IMPAIRED INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS AND DYSFUNCTIONAL CHILDHOOD: A STUDY OF THE SELECTED FICTION OF JOYCE CAROL OATES

The

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DECLARATION

I, hereby declare that the presented work in the thesis entitled "Impaired Interpersonal Relationships and Dysfunctional childhood: A Study of the Selected Fiction of Joyce Carol Oates" in fulfilment of degree of **Doctor of Philosophy (Ph. D.)** is outcome of research work carried out by me under the supervision of Dr. Sandeep Kumar Sharma, working as Associate Professor, in the School of Social Sciences and Languages, of Lovely Professional University, Punjab, India. In keeping with general practice of reporting scientific observations, due acknowledgements have been made whenever work described here has been based on findings of other investigator. This work has not been submitted in part or full to any other University or Institute for the award of any degree.



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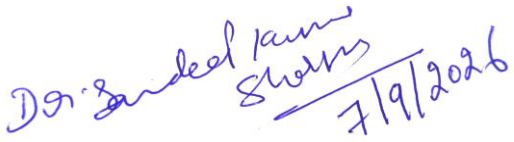
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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the work reported in the Ph. D. thesis entitled "Impaired Interpersonal Relationships and Dysfunctional childhood: A Study of the Selected Fiction of Joyce Carol Oates" submitted in fulfillment of the requirement for the award of degree of **Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)** in the School of Social Sciences and Languages, is a research work carried out by Shivalika Sharma , 11919235, is bonafide record of her original work carried out under my supervision and that no part of thesis has been submitted for any other degree, diploma or equivalent course.



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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the intricate relationship between dysfunctional childhood and adult interpersonal dynamics in the fiction of Joyce Carol Oates, analyzed through the lens of Karen Horney's social psychoanalytic theory of neurosis and personality. Oates's works often delve into the psychological conflicts and emotional turmoil of her characters, providing a fertile ground for examining how early childhood experiences, particularly those marked by neglect, trauma, and instability, shape the development of neurotic behaviors in adulthood. Oates's works, known for their psychological depth, dark realism, and exploration of trauma, offer a compelling literary space where emotional suffering, familial dysfunction, and identity crises unfold with unsettling clarity. Her characters often grapple with the enduring scars of childhood abuse, emotional neglect, and unstable family environments, making her fiction particularly well-suited for a psychoanalytic investigation into the roots and consequences of neurotic development. Among modern American writers, Oates stands out for her nuanced portrayals of psychologically tormented individuals, especially women, who struggle to reconcile their inner conflicts with societal expectations and intimate relationships. Her narratives frequently blur the line between the internal psyche and external reality, thereby providing fertile ground for applying a theory that bridges both intrapsychic and interpersonal domains. Her protagonists are often caught in the long shadow of a troubled upbringing, navigating adulthood through maladaptive coping mechanisms, failed relationships, and unresolved internal conflicts. These narrative patterns make Oates's works ideal for a psychoanalytic study centered on early-life emotional deprivation and its ripple effects in adulthood.

The theoretical foundation of the study rests on Karen Horney's theory of neurosis and theory of personality which provides a more socially and emotionally nuanced alternative to Freudian psychoanalysis. Karen Horney's psychoanalytic theory is particularly apt for this study, as it shifts the emphasis from Freud's biologically rooted drives and deterministic view of personality toward a more socially and culturally

informed understanding of neurosis. Unlike Freud, who largely attributed adult psychological issues to unconscious sexual conflicts, Horney foregrounds the significance of early environmental factors such as lack of warmth, safety, and affection in the development of neurotic patterns. Her concept of "basic anxiety" arising from a hostile or neglectful childhood environment, and the resulting "neurotic needs" and personality trends ("moving toward," "against," and "away from" people), offers a more dynamic and humanistic framework to analyze the characters in Oates's fiction.

Through this interdisciplinary approach, the thesis underscores how Oates's fiction powerfully dramatizes the long-term psychological repercussions of dysfunctional childhoods. At the same time, it highlights the unique strength of Horney's theory in interpreting the social and emotional complexities of adult relationships shaped by early trauma. This study contributes to literary psychoanalytic criticism by bridging psychological theory with literary analysis, revealing the enduring relevance of Oates's narratives in understanding human behavior and emotional conflict. It not only reinforces the relevance of Karen Horney's insights in literary criticism but also highlights the enduring significance of Oates's work in exploring the fragile, fractured nature of human relationships. The research work endeavors at achieving the following main objectives:

1. To examine the neurosis in the characters of the selected fiction of Joyce Carol Oates

2. To analyse the selected texts with the lens of Karen Horney's theory of personality

3. To understand the role of dysfunctional childhood in the selected texts

4. To investigate the solutions based on Horney's theory with respect to neurotic needs in the selected text

Thus, the research is guided by four distinct yet interrelated objectives, each foregrounding a unique dimension of Horney's theory. First, it examines the

manifestation of neurosis in Oates's characters by identifying behaviors reflective of psychological conflict and emotional instability. This fulfills the objective of studying neurotic symptoms in a literary context and sets the foundation for psychoanalytic inquiry. Second, the thesis applies Horney's theory of personality structure, with particular focus on her character typology—compliant, aggressive, and detached types. These types, derived from Horney's three interpersonal strategies (moving toward, against, and away from people), allow for a nuanced classification of Oates's protagonists based on their dominant neurotic trends and relational patterns. This typological analysis highlights how individuals cope with anxiety and unmet emotional needs by adopting distinct psychological defenses.

The third objective focuses on the etiology of neurosis, exploring how dysfunctional childhoods—marked by neglect, emotional absence, or hostility—create "basic anxiety," a central concept in Horney's theory. This chapter traces the origin of adult dysfunctions back to the lack of genuine affection and security in childhood, emphasizing the role of "basic evil" in distorting personality development. By doing so, it distinguishes itself from other objectives by emphasizing causation rather than symptomatology or typology.

The fourth and final objective investigates the so-called "solutions" neurotic individuals adopt to cope with unresolved conflicts, as outlined by Horney. These pseudo-solutions such as excessive compliance, hostility, or withdrawal are examined within the context of Oates's characters, who often pursue maladaptive strategies that fail to result in genuine psychological resolution or healthy relational fulfillment. This analysis underscores the intrapsychic conflicts that persist beneath external behavior, offering a deeper understanding of character motivations and tragic outcomes.

Structurally, the thesis is divided into six chapters, progressing from biographical and theoretical groundwork to detailed character analysis and thematic synthesis. Karen Horney's theory is favored over classical Freudian models because of its emphasis on social and interpersonal dynamics, making it especially relevant for a study centered on

the relational consequences of childhood trauma. While Freud focused on internal drives and deterministic instincts, Horney foregrounded environmental factors, family relationships, and cultural pressures, offering a more empathetic and socially grounded approach to psychological development.

In order to achieve the aforementioned objectives, the thesis is divided into six chapters followed by a conclusion. The first chapter titled "Making of the Novelist" provides a biographical account of the author Joyce Carol Oates giving an insight into her life and her prominent works. It focuses on her journey as a person and its contribution into shaping the persona of a giant of American letters. It also provides details into the works selected for the undertaken research work. A review of literature while exploring the research gap is also covered in this study.

