Manson", *True Crime* Webpage).

According to the serial killer typologies (Egger 26, 31-32) both Manson/Gotteson and their literary predecessor, the Frankenstein's monster, would be labeled as "disorganized" due to the impulsive, improvised nature of their crimes; "missionary" due to their belief that they are justified to kill, and "transient" due to their homelessness. Canter would classify them as offenders who treat their "victims as vehicles":

Anger with himself and the fates that have led him to this desolate situation is the central theme of such men's stories. They cast themselves in the role of tragic hero, living out in their assaults the sense of power and

freedom that they feel is absent in the other stories they live. [...] The fates have combined against them to deny them their rightful place, and so by seizing the moment they briefly steal back the initiative, recognizing the inevitable doom that lies ahead. (*Narratives* 351)

Some of these men even believe that they are grasping a mission which they will eventually want to tell. Many will wish to see their biographies written. (*ibid*)

Born into rejection, these criminals share a deeply embedded inferiority complex impelling them to struggle for recognition at any cost. Their crimes are like cries of children calling for attention.

In this respect, it is rather surprising that Manson, who has always seen himself as a modern-day martyr akin to Jesus, published his own Bible, *Charles Manson: In His Own Words*, as late as 1986. The reason may be, simply, that it took fifteen years until the interest in him outweighed the scruples against publishing his books.

### **3.1.2. Inside: Killing the Mother**

Criminal psychologists studying violent recidivists have known for a long time that "the major factor in the genesis of such criminally aggressive behavior is a multiple social pathology in the family, and, particularly, the father's failure" (Netík 57, my translation). Accordingly, Manson and Gotteson as well as Frankenstein and his monster share the same defiant love-hatred towards the father figures. Frankenstein conducts his experiments partly in spite of his father, who disapproves of such science; and the monster takes revenge on his creator by killing all who are close to him, except Victor himself and his father. Similarly to Manson, who admired the famous gangsters among his inmates, the Maniac admits that he adored his Old Man, Danny Minx, who taught him in the prison "to program [his] soul" (57), told him "how to hate them [women]"

(34), and telepathically urged him to pursue his musical career, but also once "fucked [him] in front of two other guys to punish [him]" (39). Gotteson also mentions that he was infuriated by Kennedy's assassination so much that "*it made [him] want to kill someone*" (43); and of all the people in the show business the only worthy of his respect is an aged lucifugous grey eminence of the industry, Mr. Vanbrugh. The Maniac's art is, most of all, an appeal to the male authorities: "[...] he is composing this jokey confession mainly to win the heart of the Judge who will sit above him" (48). "*He certainly meant to honor God, as one Maniac honors another!*" (77)

However, it is the absence of mothers what is most important when comparing the backgrounds of Frankenstein and his monster to those of Manson and Gotteson. The Maniac suggests in one of his poems called *The Cocoon* that he felt safe inside the duffel bag in a locker at "Terminal Station". He is angry for being delivered to the world, and therefore unconsciously attracted to death which would return him back to the womb-like space he came from. The same reason leads the institutionalized criminals to recidivism: they are looking forward to return back to the embrace of the nurturing correctional facility. From this respect, the name of Gotteson's birthplace is symbolic, although based on reality: Charles Manson was released upon the world from a prison called Terminal Island. Significantly, in *Frankenstein*, the dreamt-up monster reveals himself to his maker for the first time after Victor, devastated by the loss of his brother and Justine, invokes death:

"Wandering spirits, if indeed ye wander, and do not rest in your narrow beds, allow me this faint happiness, or take me as your companion, away from the joys of life" (362).

Frankenstein's mother, who brought her son up as a "plaything and [an] idol" (*Three Gothic Novels* 291), dies at the beginning of the novel from an illness she catches from his fiancée. Moreover, the monster is born on a stormy night - the night of reason - when his maker dreams of his fiancée changing into his dead mother. Also, after killing Frankenstein's younger brother, the monster takes from the child a portrait of his mother, and slips it into the pocket of a housekeeper sleeping nearby. The avenger explains his motive: "[...] not, I but she, shall suffer; the murder I have committed because I am forever robbed of all that she could give me, she shall atone" (*Three Gothic Novels* 411). Finally, and inevitably, the last victim killed by the monster is Frankenstein's bride. If we accept the interpretation of the monster as Frankenstein's "forbidden wish for death" (Oates, "Fallen", *Frankenstein* Webpage), it is Victor himself who, by killing innocent women, takes revenge on his mother who died and left him alone.

In contrast to the popular image of Frankenstein as a mad genius he is rather a naive youth "susceptible to fainting fits, bouts of illness and exhaustion, and nightmares of romantic intensity" (Oates, "Fallen", *Frankenstein* Webpage). The giant, then, reminds more of an adolescent super-hero fantasy than a scientific experiment. Victor's little brother is, then, his own vulnerable, unmanly self that has to be destroyed first. Similarly, Gotteson, who often boasts of supernatural powers, admits that he has been laughed at for being too short since childhood, and that he was sexually abused in the prison, screaming at the rapist/inmate: "Like hell I am your little girl" (14). In the world outside the prison, perceived as a battlefield, he starts killing women to destroy the weak, girlish part of him.

After both Gotteson and his Old Man are released from the prison, Bobbie's mystical experience in the desert

precipitates their break-up and sets the Maniac on his mission for immortality. The revelation comes to him in an eye-to-eye encounter with a two-year-old girl playing with a naked doll, "holding onto her legs and fooling around with it in the dirt..." It is a moment in which he feels "[his] powers rise and flow over," and how they might "if unleashed, [...] rush out into that child and destroy her." (41) Both Oates's and Shelly's killer describe their violent behavior as impulsive, instinctive, and bringing an exhilarating realization of their powers. "I too can create desolation [...]" (*Three Gothic Novels* 410), exclaims the monster after strangling Frankenstein's brother. Shelly did not use the oxymoron of "creation by destruction" by chance: the serial killer, fulfilling his mad dreams, is the worst example of a creative passion gone wrong.

Erroneously, the murder is perceived as an act of liberation, rebellion against authority, although, in fact, the criminal is only passing forward the brutality he has been treated with since birth. He remains a link in the chain of manipulation: parents → children → toys. This is most graphically demonstrated in the 1931 adaptation of *Frankenstein*, where the monster accidentally kills a little girl, plunging her into a lake the same way she has been throwing flowers. This version, in particular, depicts the first victim as "innocent death": the monster could not have known that little girls do not float because nobody taught him that.

Of course, the family dynamics are mirrored in higher social structures as well. To highlight this, Oates made her protagonist a foundling, unlike Manson, who at least knew his negligent mother. In the first chapter, Gotteson even recalls being delivered to the world from a foot-locker and "held up to the lights" by "some amazed outraged bastard in a uniform" (11). As in *Frankenstein*, the moment of birth is allegedly

remembered by the newborn, and described as mythical and predetermining. "I was always singled out for applause and encouraged to express myself by people in uniforms" (13), adds Bobbie to explain his predestination. And he often recalls women as representatives of the institutions: an angry foster mother, a nurse at the dentist, a female psychiatrist.

Gotteson frequently claims to be a product of social injustice. An extreme example of so formative an experience is probably the interview with his child therapist, who spits out all his frustration at Bobbie:

A man like myself begins with high ideals, goes into graduate school prepared to devote himself to humanity, and what does he end up sitting knee-to-knee with? - little blue-chinned muscle-bound monkey-faced bastards like Bobbie Gadsen... or Gotsen, whatever the hell this word is, the typist X'd half the word out. *You're a word that's been half X'd out, Bobbie!* Poor little bastard!  
(24)

The italicized sentence alludes to Manson's demonstrative self-mutilation at the trial with the Family: he carved an "X" into his forehead after being denied the right to represent himself as a defense attorney.

The Maniac's critique also goes against the American system of foster care, in which the child is often shuffled from one temporary home to another, more as a source of income than a human being, until it is "ready to go. Wherever you people send me" (*Triumph* 23). Thirty years later, Oates pointed at this issue again in another disturbing novella, *The Rise of Life on Earth*, whose protagonist, Kathleen Hennesey, learns „not to look back, anything you're walking away from" (39), and erases her past by setting fires to the houses she left.

Generally, in Friedmans's psychoanalytic terms, *Triumph of The Sipder Monkey* belongs to that stream of American fiction which is "a parable of a rebellious child, America,

engaged in an ambivalent effort to wrest itself from the Domination of mother England." (Friedman 55) In Oates's prose, the consequences of this rebellion are always violent. Absolute freedom and independence are dangerous aims, leading to aggression against others and/or self. America's domestic as well as foreign conflicts of the past decades seem to vindicate this message.

### **3.1.3. Crucified: Bobbie Gotteson**

In 1971, Oates moved from the USA, where life was becoming too hectic and stressful for her, to London. However, the futility of escaping one's fate, so often demonstrated in her characters, came through just as markedly in her case. Near the end of the year, in her flat, she suffered a mental breakdown, which she later recalled as "the very nadir of my psychological being" (Johnson 206). The experience of an "absolute loss of ego" (ibid), though lasting only for several minutes, was mystical and transforming for her. After this episode, she started to take interest in Buddhism, reread Freud and Jung, and fought her anorexia more successfully.

Of course, the transformation had a considerable effect on her writing, too. She overcame a writer's block by changing the ending of her already published *Wonderland*, regarding the original as being "a very dark, relentless work" (ibid 209); and she finished her next novel, *Do with Me What You Will*, with an unusually happy ending. To the contrary, the other of the two books written in London, *The Triumph of the Spider Monkey*, follows the dark path set by *Expensive People*, pushing its conflicts to an extreme. It is a cathartic, transformative work: an intensive self-reflection necessary for the artist to move on - back to America.

The crucial impulse for writing about a serial killer came, as in the case of *Where Are You Going, Where Have You*



Been, from a magazine article: an excerpt from Ed Sander's book on Charles Manson published in *Esquire*, November 1971. Similarly as "The Pied Piper of Tucson", who imitated Elvis to lure his victims and was abetted by "a number of teenagers [...] from 'good' families" (Oates, "Smooth Talk", *Celestial* Webpage), the author was probably most fascinated by Manson's show business connections and the power he had over young people from presumably normal backgrounds.

Oates also remarked in a letter to her editor that the novella is "about one of the Californian experiences" (ibid), referring to the Hollywood episode during the coast-to-coast driving trip she and her husband made in 1970. On the road, Oates even admitted feeling like "a character in a youth movie or a 1950's novel" (Johnson 196). On the West coast, she met the people co-hired by Paul Newman's production to work on an adaptation of her *Dawn*; but even though she had already extended the story into a novella and wrote several versions of the screenplay, the project was eventually put to rest as "too controversial" (ibid 197). Two years later, this mildly disappointing moment and Manson's futile journey to Hollywood coalesced in one of the crucial chapters of *The Triumph of the Spider Monkey* called "How the Maniac Gotteson Traveled West". An evident proof that the two experiences are linked can be found in the above quoted fake editor's note: the name of the publishing house handling the Maniac's writings is "Homonovus Paperbacks and not Antioch [Paperbacks]" (ibid), suggesting that the story now belongs to "New Man" and not to "first Christians".

The Maniac describes the Californian scene as a crowd of selfish would-be stars infested with drugs. He even regrets selling his song to the Survivors, who changed the title from "Unlearning to Live" to "Learning to Love" (29). This is an ironic allusion to Charles Manson's connections with the Beach Boys. Their drummer, Danny Melcher, did the same to one of

Manson's songs changing the refraining esoteric "Pretty Girl/Cease to Exit" into a much safer "cease to resist" (Sanders 64).