The second chapter titled "Theory of Neurosis: Issues and Challenges" discusses the contribution of Karen Horney to the Neo-Freudian school of psychoanalytical thought while laying emphasis on her theory of neurosis and theory of personality. Additionally, it enumerates and explains the ten neurotic needs while laying the theoretical framework of the study. Besides, it delves into the basic theoretical terms and key concepts necessary for understanding the development of following chapters scrutinizing Horney's social psychoanalytical theory.

The third chapter titled "Oates's Characters and Neurotic Needs" delves into "neurosis" as a Horneyian phenomenon while also examining the historical significance and meaning of the term "neurosis". The key accomplishment of this chapter is to study the neurotic needs as proposed by Horney with respect to the protagonists of the selected fiction of Oates. This chapter discusses the concept of neurosis as it stands juxtaposed against what is deemed healthy growth and human development. The chapter scrutinizes the behaviour of Oates's protagonists to corroborate the presence of Horney's neurotic needs. A deep examination and investigation of the protagonists' drive, and motivations is carried out to ascertain the presence of a specific neurotic need while establishing them as Horney's neurotics.

The fourth chapter titled “Typology and Diversified Personalities” examines the characters of Oates’s fiction from the lens of Horney theory of personality examining the presence of trends viz. “moving towards”, “moving against” and “moving away” to deduce personalities exhibited by the protagonist. It deconstructs the psychic propensities and interplay of psychic tendencies and interpersonal trends to assort personality types to the characters while organizing them into three personality types viz. “compliant type”, “aggressive type” and the “detached type”. The study far reaches scrutinizing their motives and inhibitions to draw similarities and distinctions establishing a comparative understanding of these types.

The fifth chapter titled “Basic Anxiety and Dysfunctional Childhood” discerns the role of childhood as a contributing factor in neurotic conflicts which further disrupt the psychic developmental pathways appearing as afflictions in adult interpersonal affiliations and conduct in general. This chapter serves as a groundwork in establishing the contribution of Horney in discerning the role of childhood in adult neurotic conflicts while laying an emphasis on the immediate environment as a contributing factor furthering the notion of Freud where he focused entirely on basal instincts. It emphasises on the concept of “basic anxiety” as a manifestation of “basic evil” which is the lack of genuine warmth and affection in child’s environment. It scrutinizes Oates’s protagonists and dissects their childhood environment to divulge the presence of “basic evil” as proposed by Horney while establishing the role of parental figures in the disruption. It draws inferences from the comparative analysis of the childhood circumstances of the protagonists of various novels reinforcing the “basic evil” and hence “basic anxiety” in the neurotic disruptions.

The sixth chapter titled “Horney’s Solutions and Developmental Pathways” studies the developmental paths in the adult neurotics while highlighting the prominence of intrapsychic elements present with the interpersonal ones. The Oates’s protagonists as Horneyian neurotics take a course of action while finding a solution to their conflicts which emerge as Horneyian solutions viz. The study scrutinizes these solutions

thoroughly understanding the intricacies of intrapsychic elements and their juxtaposition with interpersonal elements which come together to create a developmental path employed by these characters. It also highlights the wastefulness of these solutions as they are not real solutions and don't lead to any resolution or self-realization.

Finally, the section titled "Conclusion", while summarizing the research work, outlines the outcomes and the findings of the study. In addition, it enumerates the relevance and the scope of the study in the context of the present world scenario beset by several conflicting issues

Chapter 1

Making of the Novelist

Joyce Carol Oates, one of the most prolific and intellectually formidable voices in American literature, is distinguished by her prodigious creative output and her masterful exploration of diverse literary forms and genres. Over a literary career extending beyond six decades, she has constructed an astonishingly vast and diverse corpus encompassing more than seventy novels, together with an extensive range of short stories, essays, and plays. Oates's captivating storytelling and profound exploration of complex psychological and social themes have earned her widespread critical acclaim and numerous honors, including the National Book Award, the O. Henry Award, the Jerusalem Prize, and the PEN/Malamud Award for Excellence in Short Fiction, alongside multiple nominations for the Pulitzer Prize. Her novels frequently probe intricate psychological landscapes, while her short fiction reveals her mastery of the concise yet evocative narrative form. Noted for her stylistic versatility, Oates seamlessly traverses genres and subjects, consistently engaging with the complexities of human nature and the darker dimensions of American society. Her works confront themes such as violence, identity, and the moral ambiguities underlying human behavior, offering penetrating insights into the tensions of contemporary life. Recurring concerns across her oeuvre include the search for identity and self-discovery, the complexities of human relationships, and the examination of societal issues such as race, gender, and class (Encyclopedia Britannica). Through her unflinching portrayal of the violence and cruelty that lurk beneath the surface of everyday existence, Oates exposes the unsettling realities of human experience. She is thus acclaimed by Maile Chapman in The Oxford Encyclopedia of American Literature as:

> Joyce Carol Oates is a writer of great intellectual complexity and stylistic range. Her body of works offers an inter-disciplinary portrait of American culture that

> often depicts the darker aspects of human nature through psychological, physical, and sexual violence. Her prolific literary output is legendary (277).

Oates's formidable literary achievement, marked by its psychological acuity, thematic profundity, and inexhaustible creative energy has indelibly shaped the landscape of American fiction and secured her status as one of the most influential and enduring voices in twentieth- and twenty-first-century literature.

Oates was born in 1938 in Lockport, New York, into a family of modest means. The eldest of three children, she was born to Frederic James Oates, a tool-and-die designer, and Carolina (née Bush), a homemaker of Hungarian descent. Oates spent her formative years in Millersport, New York, which she later described as "hardly a community, it was a farm and another farm, and a creek" (Edemariam). Reflecting on her upbringing, Oates characterized her family as "a happy, close-knit and unextraordinary family for our time, place and economic status," though she simultaneously acknowledged that her childhood was marked by "a daily scramble for existence" (Oates and Atwan). A profound influence during her early years was her paternal grandmother, Blanche Woodside, with whom Oates shared an intimate and enduring bond. Woodside nurtured her granddaughter's imagination and love of literature by recounting stories from their family's past. It was Blanche's gift of Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) that first awakened Oates's passion for reading. In *The Faith of a Writer: Life, Craft, Art,* Oates recalls this gift as "the great treasure of my childhood, and the most profound literary influence of my life. This was love at first sight!" The later revelation that her grandmother was of Jewish descent was discovered only after Blanche's death which came as a surprise to Oates and added a new layer of complexity to her understanding of familial and cultural identity. Drawing inspiration from her grandmother's life and the broader history of her family, Oates later transformed these personal experiences into fiction in her novel *The Gravedigger's Daughter*. Oates's early intellectual formation was also shaped by the authors she encountered during her

adolescence. The works of Fyodor Dostoevsky and William Faulkner profoundly influenced her literary consciousness, inspiring her to probe the psychological depths of human behavior and to explore dark and psychological narratives.