In the above mentioned chapter the Old Man, known as *The Eye*, tells Bobbie before driving away: "Pretend you're in a movie, pretend you're a cowboy singing in the prairie" (42). Since then, the Maniac frequently acts as if he were followed by a camera, often leaving the reader in doubt whether it is true, or the Maniac's fantasy, or paranoid delusion. His most popular number on the Inside, "the *spider-Monkey-climbing-up-a-pole* routine" (13), a parody of the Darwinian struggle, becomes his mission on the Outside. Due to his physical appearance, he has been always called "a monkey", and so he continues to play the part. When looking at his last victim, he imagines himself as a movie monster:

She wore a white slip. I thought of brides' white in the movies, the costumes of girls seized and held aloft by Frankenstein [sic] or large apes and sometimes raised in the jaws of scaly monsters, a melodic screaming but no serious struggle. (87)

Also the narrative style reflects his fascination with the cinematic medium, using such techniques as flashbacks, newspaper headlines and clippings, rapid cuts, frequent changes in the point of view, "jump shots, [...] montage-freezings" (86).

In *Frankenstein*, the monster's language and thinking are also formed by art: he reads Plutarch's *Lives*, Goethe's *Sorrows of Young Werther*, and Milton's *Paradise Lost*. In the latter he is awed by "the picture of an omnipotent God warring with his creatures" (*Three Gothic Novels* 396) and identifies most with the character of Satan. Manson similarly identified with the main character of Robert Heinlein's *Stranger in a Strange Land*: "a power-hungry telepathic Martian roaming the

Earth with a harem and a quenchless sexual thirst while proselytizing for a new religious movement" (Sanders 10).

Oates's works are very close to naturalism in their preoccupation with violence, struggle for survival and social predetermination, however, as Creighton noted, "[their] visionary perspective counters the determinism usually associated with Naturalism." ("Oates", *Celestial* Webpage) Especially in her shorter works she tends to be heavily symbolic. The most obvious example of this is her use of significant names, inseparably bound with the characters' identities, reflecting their origins, personalities, fates, roles in life. For example, in *Expensive People*, as Friedman noted,

the mother [...] changes her name from the prosaic 'Nancy' to the exotic 'Nada,' but her new name betrays her accomplishment; she has exchanged 'Nancy,' signifying a person associated to the world in ordinary ways, for 'Nada,' signifying nothingness. (*Oates* 71)<sup>2</sup>

In *Blonde*, Norma's famous lovers are defined only by their public roles, "the Ex-Athlete", "the Playwright", "the President", and Norma herself becomes a similar icon, the Sex-Symbol, when she denies her former identity by acquiring a pseudonym, Marilyn Monroe.

Curiously, the names of *both* the real and the fictional villains analyzed in this chapter also tell much about their nature. Charlie Manson owes his surname to a stepfather whom he had never seen, and a popular legend says that his birth certificate states only "No Name Maddox" ("Certificate", *ATWA* Webpage). Conversely, Victor Frankenstein's monster is commonly given name after his creator, although he is actually

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<sup>2</sup> To be accurate, it is the narrator who is responsible for the final form of his mother's name, as he admits in one of his footnotes: "My mother had wanted me to call her 'Nadia' but, as a small child, I must have been able to manage only the infantile 'Nada.' Hence Nada - strange name!" (11) Symbolically, it is the son who, unknowingly, reveals the "nothingness" of his mother's altered identity.

nameless. Moreover, Frankenstein's name, meaning "victorious French star", alludes to the Romantic ideals of the French revolution, which also lead to bloodshed. Finally, the parentless Bobbie Gotteson, when pondering on his origin, never asks who had given him his strange name. The answer is clear: it was the almighty experimenting artist, who resurrected him as a character in her prose. The real Charles meaning "strong, male," was transformed in the confession into the fictional Robert, meaning "bright, famous"; the mortal Manson, "Son of Man", ascended, through art, to the immortal Gotteson, "Son of God".

This intricate nameplay suggests a fundamental connection between the role of a criminal and that of the artist. They share the same urge to violate social norms on their quest for self-definition, or self-divination.

Art by its nature is a transgressive act, and artists must accept being punished for it. The more original and unsettling their art, the more devastating the punishment. (Oates, "Invigorate", *Times* website)

In her essay *Stories That Define Me* Oates expressed her opinion on the mission of the artist more thoroughly, paraphrasing the ideas of one of her major literary influences:

Surely [D.H.] Lawrence was correct in believing that the excessively self-conscious artist seeks to exalt himself over his subject; and that the highest role of the artist is to proclaim not his own ingenuity and superiority over other men but his sympathy with them – an effort that will demand a radical and disturbing individualism, that refuses to continue an intellectual or literary tradition in order to proclaim the impersonal and the divine within ordinary men. (*Times* Webpage)

The tragedy of the criminal is that his radical individualism excludes sympathy: in his world, where everybody struggles for survival, superiority is still the principal objective.

A few years after publishing the novella, sensing its dramatic potential and the nature of its actor/narrator, Oates rewrote it into a "grimly satirical posthumous-confessional play" (Oates, "Twelve Plays", *Celestial* Webpage). In the preface to the collection in which it was included she outlined her personal interest in the protagonist:

*The Triumph of the Spider Monkey*, [...] for obvious reasons the play closest to my heart, involves a 'tragic' hero who is both criminal and victim: one who acquiesces finally to his fate, which he has tried to misread as destiny. Bobbie Gotteson's story has evolved through so many stages in my writing career that its basic meaning has become inescapable to me, yet no less painful for being self-evident. The thwarted artist, the mocked and ridiculed and doomed artist, the artist who is tirelessly (and madly) convinced of his genius - how has it come about that he is, in the public's rapt eye, merely another mass murderer? - merely the 'most appealing' of recent mass murderers in the great State of California? And how has it come about that his pursuit of his obsession has involved the deaths of others? They are innocent deaths as well - as Bobbie admits freely, "They were all innocent." Yet the Spider Monkey is redeemed - in a manner of speaking. His passion is a triumph: in a manner of speaking. (*Three Plays*, *Celestial* Webpage)

Oates's immense sympathy for violent offenders and their victims - for they often attract each other, and the latter often become the first - admittedly stems from her childhood in Millersport, a rural town near Lockport, New York:

My reasoning, unfashionable in some circles, shades into what is in another context a childhood story. For, as a child, in the company of other young children of both sexes, I was repeatedly - sometimes daily - tormented by older children (primarily, but not always exclusively, male), pursued across a field funnily called a "playground," until my heart knocked against my ribs and I came close to collapsing. [...] Once or twice I was singled out for not quite clinical molestation, less because I was female than because I was, at the moment, there. Also, it was said they liked my curly hair. Such systematic, tireless, sadistic persecution had the consequence of making me love with a passion the safe, even magical confines of home and schoolroom (cynosures

of gentleness, affection, calm, sanity, books) and, later, library. For outside these magical confines the true brute, or merely, brutish Nature awaits us. ("Stories", *Times* Webpage)

This experience probably also lies at the core of her lifelong passion for running, an addiction which is, in her case, inseparable from writing. In its salutary influence on the mind, she compares it to dreaming:

Dreams may be temporary flights into madness that, by some law of neurophysiology unclear to us, keep us from actual madness. So, too, the twin activities of running and writing keep the writer reasonably sane and with the hope, however illusory and temporary, of control. ("Invigorate", *Times* Webpage)

Analogously, the art of the grotesque, with its almost physical intensity and dreamlike irrationality, is meant to have a beneficial, sobering effect on the reader. It shatters the fragile shell of reason to arouse the primitive, instinctive in us: to remind us of the darkness and chaos we evolved from. As Oates explained in an interview, she tends to be more realistic in her longer novels, switching to the grotesque, poetic, fairytale-like in her shorter works ("Blonde, *Celestial* Timepiece). In their loosening of the rational these novellas are like dreams against being awake, and, hopefully, just as necessary for the psyche. The criminals like Charles Manson or Bobbie Gotteson can, perhaps, do the same for the consciousness of the whole society.

## 3.2. DRACULA'S DESCENDENTS: PRAGMATIC PREDATORS

### 3.2.1. Outside: Jeffrey Dahmer

Jeffrey Dahmer's career as a serial killer is, in many ways, antithetic to Manson's. He was born in Milwaukee on May 20, 1960, to Lionel and Joyce Dahmer, and, in spite of his mother's problematic pregnancy, he was a happy child. On the other hand, his father, a chemist, remembers in his "groping and questioning" (Oates, "Thrill", *New York Review* 58) memoirs, that, already at the age of four, the sensitive boy was fascinated by dead animals. Two years later, an operation on a double hernia made him diffident, taciturn and apathetic. And he was also shaken by the family moving from Iowa to Ohio. At school he sometimes acted out to attract attention, but still remained a loner, and soon developed a heavy addiction to alcohol. In his free time, he started to collect road kill and found himself sexually aroused by experimenting with it.

Two weeks after his graduation, Jeffrey, for the first time, accomplished his increasingly violent homosexual fantasies by killing a hitchhiker. The first murder established a pattern that he later continued to follow and develop: he invited a young man for a visit and killed him once he showed the intention to leave. Then he had sex with the corpse, cut it into pieces and disposed of it, usually keeping a trophy of some kind. A month after the first murder, the tense relationship between his workaholic father and slightly neurotic mother finally ended up in a divorce and a custody battle over their younger son. Jeffrey stayed with his father, who remarried, and, on the impulse of his new wife, attempted to reform his reclusive, alcoholic son. But not army service, nor a university education, nor psychiatric treatment could divert Jeffrey from the dark path. Nine years after the first murder, he started killing again, looking for his victims in gay bars, choosing mainly black/Asian/Hispanic

boys. Apart from necrophilia he also practiced ritual cannibalism and tried to lobotomize his victims to turn them into zombies. He was not arrested until 1991, after four years and sixteen more murders. At the trial, sensationalized by the press, the jury rejected Dahmer's plea of insanity and sentenced him to fifteen consecutive life terms. Two years later, in the Columbia Correctional Institute in Portage, Wisconsin, he was bludgeoned to death by a delirious Cuban inmate who claimed to be the Son of God. (Egger 179-195; Bardsley, "Dahmer", *True Crime* Webpage).

The serial killer typology would define Dahmer and Quentin P\_ as well as Count Dracula as "organized" because their violence is coldly premeditated and executed, "power/lust murderers" due to their hunger for sexual domination, and "stable" because they are bound to one place or area. According to Canter's division they would belong to those offenders who treat their "victims as objects":

Sexuality and many different and often bizarre sexual acts dominate the personal narratives of these men. Their victims are little more than objects to be explored and played with. (*Narratives of Evil*, 344)

Their central sanity is typically distorted only around this focal obsession so that they can plan and think about their plans carefully. They will try to create some lair in which to keep their prey without disturbance. Although they may present themselves to the world as inoffensive, their hidden preoccupations will tend to keep them separate. "A quiet young man," the neighbors will say, "we didn't see very much of him." (ibid 348-349)

Unlike Manson, Dahmer never felt the need to write his life-story, let alone blame the society for "creating" him. However, he also showed little remorse and looked for explanations outside himself, in the Christian religion:



"Am I just an extremely evil person or is it some sort of satanic influence or what? I have no idea...do you?" (Mitchell, "Aetiology" Webpage)

Although Oates claims to be non-religious, she never expressed sympathy for Quentin P\_ as she did for Bobbie Gotteson. In an interview, she even admitted that *Zombie* is the one book she could not give to her parents. "My father bought it anyway" (Newgard, "Author", *Texan* Webpage), she added with dry humor.