At the age of fourteen, Oates began writing in earnest after receiving a typewriter from her grandmother. She attended Williamsville South High School, her mother's alma mater where she actively participated in literary clubs and writing competitions, eventually winning a Scholastic Art and Writing Award for her early work. Following her graduation, Oates was awarded a scholarship to Syracuse University, which she later described as "a very exciting place academically and intellectually," recalling that she prepared herself there by "writing novel after novel and always throwing them out when I finished" (Phillips). She graduated *summa cum laude* with a B.A. in English in 1960 and subsequently earned her M.A. from the University of Wisconsin–Madison in 1961. Oates briefly pursued doctoral studies at Rice University before deciding to devote herself entirely to writing. Her literary promise was immediately recognized by Evelyn Shrifte, the president of Vanguard Press and the first publisher of such notable figures as Saul Bellow and Dr. Seuss. Shrifte later remarked, "She was fresh out of school, and I thought she was a genius" (Loo). Oates's debut publication, the short story collection *By the North Gate* (1963), was issued by Vanguard Press and met with critical acclaim. The volume announced the arrival of a formidable new voice in American fiction, remarkable for its psychological acuity and its unflinching portrayal of the human condition. Greg Johnson, the award-winning writer, biographer, and scholar of Oates, observes that *By the North Gate* "provides a carefully detailed portrait [of the] post-Depression rural poor; [the stories] investigate women's experience in a patriarchal mid-twentieth century culture that conformed to long-standing social, religious, and family models." He further contends that the collection "investigates virtually all the important themes that characterize her dozens of subsequent books [and] contains several of her finest stories" (Johnson). Another critic, Margaret Groppi Rozga while talking about Oates's first book says:

> The initial stories in *By the North Gate* portray a series of losses that define the condition of the contemporary world as Oates sees it. The Eden County in which several of them are set is hardly an echo of the paradise it might once have been. It is a world that values only material goods and whose characters set store not by their conscience but by what they perceive to be the opinion of their fellows. Any deeper consciousness, and any sense of perspective on the present, is fractured, if it continues to exist at all. Consequently, the quality of love, friendship, community, and any unifying element, is also diminished. And it is such erosion and its alienating effects on the characters that the other stories in this volume show. (Rozga)

Following the publication of her debut short story collection *By the North Gate* (1963), Joyce Carol Oates released her first novel, *With Shuddering Fall*, through Vanguard Press in 1964. Written in her early twenties, this striking debut marked the emergence of a distinctive literary voice deeply preoccupied with the psychological and moral dimensions of violence, passion, and self-destruction (Grant 3-4). In this novel, Oates probes the dynamics of dominance within erotic relationships, the psychological and emotional aftermath of adolescent trauma, and the destructive legacies of patriarchal authority. The narrative centers on a turbulent and ultimately tragic love affair, rendered with a paradoxical blend of compassion and ruthlessness, where the desire for destruction becomes as enduring and potent as the impulse to love. Set in Eden County, a fictional landscape that would recur throughout Oates's later fiction, *With Shuddering Fall* already demonstrates her characteristic interest in the moral fractures and emotional disintegration of American life. The protagonist, Karen Herz, is profoundly influenced by her father's reading of the biblical account of Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Isaac at God's command. In a chilling act of psychological transference, he instructs Karen to kill Shar, a race car driver who violently assaults him. Drawn to Shar despite her father's injunction, Karen elopes with him, entangling herself in a destructive relationship marked by mutual attraction and deep emotional confinement (Oates, *With Shuddering Fall).*

Shar's simultaneous desire for freedom and his inability to extricate himself from the relationship mirror Karen's own moral paralysis. Ultimately, recalling her father's command, Karen abandons Shar at his moment of greatest vulnerability, allowing him to fall to his death, a climactic act that fuses biblical symbolism with psychological realism. Her subsequent institutionalization and eventual reconciliation with her father frame her search for redemption and self-understanding. Although *With Shuddering Fall* remains relatively obscure and is now out of print, it stands as an extraordinarily accomplished debut, presaging many of themes that would dominate Oates's later work (Johnson 11-13). The novel's intricate exploration of violence, guilt, and the ambivalent interplay between love and destruction anticipates her sustained interrogation of the moral tensions underlying American society. (Johnson 18) Indeed, as critics have observed, the novel occupies a place alongside the works of Flannery O'Connor in its fearless depiction of the intersection between religious ideology and violence in American cultural consciousness. In his review of the novel for *The New York Times*, John Knowles praised Oates's unwavering commitment to her central theme, observing:

> One of the excellent qualities of this novel by the talented young writer Joyce Carol Oates is an unswerving fidelity to its theme. The theme is violence, beginning with a minor automobile accident, then accelerating swiftly to a nearly mortal fight, an immolation, onward and downward into an even faster and stronger whirlpool of violence, until the entire world of the novel is caught in a paroxysm of hate and destruction. . . This material is not as garish as it sounds because of the clarity, grace and intelligence of the writing. The tone has some of the baleful reasonableness amid madness that made Shirley Jackson's "The Lottery" so powerful. (Knowles 5)

The author delves into the theme of dominance in erotic relationships, the dangers of patriarchal inheritance, the aftermath of emotional loss in adolescence, and the perils of patriarchal inheritance, all while exploring the turbulent story of two lovers who end up becoming mortal enemies. The result is an amiable yet unsentimental depiction of a

tragic love affair in which a burning desire for destruction is an enduring passion and hatred is almost as strong as love. The New York Times compared this young writer's debut to Shirley Jackson's famous short story, "The Lottery," due to its masterful portrayal of the dark and unsettling aspects of human nature.

In 1966, she wrote "*Where are you going, Where have you been?"*, a frequently anthologized short story that first appeared in the Fall 1966 edition of Epoch magazine. It was prompted by three murders in Tucson, Arizona that Charles Schmid committed, which were covered by Don Moser in a March 4, 1966, Life magazine article (Johnson 37). Oates claimed that after listening to Bob Dylan's song "It's All Over Now Baby Blue," she was inspired to write the story and dedicated it to him. In an essay titled Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been? and Smooth Talk: Short Story Into Film, Oates revealed that the story was originally named "Death and the Maiden". Based on the real-life experiences of a Tucson, Arizona serial killer, this story of confused adolescence follows fifteen-year-old Connie, who despises her parents, spends her hot summer nights at suburban malls and hangs out with her equally precocious girlfriends. She does, however, secretly have naive fantasies of perfect love throughout it all. She is alone at home one day when a strange man bearing the ominous name Arnold Friend approaches her intending to lure her away. Friend manipulates Connie's delicate and developing sexuality by subtly penetrating her mind rather than using physical force (Oates, "*Where are you going"*). In the end, it is clear that he is guiding her toward a physical or spiritual death of some kind and that his love is hollow, yet she is helpless to stop him.

Although Oates presents the story in a naturalistic manner, there are surrealistic and dreamy moments that point to possible allegorical interpretations (Johnson 40-42). The title alludes to the ambiguity of adolescence as well as the unchanging nature of feminine behavior—or, perhaps more specifically, the glacial pace at which societal advancements are improving the lot of women. This particular short story gained widespread recognition and is considered one of Oates's most influential works. Its

exploration of themes such as adolescence, sexuality, and the dangers of the modern world resonated with readers and solidified Oates's reputation as a master of psychological fiction. The story was adapted into the 1985 film *Smooth Talk*, directed by Joyce Chopra, further extending its cultural influence (Johnson 47). Oates claimed in 2008 that of all her works that have been published, "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?" had garnered the greatest attention (Oates, "Interview")

In some ways, "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?" is a preface to many of Oates's later stories, delicately written and quintessentially Oatesian. The first-person narrative in "How I Contemplated the World from the Detroit House of Correction and Began My Life Over Again" tells the story of a lost teenage girl searching for love and self-discovery. "Testimony," which was published much later, shows the story of a teenage girl who is so devoted to her older boyfriend that she helps him abduct, rape, and kill her perceived "rival." "April" is a straightforward portrait of two young teenagers defying their mothers' authority. These four, along with countless more, depict points in time when childhood verges on maturity, when naiveté gradually gives way to refinement, and when love and desire outweigh life itself.

Another short story "In the Region of Ice" published in 1966, a haunting tale that delves into the complexities of family dynamics and the fragility of human relationships also gained her significant recognition winning her the first of her two O. Henry Awards. First published in The Atlantic Monthly in 1965, and later in The Wheel of Love, it was an O. Henry Award-winner in 1967 (Johnson 29). Sister Irene is the protagonist of "In the Region of Ice." She teaches Shakespeare at a small Roman Catholic university. She technically resides "in the region of ice," which is a place devoid of emotion and passion. She is shy in social situations and finds it difficult to establish genuine human connections, but she is extremely at ease when speaking in front of a class. Allen Weinstein, a Jewish student who is intelligent but emotionally unstable, enters her segregated life. He takes over one of Irene's classes because he is fixated on the reality of ideas, which incites his classmates' animosity while igniting the professor's own intellectual and emotional life.

The narrative, told from Irene's point of view, follows her emotional journey in reaction to Allen's erratic actions (Oates, "Region"). Through her eyes, their relationship is transformed into a dance of spiritual allure and intellectual passion.

But Allen quits attending classes and, after a protracted absence, calls Irene from a mental health facility, pleading with her to speak with his father. When Irene encounters Allen's hateful, irritated, and callous father, the Christian awakening and power she feels as she approaches the Weinstein residence vanish. After being discharged from the sanatorium, Allen turns to Irene for financial and emotional support, but she vehemently and incoherently rejects him, unable to build a genuine relationship. Irene is in a more pitiful situation than Allen, even though it is obvious that Allen is on the verge of insanity; she is consciously imprisoned within the silly boundaries of her own identity (Oates, "Region"). Even the almost inevitable news of Allen's suicide at the end of the story elicits no real emotional reaction, just a yearning for feeling.

Her second novel, *A Garden of Earthly Delights*, was published in 1967 and is considered the first of the so-called Wonderland Quartet, which was published by Vanguard from 1967 to 1971. The novel's title derives from Hieronymus Bosch's painting *The Garden of Earthly Delights* (Johnson 55). The goal of *A Garden of Earthly Delights* is to examine American socioeconomic class and the inner lives of its youth. It centers on the lovely Clara Walpole, the migrant farmer's daughter from Kentucky who is the main character. The story delves into Clara's unfortunate life and the four men who influenced it: Clara's embittered hard-working father; Lowry, who whisks the teenage Clara away and tempts her with love; Revere, a wealthy married businessman who provides Clara with stability; Swan, Clara's son, who bears the physiological weight of Clara's determination to escape her haphazard existence of violence and poverty. Through her relationships with the four different men in her life, Clara fights for independence to rise above her mother's ambitions (Oates, *Garden*). Speaking of the grotesque in Oates's works Kathleen in her essay observes, "Oates endows her characters with survival skills that metastasize into the obsessions that ultimately destroy them," and concludes, "That the Walpole clan's

progression runs full circle from the depths of misery to great heights of satisfaction and back down to misery, greatly intensifies the grotesque effect of the novel" (Bloom).

Oates offers a thought-provoking and gripping look at the rolling secrets of America's wealthy suburbs in *Expensive People* (Johnson 61). This first-person confession, which takes place in the late 1960s, is told by Richard Everett, an intelligent but overweight young man who feels like a bit part in the frightening drama going on around him. Richard, who is both fascinated and estranged from his ostentatious, conceited parents and the affluent environment they live in, sharply examines his own mishandled upbringing, his ostentatious private education, his "successful executive" father, and his enigmatic mother. In an act of defiance and desperation, eleven-year-old Richard strikes out in a way that presages the violence of ever-younger Americans in the turbulent decades to come (Oates, *Expensive*). This novel is a National Book Award finalist and a stunning blend of social satire and gothic horror.

Them, the third novel in the Wonderland Quartet series, explores the gritty realities of life in Detroit's black ghetto neighborhoods from the 1930s to the 1960s. With a fearless portrayal of crime, drugs, and racial and class conflicts, it delves into the harsh social conditions that plagued the city during this period. The novel's unflinching honesty and powerful narrative earned it the prestigious 1970 National Book Award for Fiction (Johnson 72). The narrative of Loretta Wendall, her spouse(s), their offspring, and their great-grandchildren is presented in *Them*. At one point in their life, all of them reside in Detroit. They're all impoverished. John Webster's quote, "...because we are poor / Shall we be vicious?" opens Oates's book (Oates, *Them* epigraph). Although Maureen's parents didn't talk much about money when she was growing up, it was clear that it was on their minds. When Maureen is a teenager, her stepfather subjects her to a horrifically violent deed. For the next two years, Maureen is essentially in a catatonic state, consuming copious amounts of food to change her appearance and conceal her identity. Meanwhile, Loretta mutely insists that Maureen "hasn't lost her appetite" and so cannot be ill when anyone shows concern. After a while, Maureen returns to work as a secretary and goes to Oates's

evening classes at the college. She is partially resentful of her professor because of the professor's effortless comfort with men—her husband and other instructors. Maureen has never been able to converse with a man without becoming aware of his gender. Jules, Maureen's brother, is a fascinating individual as well. He is a symbol of the liberty of the 1960s and 1970s, on the one hand. Jules manages to leave the hazardous Wendall home on his own, in contrast to Maureen and Loretta, who can only achieve freedom by leaving their home environment. Due to his attractiveness and charisma, he is accepted and drawn into several significant events at that time, such as the Detroit racial riots and anti-Vietnam War demonstrations. However, he also stands for the vices of the era, raping and firing at individuals at random during the riots and sexing up a young lady he encounters during the demonstrations (with another woman and baby on the side). He vanishes near the book's conclusion, just before he leaves for what looks to be a political job in Los Angeles (Oates, *Them*).