The revulsion against this type of criminal is, perhaps, so visceral exactly because his conduct is an imitation of what is considered "normal" behavior rather than a rebellion against it. Tithecott describes Dahmer aptly as

the Sadian "monster within": the perverse within the mundane, the unnatural within the natural, the animal within the social, the antiheroic within the heroic. He is the archetypal figure of impurity, the representative of a world which needs cleansing. (*Defining* 18)

### **3.2.2. Inside: Killing the Fathers**

Unlike Manson/Gotteson and Frankenstein's monster, Dahmer/Quentin P\_ and Count Dracula come from presumably respectable backgrounds. On the other hand, Count Dracula, although of noble origin, never speaks about his ancestors; and Quentin P\_ has only words of contempt towards his divorced parents. Internally, these murderers are less connected to any other human being than those described in the previous chapter. At the same time, however, they are discreet enough to live inside the society and feed on it without raising suspicion for a long time.

The lair of such a predator is, then, a blasphemous parody of home, and therefore it must be ritually cleansed. In *Dracula*, Van Helsing purges the unholy soil of the vampire's land with the Host. In reality, Dahmer's apartment was exorcised, live on television,

[by] a local Baptist priest and his wife [...], complete with speaking tongues and guttural growls as the evil spirits filled them" (quoted Tithecott 19-20).

Whether the rite was successful or not, the apartment building was abandoned by most tenants within a year, and eventually demolished (Anderson & Sanders, "Dahmer", *Estate Webpage*). In *Zombie*, the very structure of the old Victorian house also mirrors the character of its caretaker: Quentin lives "in the ground floor rear" (11) of the three stories rented to foreign students. But he also works on his zombies in the cellar "safe UNDER GROUND" (19), or gazes at the moon through a star shaped window in the attic "far ABOVE GROUND" (19). He prefers to indulge in the darkness below or look for the light in the darkness above, instead of living with strangers in the daily world between. Nevertheless, he is entrusted by his father to take care of the *whole* place; and he accepts his role gladly. The house thus becomes also a metaphor for the whole of America: built in the Victorian style and governed by a white man who indulges in his past and dreams of his future, instead of living in the present with foreigners to whom his fathers rented the place.

The imagery suggests, as in *The Triumph of the Spider Monkey*, that the narrator only takes part in the succession of power: following the example of his ancestors, who rejected the dominance of their homeland, enslaving and destroying a younger nation in the new territories. Symbolically, at the very end of the novella, Quentin makes a wristband of his hair and the hair of his last victim "braided together with leather thongs & red yarn" (180): the first to remind him of the social bonds that forced him to cut his hippie pony-tail, the second to remind him of the blood he drew taking his own Apache scalp from his victim. The killer who tries to enslave young boys assimilated himself into the society of former slave-drivers.

The crucial factor in the development of the protagonist is, of course, the relationship with his parents. The mother can be, as in Gotteson's case, considered missing, although, technically, she remains in contact with her son via embarrassingly empty telephone calls. Unlike Gotteson, however, Quentin does not miss her, and he has no difficulty replacong her with his indulgent grandmother, who is completely oblivious to her grandson's idiosyncrasies. He also easily fools his Big Sis, a former "star in *women's lacrosse*", now a school "PRINCIPAL" (176) with a passion for accounting.

The father's influence is certainly stronger. Probably most disturbing is Quentin's reminiscence of how his father forced him, at the age of twelve, to ritually burn his *Body Builder* magazines with obscene drawings. As Count Dracula, who is often considered a personification of buried Victorian desires, Quentin turns into a monster mainly because of repressed sexuality. Stoker's descriptions of the vampires' attacks hardly conceal erotic subtext<sup>3</sup>, and their homosexual implications had to be, for a long time, tamed by the adapting authors: even in the 1931 movie version "the screen fades discretely as Dracula stoops over his fallen prey [Renfield]" (Oates, "Dracula", *Southwest* 504).

With the exception of the father's interventions, the authorities in *Zombie* are described as benevolent rather than

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<sup>3</sup> Lucy's report of her first encounter with the Count is very sensual. "And then I seemed sinking into deep green water, and there was a singing in my ears, as I have heard there is to drowning men, and then everything seemed passing away from me. My soul seemed to go out from my body and float about the air. I seem to remember that once the West Lighthouse was right under me, and then there was a sort of agonizing feeling, as if I were in an earthquake, and I came back and found you shaking my body." (8) The lighthouse seems almost as a conscious hint - a phallic symbol - suggesting that the whole scene is a description of a sexual intercourse. Following this interpretation, Mina's record of Dracula's materialisation during his first visit in her room, can be explained in the same way. "It (the mist) got thicker and thicker, till it seemed as if it became concentrated into a sort of pillar of cloud in the room, through the top of which I could see the light of the gas shining like a red eye." (19)

persecuting as in *The Triumph of the Spider Monkey*. Quentin remains undiscovered by his male probation officer, male private therapist, male group therapist, and, finally, two tired policemen, whose questions seem mechanical and disinterested. In the Milwaukee case, the authorities failed even more strikingly: Dahmer sometimes murdered "within hours of his visits to his probation officer" (Oates, "Thrill", *New York Review* 54); and when his fifth victim, drugged and raped, managed to escape from the foul-smelling apartment, two policemen brought him back and left, believing Jeffrey when told that the Asian American boy is his drunken gay lover. (Bardsley, "Dahmer", *True Crime* Webpage)

Both Dahmer's and Quentin's experiments seem like failed imitations of their father's science. They both enrolled for universities, but flunked out after the first semester. Moreover, the father's guru in *Zombie*, the Nobel Laureate Dr. M\_K\_, is "FOUND TO HAVE LEAD RADIATION EXPERIMENTS 1953-1957 COMPARED TO NAZI DOCTORS" (171). This headline refers to real uranium injections administered to patients in Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston (Sharav, "Human Experiments", *Alliance* Webpage). Very similarly, Count Dracula "dared even to attend Scholomance" (Dracula) at a school in Germany run by "the Evil One" (*Dracula* 344). When quarantined for molestation, Quentin, a student of "ENGINEERING & [...] DIGITAL PROGRAMMING", is "observed doing rapid calculations" (7) on the margins of magazines with a leadless pencil; and his father sees in it "a *gift of numbers. Inherited from me*" (9). Another heritage is the professor's lectures in astrophysics, interpreted by his son in the following way:

Seeing the Universe like that [...] you see how fucking futile it is to believe that any galaxy matters let alone any star of any galaxy or any planet [...]. Let alone any continent or any nation or any state or any country or any city or any individual.