Oates's personal connection to the city adds an authentic depth to the characters and events depicted in the novel. Drawing from real-life experiences, she brings a sense of realism and empathy to the story, shedding light on the struggles faced by those living in Detroit's black ghetto neighborhoods. Speaking of the influence life in Detroit had on her to shape her literary career Oates in her "Visions of Detroit" says:

> Life is fecund, art is selective . . . If we had never come to the city of Detroit I would have been a writer (indeed, I had already written my first two books before coming here, aged twenty-three) but Detroit, my "great" subject, made me the person I am, consequently the writer that I am- for better or worse. (Oates, "Visions" 348)

The epic tale of Jesse Vogel, a young man whose life was spared but whose world was shattered after a family tragedy, is told in the fourth novel named *Wonderland* after which the series takes its name *Wonderland Quartet*. After witnessing his father kill his entire family, Jesse becomes an orphan and sets out on a personal journey that leads him

from a Dickensian foster home to graduate school, college, and the top of the medical field. In order to save his teenage daughter, who has become enmeshed in the drug-fueled 1960s counterculture, Jesse must find the strength as an adult to bridge the "generation gap" (Oates, *Wonderland*). The novel is praised by Library Journal as "the greatest of Oates's novels," and is the culmination of an amazing literary journey that delves beneath the glossy exterior of American life. A New York Times editor Geoffrey Wolff while commenting on the portrayal of the grotesque in the Wonderland Quartet says:

> These novels delve into themes of mayhem, rape, madness, and even the unsettling topic of murdered children. These works skillfully explore various forms of murder, both ordinary and extraordinary, leaving readers both disturbed and enthralled. A book titled *Nietzsche and Joyce Carol Oates: Nietzschean Themes in The Wonderland Quartet* explores the influence the Nietzsche on Oates's Wonderland Quartet. (Wolff)

Joyce Carol Oates's early novels are referred to as "psychological realism" and "American naturalism". In literature, psychological fiction (also psychological realism) is a narrative genre that emphasizes interior characterization and motivation to explore the spiritual, emotional, and mental lives of the characters (Penguin Dictionary). The mode of narration examines the reasons for the behaviors of the character, which propels the plot and explains the story (Penguin Dictionary). Fyodor Dostoevsky is a classic example of an author who used psychological realism. Oates draws inspiration from him as he is one of her literary influences among many others (Johnson 15). However, in the 1970's her inclination was switched to the gothic genre. A lot of her novels and stories talk about distressed females but she opts out of being called a feminist writer. It is rather the neuropsychological processes of her female characters that she portrays in her young female characters. In the words of Mary Kathryn Grant:

Joyce Carol Oates's women are stereotypical portraits of frustrated, neurotic human beings physically crippled by the events of their lives and the tragic frustrations with which they cannot cope. Their only redeeming quality is that they do survive, they

manage to make it through all but overwhelming circumstances. (Grant 25) So, the current study takes this dimension of the vivid literature of Oates and studies her novels from the perspective of functional neurosis in Oates's characters both male and female. Speaking on her role as a writer Joyce Carol Oates says:

> Most of the world's population, through his-tory, have not been able to "bear witness" for themselves. They lack the language, as well as the confidence, to shape the language for their own ends. They lack the education, as well as the power that comes with education. Politically, they may be disenfran-chised—simply too poor and devastated by poverty and the bad luck that comes with poverty, like an infected limb turning gangre-nous. They may be suppressed or terrorized into silence. My most intense sympathies tend to be for those individuals who have been left behind by history, as by the economy; they are all around us, but become visible only when something goes terribly wrong, like a natural disaster, or an outburst of madness and violence. Particularly, I have been sympathetic with the plight of women and girls in a patriarchal society; I am struck by the ways in which weakness can be transformed into strength and vulnerability into survival. If the writer has any obligation—and this is a debatable issue, for the writer must remain free—it's to give voice to those who lack voices of their own. (Oates, Motives 5)

Joyce Carol Oates represents the marginalized particularly young girls and women who face immense challenges and obstacles in a society that often silences their experiences. In her writings like "The Lost Landscape: A Writer's Coming of Age" and "We Were the Mulvaneys", Oates explores the resilience and determination of these individuals, shedding light on their struggles and empowering them through her narratives. Through her short stories, novels, and critical writings, she has "become something of a contemporary Honoré de Balzac"; however, instead of nineteenth-century France, her expansive view of the human comedy provides a somber look at the wounds, violence, and rage of modern American society. Oates confessed in 1972 that "I have a laughably

Balzacian ambition to get the whole world into a book" (Wagner). Gothic and horror genres have found a place in her earlier works and still touch her works. She accepts the influence of Kafka on her and even claims to share a literary kinship with James Joyce.

Oates started her teaching career at Beaumont, Texas, where she taught for a year, then moved to Detroit in 1962, where she began teaching at the University of Detroit. Influenced by the Vietnam war and the 1967 Detroit race riots, Oates moved across the river into Canada in 1968 with her husband, to a teaching position at the University of Windsor in Ontario (Johnson 23). She started a literary magazine named The Ontario Review in 1974 with her husband Raymond J. Smith, who was a professor of 18th-century literature. The Ontario Review magazine that she started in Canada was to bridge the gap between the literature of the US and Canada. Speaking of this journal, Raymond. J Smith says:

> Conceived of as a North American Journal of the Arts, it was intended to bridge what Joyce and I, Americans teaching in Canada at the time, felt to be a widening gap between the two literary/artistic cultures. We tried to do this by publishing writers and artists from both countries, as well as essays and reviews of an intercultural nature. When we moved to Princeton, we put less emphasis on the intercultural role of the journal, though we still published many Canadians, from Margaret Atwood to Tom Wayman. (Smith)

They moved back to the US in 1978, and she started teaching at Princeton University. Her career at Princeton was a very long one spanning more than thirty years. She retired from Princeton in 2014. She launched a course in creative writing following her retirement and besides that, she is still actively pursuing her writing career at 82 years. One of her major attributes as a writer is her prolificacy; she is known to write on average two novels a year and this tradition continues in the year 2025 with her work *Fox: A Novel* coming out earlier this year. She calls herself an atheist though born Catholic. She

identifies as a liberal as far as her political inclinations are concerned. She is known to be a vocal critic of the American President Donald Trump. (Oates, "Paris Review" 12).

This study focuses exclusively on the novels of Joyce Carol Oates, who has authored approximately seventy-one novels between 1964 and 2025. While her early works have received substantial critical attention for their exploration of violence, identity, and the darker dimensions of American life, her later fiction published after 1990 marks a significant evolution in both thematic complexity and psychological depth. The post-1990 phase of Oates's writing reveals a more introspective engagement with the enduring effects of childhood trauma, emotional deprivation, and fractured familial relationships, often rendered through nuanced psychological realism. These works demonstrate a discernible shift from the broader social and cultural critiques that characterize her earlier fiction toward a more inward examination of the self and its conflicts. Accordingly, this study concentrates on selected novels from this later period, chosen for their thematic resonance with the research's central concern: the psychological repercussions of childhood experiences on adult behavior and interpersonal dynamics. By engaging with Oates's recent fiction, an area that remains comparatively underexplored in existing scholarship, this study seeks to offer new critical insights into the evolving psychological architecture of her characters, analyzed through the conceptual framework of Karen Horney's theory of neurosis and theory of personality.

Joyce Carol Oates shaped many young minds through her writing courses at Princeton. Jonathan Safran Foer, initially unsure of his career path, discovered his passion for writing after taking an introductory fiction course with Joyce Carol Oates. He graduated in 1999 and later wrote an undergraduate thesis with Oates, which was an early version of his acclaimed novel, *Everything Is Illuminated*. When he was a few weeks into the semester, Oates told him that she was a fan of his writing. Speaking of Oates's influence on him in finding his passion for writing he says, '"It was a revelation," he said. "It had never occurred to me that there was such a thing as 'my writing.' I thought the thing I was doing was just fulfilling the assignments" (Nash).

The novels of Joyce Carol Oates selected for the undertaken study include *What I Lived For* (1994), *Zombie (*1995), *I'll Take You There (*2002), My *Life As Rat (*2019), and *Pursuit (*2019). The novel *What I Lived For* (1994) talks about a day in the life of Jerome Corcoran nicknamed Corky who is a 42-year-old successful real estate businessman and a city councilman whose lavish lifestyle speaks for his success. The novel opens on 1992 Memorial Day when Corky comes face to face with his ugly past of a murdered father and a mad mother. Corky Corcoran is a very hard-to-like character with his ugly mouth and womanizing vice though he speaks very highly of himself and considers himself to be a self-made millionaire. The novel reveals in flashbacks his traumatic childhood where he witnessed the murder of his father in cold blood and the eventual mental breakdown of his mother following the event. Corky manages to emerge from this traumatic setback and makes a life for himself though still haunted by his past. Despite all the shimmer and shine in his lifestyle, he still has this hollow spot in his life that he tries to fill with success, money, and women. He is loved by all women but this one woman his ex-stepdaughter from his ex-wife brings havoc upon his life. Joyce Carol Oates captures the male psyche effectively pages upon pages of thought crossing over each other like a violent thunderstorm (Oates, *What I Lived For*).

Zombie (1995) is a novel based on true events from the life history of the most feared sexual sociopath in American history Jeffrey Dahmer. The author through the narrative enters the interiors of the mind of a sexual serial killer who is named Quentin P in this novel. The author uses the first-person narrative to tell the story of Quentin P who is sometimes referred to as Q.P. The use of the first-person narrative makes one sympathize with him making the monster a human being again. The narrative appears more like a diary written by Q.P. who is known to other people in his surroundings as a recovering alcoholic who once molested a teenage boy. It's either him or his victims who know all things ugly and grim about him. He has a desire to own a sexual zombie who will fulfill all his desires without question. He wants to create a drone of sorts who will serve as a sexual slave.

To fulfill this desire of his, he reads a lot of books on lobotomy and comes across the concept that if a hole drilled right in the brain of someone that person becomes more like a zombie with no sense of his own. Attempting to create a sexual slave for himself he abducts, tortures, and rapes several men. He holds them captive and applies an icepick to their brains to transform them into living zombies, but those experiments fail, and many men die miserable deaths. By the end of the novel, he starts to enjoy killing for its own sake (Oates, *Zombie*).

I ll Take You There (2002) is a coming of age story of an intellectual girl who has obsessive-compulsive disorder. The protagonist of the story is the nameless narrator who conjures up a name for herself Anellia to impress a black philosophy student with whom she later enters a relationship. The reader learns about the past of the narrator, which was not very happy. Her mother died when she was only one and a half years old leaving her and her older three brothers to her father. Father, because of his business, would go away for weeks and months, leaving the kids to their grandparents. She suffered not only the loss of her mother but also got blamed by her siblings for being responsible for her mother's death. She was an intellectual thus enduring hardships she managed to enter the University at 19 years of age. She gets this opportunity to join the sorority which she gets very excited about as she always wanted to have sisters and sisterhood, but when she joins the sorority, she comes face to face with reality. She thought that the girls at the sorority would treat her like elder sisters do, but she gets mistreated by these girls who were from an affluent background. They would try to control her by making her write their assignments and take over her room. She always thought that she would get the love and sisterhood she craved at the sorority, but she felt deceived. She also runs into debt to pay for the sorority. When she finally feels she can't put up with it anymore she decides to leave the sorority.

Then she falls for a black philosophy student ten years as her senior at which she gets reprimanded by the Dean of the University. An interracial relationship of this sort is not approved of in the time and place she exists in. Soon she learns that this black guy

has deserted his wife and family and even shows violent behavior towards her. She eventually calls it off with him. Two years later she graduates from the university. Then the unexpected happens her father who went missing 4 years earlier and was thought to be dead comes back into the scene but barely alive- dying of cancer. She decides to visit her father whom she finds being taken care of by his girlfriend. After his death, it turns out that he left a will asking his body to be buried near his dead wife leaving his girlfriend outraged. The daughter gives the rest of the money from the will to the girlfriend after the burial expenses and the novel ends with the saying "my family was now complete if things work out between us, I will take you there." (Oates, *I ll Take You There*)

My Life As a Rat (2019) is a novel that follows the story of a young girl Violet Rue Kerrigan who was sent into exile years as a child after giving testimony against her brothers regarding what she knew about their involvement in a racist crime. She was born into a family where the father's word was law, and boys were considered superior to girls. One day 12-year-old Violet Rue Kerrigan saw her brothers bury a baseball bat soaked in blood and heard their conversation about their involvement in the murder of an African American boy. When the brothers learned that Violet came to know about them and saw them burying the bat, they did beat her up and physically abuse her to ensure she doesn't tell anybody about it. But accidentally at school, she blurted out everything which led to the imprisonment of her brothers, and she was sent to exile by her father when he learned about her spitting the truth against her brothers. She suffers from banishment from her parents, siblings, church, and community. Life is never easy for her in exile as she not only suffered estrangement but also a lot of other horrible things at the hands of people who were bent on exploiting her. She goes through a quest to seek her identity and eventually rediscovers herself after emerging from the trauma of abandonment by her family and the subsequent stuff she endured while in her exile (Oates, *My Life As a Rat*).

Pursuit (2019) is about a newlywed woman who gets into a traffic accident within 24 hours of the wedding after suffering from reoccurring nightmares night after night

about skulls and bones. Her husband inquires to know whether it was truly an accident, or if she intentionally did that in a suicide attempt. Answering his questions, she begins to unravel her past of a jealous drug-addicted father and a terrified mother. 20-year-old Abby Hayman works for a rehabilitation center for the blind, this is where she meets Willem Zegler-a Christian student with whom she falls in love. Wilem goes on to marry her despite his parent's objections who were suspicious of her because of her unknown past. Abby is an orphan who lost her parents early in her life and is raised by her aunt Traci in Chautauqua Falls. The marriage of her parents was not a happy one. Her father Lew Hayman who was a war veteran suffering from PTSD was a jealous controlling man who always questioned his wife's loyalty towards him. One day when the mother was away, he asked her baby daughter whether some man visited the home when he was away and the child not understanding the question said yes to get her father's approval. This creates a very big misunderstanding, and their relationship heads to a divorce. The father goes away to the West and commits suicide. The mother, Nicola Hayman goes after him and never returns. This is how Abby becomes an orphan and comes to live with her aunt. It is only when she turns 8 years old; she understands how the "yes" she blurted out unknowingly as a baby ruined her life. Abby recovering from the injuries from the accident gets flashbacks of her past which she shares with her husband Wilem (Oates, *Pursuit).*

Review of Literature

Joyce Carol Oates's vast and varied body of work has generated an equally expansive critical tradition, one that has consistently attempted to locate her fiction within or deliberately against established literary and theoretical frameworks, with scholars approaching her work through multiple critical frameworks such as naturalism, gender studies, race studies, gothic studies, trauma studies, media studies, and Cold War criticism. Despite this richness, psychoanalytic criticism particularly beyond orthodox Freudian readings remains marginal.