The idea came to me at that time too because I was having trouble keeping my dick hard with guys' AWAKE EYES observing me at intimate quarters. (29)

The detached perspective of science heals the narrator's impotence. He declares the whole universe insignificant, and follows his dream of power instead of staying "AWAKE".

Quentin uses astrophysical terms also to describe his fatal attraction to authority, comparing himself to

Fragment Q of the big comet pulled apart into clusters of fire by drifting too close to Jupiter & that terrible gravitational field & it would collide with its target & explode & it was fated to do so & so it will be so. (108)

In July 1994, shortly before Oates started writing *Zombie*, Jupiter was hit by fragments of the comet Shoemaker-Levy 9. Observations proved that the gravitational field of the fifth planet (Quentin P\_) attracts comets. Some theorists claim that by doing so father Jupiter, the patron of the Roman state, protects rare mother Earth (Arnett, "Jupiter", *Nineplanets* Webpage). In *Zombie*, Quentin decides, at one point, against strangling his father because "Dad is strong" (40).

Another astronomic vision is described in the end of Part One, when Quentin recalls leaving the court as an "'admitted' sex offender" (74) given a chance to improve. At this point, his father demonstrates his trust by handing him the keys to his car and suggesting that he drive the family home:

For the first time driving that day I believed I could feel the motion of the Earth. The Earth rushing through the emptiness of space. [...] & I knew I was moving into the future. There is no PAST anybody can get to, to alter things or even to know what those things were but there is definitely a future, we are already in it. (90)

Behind the wheel of an automobile - the symbol of the American industrial revolution - Quentin is "so happy & feeling so free" (ibid), already thinking of making his own sexual slave.

The similarity to *Dracula* is, again, evident: the Count leaves his castle using ships to travel the globe, planning to conquer the civilized world from within by raising an army of undead slaves. Like *Dracula's* pursuers, contemporary detectives have hard times catching the so-called stable serial killers exactly because they are increasingly mobile and using modern technologies. Oates herself describes this type of criminal as

the American isolato cruising interstate highways in van or pickup which will yield, should police have the opportunity to investigate, a shotgun, a semiautomatic rifle, quantities of ammunition and six-packs and junk food, possibly a decomposing female corpse in the rear. ("Art of Murder", *New York Review* 32)

For Quentin, in his Ford van with the rear window sealed by American flag, "a distance of seven hundred miles is nothing" (9).

Another frequent aim of Oates's criticism is modern medicine, dehumanized and dehumanizing in its struggle for control over life and death. It is not by chance that both novellas include scenes at the dentist's, where the doctors treat the most primitive weapons of their patients - their teeth. The two experiences, however, significantly differ: Bobbie Gotteson is tortured by a ruthless prison quack, whereas Quentin P\_ is aroused by the smooth procedure, imagining himself in the doctor's position.

Opposite to dentists are, according to Oates, neurologists, studying the human brain, the most developed instrument of survival. Her interest in this branch of medicine is, admittedly,

the consequence of [her own] apparent medical condition, which necessitated one or more trips to a neurologist [...]: but the "condition" turned out to be [...] a temporary confluence of symptoms caused by what is today called, so commonly, "stress". (Oates, "Wonderland", *Celestial* Webpage).

Her skepticism towards the neurological approach is illustrated, for example, on the main character in *Wonderland*, who becomes a brain surgeon to overcome his childhood trauma. The fictional Quentin's ice-pick "transorbital lobotomies" (42) and Dahmer's real-life skull drillings with acid injections are primitive manifestations of the same impulse.

Several times throughout the novella, the narrator compares his zombies to his childhood friend Barry, who drowned. In Part Two, he even stops hunting black/Asian/Hispanic boys and plans to enslave a white neighborhood kid with a "little pigtail at the nape of his neck" (111), who reminds him of Barry. When preparing for the capture, he memorizes the boy's route home, driving his car behind the boy's bicycle, feasting on the youth's energy (111). Metaphorically speaking, he is following his own childhood. In his mind, he breaks "the hands off a clock" and creates "[his] own Time" (6), going more backwards than forward. Like Count Dracula, who turned vampire by necromancy, or "divination by the dead" (*Dracula* 270), Quentin wants to enslave his own past. Unlike the short and swarthy Gatteson who "scorned the body" and longed to dominate only spiritually, the tall and white Quentin makes love to the body, physically possessing others. Unlike Gatteson who complains for being torn from the womb and rushes towards the void, Quentin P\_ dismisses his mother as "BAD BREAST" (74) and thirsts for life eternal.

### **3.2.3. Exorcised: Quentin P\_**

In 1991, sixty years after Tod Browning's *Dracula* was released, Oates wrote an article, in which she confesses her nostalgia about the movie, comparing it to a surreal dream, or "the nightmare evoked by Darwinian theories of survival of the

fittest and natural selection, morally repugnant to Victorian traditionalists" ("Dracula", *Southwest* 500). She also notes the priestly manners of the Count portrayed by Bela Lugosi<sup>4</sup>, finding analogy between the drinking of blood and the "ritual cannibalism" of the Eucharist (502). Nevertheless, she adds that, fundamentally, *Dracula* is not about the struggle between the forces of good and evil, or even between Christianity and Paganism, but between "propriety" and "the forbidden" (503). The professorial father and his perverted son in *Zombie*, who worship astrophysics, clearly represent the latter two opposing categories.

Three years later, Oates was asked to write an article on serial-killer literature, and to prepare herself, she read about thirty five books on this topic (Oates, "Inhabiting", *Salon* Webpage), including two books on Dahmer: *The Father's Story* by Lionel Dahmer and *The Man Who Could Not Kill Enough* by Anne E. Schwartz. In the article, she first describes her own experience from winter 1976-77, when the affluent suburbs of Detroit - where she then lived - were haunted by a serial killer nicknamed "Babysitter" for the care he provided his children victims. The meticulously washed corpses found in funeral positions reminded Oates of "nightmare artworks" ("Thrill", *New York Review* 52) and she felt

trapped within another's mad, malevolent dream, for the serial killer behaves with the logic of dreams - his madness yields a distinct pattern, yet is unpredictable, and seemingly unpreventable. (ibid)

In the following year, she attempted to fictionalize the unsolved case in *Graywolf: Life and Times*, "a novel about the terror and the despair of living in the community where this was going on" ("Inhabiting", *Salon* Webpage); however,

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<sup>4</sup>Oates even admits that Bela Lugosi, "in his ethnic-exoticism" reminded her of her maternal step-grandfather John Bush, who also came to America from Hungary ("Bus" means "melancholy" in Hungarian). ("Dracula" *Southwest* 503)



eventually, she was dissatisfied with the 340-page manuscript and put it away. Johnson explains it by the clash between "her yearning to produce a symbolic work and her reluctance to abandon the durable realism she had practiced for so long" (Johnson 276). He considers the unfinished work preparatory to another important transition in her writing: opening her imagination to the grotesque surrealism of her Gothic tetralogy.

Twenty years later, the writing on *Dracula* and reading on Dahmer stirred her interest once again, and she wrote the second of her non-pseudonymous serial killer confessions, *Zombie*: first as a short story, focusing more on Quentin's heritage of science, and then as a novella, adding the dream-driven hunt for the white neighborhood boy nicknamed "SQUIRREL".

Mainly the second part reveals Quentin P\_ also as a cruel caricature of the artist who abstracts from life in order to get hold of it. They both start by stealing mannequins from a shop, and continue by making their own imitations of life. Unlike Gotteson who attempts to rebel against form, Quentin P\_ tries to master it, oblivious of its content. The difference between them seems to correspond with Oates's own division of the Gothic genre into "too overlapping categories":

Works in which supernatural forces figure, manifested literally as monsters or symbolically as "compulsions" in presumably normal people, and works in which sexual predators stalk their victims. The former might be defined as essentially a juvenile mode, the latter its adult equivalent." ("Art of Murder", *Southwest* 32)

From this point of view, *The Triumph of the Spider Monkey*, in which the narrator is rather a magical child of the machinery, can be considered a juvenile equivalent to *Zombie*, in which a rotten offspring creates sexual robots. A similar comparison can be made between the monster in *Frankenstein* and the Count in *Dracula*: the first is a creature of science turned evil by

humans; the latter is an evil human turned sexual monster using science.

At the beginning of the novella, Oates deliberately hints at both Stoker's and Tod Browning's visions. Quentin notices "the date 1829" at the "front right corner" (11) of the foundations of the Victorian house - that year, Bram Stoker began writing *Dracula*. In the attic, Quentin absorbs "cosmic rays" and mimics the Moon with his "CARETKER's flashlight" to make "shadows leap like bats", thinking: "*This could actually be for the best. Bringing a problem out in the open. The clarity of day.*" (19) This is an ironic allusion to the power of projection, the "tyranny of film" ("*Dracula*", *Southwest* 511). Oates also suggests a closer relationship between film and dreaming than film theorists have speculated upon:

There is a new theory of dreaming that argues that dream-images are primary culled from the day's experiences or from a memory and imagination; the dream itself, as a story, is a pragmatic invention to string together these images in some sort of coherent casual sequence. (ibid)

Unlike Gotteson's manic confession composed as a screenplay, Quentin's narrative is a more conventional diary/memoir. On the other hand, the Maniac's films and drawings are described in "sane" words from the point of view of his judges, whereas *Zombie* already includes "insane" cut-out lobotomy diagrams, and the narrator's own crude childish drawings and a map. The same development from verbal to visual can be traced not only between *Frankenstein* and *Dracula*, but also in all contemporary art.

On the formal level, *Zombie* is a conscious return to Oates's earliest childhood when she started to create her own stories under the influence of *Alice in Wonderland* with Tenniel's illustrations (Oates, "Alice", *Salon* Webpage):

After "tirelessly" executing her stories by way of drawings, she would simulate handwriting at the bottom of

the page, "being eager to enter adulthood. Wasn't handwriting what adults did? Some of the drawings were done in ordinary tablets, which Joyce filled with human and animal figures "acting out complicated narratives - surprises, chase scenes, mistaken identities, happy endings." (Johnson 33)

Oates probably perceives the shift from the written to the visual as regressive rather than progressive, but as a writer with a liking for surrealism, she probably also values the importance of such dreams.

Her own excursions into the darkest realms of human psyche were many times awarded by the critics and fans of the genre. In 1994, she was the first woman to get the Bram Stoker Award for Life Achievement, and two years later, *Zombie* won her another Bram Stoker Award, this time for Superior Achievement.

#### 4. THE RECKONING

As in the Gothic novels, Oates's characters, plots and settings are re-invented as complex and universal symbols of the human condition. Oates's serial killer novellas reflect, on many levels, the dualism of human existence. They show the consequences of obsession with the past and unrealistic dreams of future - forces which have always haunted and divided America. As *Frankenstein* and *Dracula* symbolically show the dark side of the Victorian Empire, both *The Triumph of the Spider Monkey* and *Zombie* hyperbolize the problems of post-industrial America. Unlike their Gothic inspirations, Oates portrays the criminals as jammed wheels in the social machinery, rather than supernatural foes. The readers can clearly see their twisted twins behind the mirror of her language.