Early criticism of Oates was largely dominated by debates around naturalism, with many reviewers situating her in the lineage of Dreiser, Norris, and Steinbeck because of her focus on violence, social determinism, and economically marginal characters. Mary Ann Wilson, in "The Image of Self in Selected Works of Joyce Carol Oates" (1977) attempts to revise Oates's critical positioning by arguing against her categorization as a mere naturalist in the tradition of Dreiser and Steinbeck. Focusing on novels published between 1969 and 1974, Wilson reads *Them* as a departure from strict naturalism and places Oates closer to psychological realism, aligning her with Henry James. Through an analysis of love and selfhood, Wilson suggests that Oates's characters are not simply victims of deterministic forces but are capable of transcendence through emotional and psychological growth. Although Wilson gestures toward psychology, her analysis remains thematic rather than psychoanalytic represents a significant attempt to reposition Oates within the tradition of psychological realism. Wilson examines themes of love and selfhood, arguing that Oates's characters move beyond deterministic naturalism through emotional transcendence. At the same time, Wilson's approach remains largely thematic and humanistic rather than theoretically psychoanalytic. Although she foregrounds psychological growth and emotional transcendence, she does not draw upon Freud, Lacan, object relations theory, or later developments in psychoanalysis to interrogate the unconscious dimensions of subject formation, repression, or trauma in Oates's fiction. The "self" in Wilson's reading remains coherent and capable of redemptive integration, a model that contrasts sharply with later critical frameworks—such as trauma studies or poststructuralist theory—that emphasize fragmentation, belatedness, and psychic instability. In this sense, Wilson's work marks an important transitional moment: it shifts Oates criticism away from rigid naturalism but stops short of engaging the deeper psychic structures that animate Oates's representations of violence, desire, and identity.

This reclassification of Oates did not, however, go uncontested. Steven Barza's "Joyce Carol Oates: Naturalism and the Aberrant Response" (1979) reasserts the

importance of naturalism firmly situating Oates within the naturalist tradition, particularly in Oates's early fiction, including *Them*, *The Wheel of Love*, *The Goddess and Other Women*, and *A Garden of Earthly Delights*. Barza distinguishes between naturalistic tragedy and naturalistic success narratives, arguing that Oates disrupts classical naturalism by allowing some protagonists to succeed despite oppressive external circumstances. She argues that while some protagonists are crushed by environmental forces, others paradoxically achieve success because of them. This study reinforces Oates's engagement with naturalism while acknowledging her revisionist tendencies. Together, Wilson and Barza establish a foundational critical tension that continues to shape Oates scholarship: the oscillation between determinism and psychological agency. Wilson foregrounds interiority and the possibility of emotional transcendence, while Barza reinscribes those same narrative movements within an expanded naturalist logic. Yet both critics ultimately frame the debate in terms of environment versus agency, without fully engaging the unconscious processes that complicate this binary.

As criticism progressed, scholars increasingly turned toward feminist interpretations, particularly in relation to Oates's representation of women, violence, and agency. Joanne V. Creighton's early feminist assessment "Unliberated Women in Joyce Carol Oates's Fiction" (1978) foregrounds the emotional and sexual repression of female characters, concluding that liberation remains incomplete without the possibility of healthy sexuality. Examining female sexuality and oppression, she concludes that Oates's women remain psychologically constrained due to unhealthy sexual dynamics. For Creighton, the absence of "healthy" sexuality becomes both a symptom and a cause of women's continued subordination. It is notable that feminist readings foreground gender but do not examine the unconscious psychological mechanisms underlying female repression. Her analysis remains largely sociological and thematic, while she identifies repression and psychic constraint, these terms function descriptively rather than analytically; they are not grounded in a theory of the unconscious, desire, or internalized patriarchal authority. The mechanisms by which sexual trauma, shame, or identification

shape female subjectivity remain unexplored.

This concern with women's constrained subjectivity is developed further in Cauveri S.'s thesis "From Dream to Dream: Women in the Selected Novels of Joyce Carol Oates", which traces a gradual movement toward liberation across novels such as *Garden of Earthly Delights, Expensive People, Them, Wonderland, Do with Me What You Will,* and *Unholy Lovers*. She offers a feminist reading of Oates's early novels, tracing women's gradual movement from confinement within patriarchal roles toward self-awareness and liberation. Through a feminist lens, Cauveri presents Oates's narratives as progressive journeys from social entrapment toward self-realization. This developmental framework is important because it resists viewing Oates's repeated depictions of suffering as merely pessimistic; instead, suffering becomes part of a longer arc of awakening. However, Cauveri's emphasis on linear progress and liberation risks smoothing over the ambivalence and circularity that mark many of Oates's narratives. By contrast, later feminist critics complicate this progressive narrative by interrogating Oates's representation of female suffering and its relation to media, spectatorship, and narrative authority. Tanya Horeck's "The Lost Girls in the Fiction of Joyce Carol Oates" (2010) interrogates Oates's fictional reimagining of real women whose deaths were sensationalized by the media, focusing on *Blackwater* and *Blonde*. Horeck argues that Oates reclaims silenced female perspectives by narrating what the media erases—particularly women's interior experiences during violence. However, she questions Oates's motivations and her uneasy relationship with feminism, noting that while some critics argue that realistic depictions of women's lives foster female subjectivity, others accuse Oates of perpetuating negative portrayals. Horeck credits *Black Water* in particular with re-centering the victim's subjective experience, shifting attention from the male political narrative that dominates public memory to the woman's embodied consciousness at the moment of violence. Yet Horeck remains ambivalent about Oates's feminist status, noting that critics are divided: some view her unflinching realism as a necessary confrontation with misogynistic structures, while others argue that her repeated

return to violated female bodies risks reproducing the very dynamics it seeks to critique. Christine E. Atkins similarly challenges Oates's treatment of sexual violence in "'This Is What You Deserve': Rape as Rite of Passage in Joyce Carol Oates's 'Naked,'"(2002) contending that the narrative participates in a troubling literary tradition that frames rape as formative in female maturation. While these readings powerfully foreground representation and gender politics, they largely leave untheorized the unconscious economies of desire, identification, and repetition that may structure female suffering

Grotesque and Gothic studies form another prominent strand of Oates criticism, shifting attention from questions of realism and feminist progress toward aesthetic excess, bodily distortion, and affective extremity. EMI De Nittis, in "Gender and Grotesque in the Short Fiction of Joyce Carol Oates (2008), which examines the grotesque across Oates's short stories, including selections from *Haunted: Tales of the Grotesque*. De Nittis interrogates the persistent coupling of violence, bodily abnormality, and gendered transgression, asking whether Oates's grotesque imagery should be read as feminist protest against patriarchal norms or as a form of personal or narrative catharsis. Rather than aligning the grotesque exclusively with female victimization or resistance, De Nittis argues that Oates destabilizes gender binaries by presenting grotesqueness as a mode of deviant behavior that exceeds stable moral or ideological categories. In this reading, the grotesque becomes less a gendered condition than an aesthetic strategy that exposes the fragility of social identities and normative embodiment. By locating grotesqueness in acts of deviance rather than inherent gendered tendencies, she reframes Oates's fiction as an exploration of extremity itself—psychological, social, and corporeal. The grotesque body in Oates often registers anxiety, repression, and the return of what has been disavowed, yet De Nittis does not fully engage with concepts such as abjection, the uncanny, or the death drive that might illuminate why deviance repeatedly takes violent or self-destructive form.