Oates's achievement in American literature is comparable to that of her favorite Dostoyevsky in the Russian psychological novel: they both use characters to illustrate forces shaping the whole society. Where Dostoyevsky's murderers personify the matricidal and parricidal tendencies in the decaying tsarist Russia, Oates's serial killers fulfill the darkest dreams haunting America since the landing of Mayflower. Like the idealistic Raskolnikov, who escapes from his nervous mother and kills an old pawnbroker, the prophetic foundling Gatteson kills women to take revenge on his negligent mother (England). Like the bastard servant son Smerdyakov, who feels authorized to kill his selfish patriarch, the failed heir Quentin P\_ collides with his distant and powerful father (Rome). Both visions are violent, in both, "as the society approaches a crisis, [...] it provokes private disintegration, private ceremonial exorcism" (Oates, "Ceremonial", *Celestial* Webpage).

What distinguishes Oates from Dostoyevsky is that she is not apocalyptic in the Christian sense. Although her works abound with biblical allusions, these are often meant ironically. Although her stories are often read as parables warning against the evil, in her essays she tends to use the word "evil" in brackets. She rejects Dostoyevsky's belief that religion is the only way out of the crisis, ascribing it to "[the] terror of change, [...] characteristic for the primitive mind [that] is always with us" (Oates, "Rites", *Celestial* Webpage). She rather shares Durkheim's optimistic belief that this "festival of misrule [...] will serve to revitalize the diseased cultural order" (ibid). She points to another kind of transcendence: reconciliation with life in all its manifestations, and acceptance of one's fate which is inseparably bound with the communal. She hopes that the painful transformation of consciousness will one day lead to

[...] a higher humanism, perhaps a kind of intelligent pantheism, in which all substance in the universe (including the substance fortunate enough to perceive it) is there by equal right. ("New Heaven", *Celestial* Webpage).

For the time being, however, the yet adolescent America remains the promised land of Romantic overreachers, obsessed with the past or dreaming about future, trying to fill their emptiness with fame, power, sex, drugs and food, inevitably ending up in destruction.

## 5. Resumé

Metoda, s jejíž pomocí vytváří Joyce Carol Oatesová na základě skutečných událostí fiktivní příběhy, působí na první pohled post-moderně. Zdánlivě snadno mísí prvky gotického a psychologického románu, symbolismu a naturalismu, snu a reality. Už druhý pohled ale odhalí složitou síť souvislostí mezi fikcí a skutečností, formou a obsahem, vnějším a vnitřním světem vypravěčů, jejich osudy a osudem celé společnosti. Ne nadarmo se mamutí internetové stránky věnované této autorce jmenují *Celestial Timepiece* - Nebeské hodiny. Soukolí významů, která ve svých dílech roztáčí, opravdu mohou připomínat svou složitostí sluneční soustavu.

Novely *The Triumph of The Spider Monkey* a *Zombie*, jimiž se zabývala tato práce, představují dva nezazší extrémů v její prozaické tvorbě. Jejich sériově vraždící vypravěči však o to názorněji demonstrují rozplocenost mezi starým a novým, primitivním a civilizovaným, zakázaným a dovoleným, jímž byl fascinován už gotický román a který zdědila mladá Americká kultura. Spojením autentičnosti a téměř architektonické kompozice se Oatesová přinejmenším vyrovná svým předchůdcům, Shellyové a Stokerovi, na něž vědomě navazuje. A stejně jako oni často vkládá do vyprávění svých hrdinů složité metafory a literární i mimoliterární odkazy.

Hlavním přínosem této práce je odhalení dvou základních principů, jež kdysi daly život dvěma nejslavnějším gotickým monstrům, a jimiž se v novelách Oatesové řídí osudy vypravěčů i celé Ameriky. První je vzpoura proti matce, druhou vzpoura proti otci. V celosvětovém měřítku pak lze Ameriku přirovnat k dospívajícímu dítěti, které se vytrhlo z náručí krkavčí matky Anglie a pokouší se vzdorovat i despotickému otci Římu.

Nárůst popularity i počtu sériových vrahů v průběhu dvacátého století svědčí podle Oatesové o blížící se společenské krizi. A její díla popisují násilí, které bude tuto transformaci provázet. Na rozdíl od svých křesťansky

smýšlejících krajanů však neočekává Soudný den. Spíše doufá, že z těchto bolestných změn vyjde Amerika konečně jako dospělá.

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## ÚDAJE PRO KNIHOVNICKOU DATABÁZI

<b>Název práce</b>	Prvky gotického románu v díle Joyce Carol Oatesové
<b>Autor Práce</b>	Kamil Pinta
<b>Obor</b>	Obor Učitelství anglického jazyka
<b>Rok obhajoby</b>	2006
<b>Vedoucí Práce</b>	Michael Kaylor, M.A., Ph.D.
<b>Anotace</b>	Diplomová práce zkoumá vliv gotického románu na dílo Joyce Carol Oatesové. V úvodu podává přehled vývoje gotického románu a jeho pokračovatelů v anglické a americké literatuře a filmu. V ústřední části nalézá paralely mezi dvěma nejslavnějšími gotickými monstry <i>Frankensteinem</i> a <i>Draculou</i> , a dvěma sériovými vrahy/vypravěči v novelách Joyce Carol Oatesové, inspirovanými skutečností. Popisuje metodu, s níž Oatesová kombinuje vlivy romantického symbolismu a naturalismu, a rozkrývá metafory a kulturní odkazy, jimiž se autorka slovy postavy vyjadřuje k současné společenské situaci v USA. V závěru shrnuje poznatky a hodnotí význam díla Joyce Carol Oatesové v kontextu amerického psychologického románu.
<b>Klíčová slova</b>	Joyce Carol Oates Gothic novel Serial Killer Frankenstein Dracula Narrative