Oates's frequent use of gothic and grotesque modes has prompted critics to situate

her within American Gothic traditions. Djeabalan S.'s thesis "The American Gothic" (2012) examines six novels to demonstrate how gothic conventions allow Oates to confront contemporary social realities, further suggesting that her fiction exposes contemporary anxieties through horror, violence, and psychological instability. Djeabalan's study is valuable in that it situates Oates within a national literary lineage, linking her work to earlier American gothic writers while emphasizing her modern inflection of the form. However, the psychological instability she identifies tends to function metaphorically—as a reflection of social breakdown—rather than a fully theorized account of psychic conflict or unconscious return. Mary E. Papke's "Naturalism's Children" (2016) further complicates generic boundaries by introducing the notion of "unruly" or grotesque naturalism in works by Oates and her contemporaries. Papke argues that young female protagonists disrupt the conventions of both classical naturalism and domestic realism, embodying a hybrid mode in which environmental determinism merges with gothic excess and psychological disturbance. This formulation productively destabilizes rigid genre classifications, suggesting that Oates's fiction operates at the intersection of realism and horror. Pascale Antolin's "Deadly Girls' Voices" (2015) similarly explores suspense and fear in stories such as *"The Banshee"* and *"Doll: A Romance of the Mississippi"*, highlighting Oates's recurring fascination with violent girlhood and the unsettling power of adolescent female narration. Both Papke and Antolin foreground the disruptive energy of girlhood and the aestheticization of fear, yet their analyses largely emphasize genre and narrative strategy.

Oates's engagement with media culture and representation has also been a significant area of study. M. C. Wesley's "Reverence, Rape, Resistance: Joyce Carol Oates and Feminist Film Theory" (1999) applies feminist film theory to Oates's short fiction, particularly *The Girl*, to examine how media structures shape women's vulnerability and self-perception. Drawing on concepts such as the male gaze and voyeuristic spectatorship, Wesley contends that Oates dramatizes the internalization of media scripts: female characters come to see themselves through externally imposed

visual frameworks that eroticize danger and normalize violation. Heather Duerre Humann's "Domestic Violence, Child Agency, and the Adolescent Perspective in Joyce Carol Oates's Freaky Green Eyes" (2013) extends the discussion of representation into Oates's young adult fiction, an area long marginalized in scholarship. By employing a child narrator, Oates foregrounds domestic violence while simultaneously raising complex questions about child agency and narrative reliability. While Humann convincingly demonstrates that Oates's young adult fiction deserves serious critical consideration, the essay primarily situates agency within ethical and narratological debates. The deeper psychic consequences of witnessing and narrating domestic violence such as dissociation, splitting, or the formation of traumatic memory are not fully theorized.

Another major strand of Oates criticism centers on race, whiteness, and the construction of identity, particularly in relation to visibility, embodiment, and cultural capital. Lotta Kohkanen's "Anxiety About Whiteness in Joyce Carol Oates's Blonde" (2009) explores how Marilyn Monroe's racialized whiteness is not innate but painfully manufactured, producing profound anxiety and self-erasure. She compellingly links this manufactured whiteness to imagery of erasure and death, suggesting that the pursuit of racialized perfection culminates in psychological nonexistence. Whiteness, in this formulation, is both hyper-visible and annihilating: it promises transcendence while hollowing out interiority. Kohkanen's analysis is particularly valuable for revealing how Oates exposes whiteness as an anxious construction rather than an invisible norm. Karen Gaffney's "Whiteness as Cursed Property" (2015) extends this inquiry by placing *Bellefleur* in dialogue with Cheryl Harris's legal theory of whiteness as property, arguing that Oates dramatizes whiteness as an inheritable asset that confers power while simultaneously binding its possessors to violence and decay. Gaffney's intervention highlights how racial privilege operates structurally through lineage, land, and ownership while also exposing its corrosive effects. April Pitts's "Ideal Objects" (2016) further complicates racial analysis by examining *Zombie*, arguing that Quentin's selection of

non-white and gay victims reflects a desire to dominate marginalized bodies, thereby exposing the intersection of race, sexuality, and power. Pitts insightfully situates Quentin's violence within broader hierarchies of marginalization, framing his victims as "ideal objects" within a racialized and heteronormative order. Together, these critics illuminate the sociocultural mechanics of whiteness and domination in Oates's fiction, foregrounding systemic power structures, and embodied inequality.

Several critics explore trauma, memory, cold war ideology, and historical consciousness in Oates's fiction. David R. Jarraway's "Traumatic Post-memory and the Cold War Construction of Canon" examines how Cold War anxieties shape novels such as *Marya: A Life*, *You Must Remember This*, *Because It Is Bitter, and Because It Is My Heart*, *Foxfire*, *What I Lived For*, and *Blonde* arguing that Oates's characters inherit and unconsciously reenact Cold War anxieties even when they are temporally removed from their origins. Jarraway positions Oates as a chronicler of ideological aftershocks, suggesting that paranoia, repression, and fractured identity in her fiction reflect the psychic residues of nuclear fear and political containment. James Cruise's "Cold War Hermeneutics" (2005) extends this argument to Oates's short story *"Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?"*, reading its implicit Cold War anxieties beneath an apparently timeless setting and proposing that its menace and ambiguity resonate with contemporary fears of invasion, ideological seduction, and destabilized authority. Together, these readings argue that Oates encodes geopolitical anxiety within intimate psychological drama, transforming historical unease into narrative atmosphere. Nathan Shank's "Narrating Underrepresented Minds" (2017) focuses on *We Were the Mulvaneys*, arguing that narrative restraint becomes an ethical strategy for representing trauma. Sonia Weiner's "Photographic (Over) Exposures" (2020) emphasizes Oates's visual and verbal imagery, positioning her as a witness writer of postwar America. Shank contends *We Were the Mulvaneys* employs narrative restraint as an ethical strategy for representing trauma, particularly sexual violence, suggesting that gaps and silences function as modes of respect rather than evasion. Weiner, meanwhile, emphasizes Oates's dense visual and

verbal imagery, framing her as a witness writer of postwar America whose prose mimics photographic exposure at once revealing and overexposing her subjects. These approaches compellingly situate Oates within broader historical and media landscapes, underscoring her role as an observer of national trauma and cultural spectacle. Yet, as with other strands of Oates criticism, the emphasis tends to fall on ideological formation, narrative ethics, and representational strategy rather than on the unconscious mechanisms through which historical anxiety is internalized and transmitted across generations.

Critics have also examined Oates's complex relationship between fiction and lived experience analyzing hybridity and memoir. Tanya Tromble's "Fiction in Fact and Fact in Fiction" (2015) and Pascale Antolin's "Hybridism and Self Reconstruction" (2015) analyze *Dear Husband* and *A Widow's Story*, demonstrating how Oates blends memoir, elegy, and fiction to process grief. These studies highlight Oates's belief in narrative as a means of psychological survival. Both scholars argue that hybridity functions not merely as a stylistic experiment but as an adaptive strategy: by reshaping lived experience into narrative, Oates constructs a textual space in which grief becomes bearable, ordered, and communicable. Antolin, in particular, emphasizes self-reconstruction, suggesting that narrative layering allows Oates to reconstitute identity in the aftermath of bereavement. These readings productively frame storytelling as a mode of psychological survival, foregrounding Oates's belief in art as both witness and repair, yet they stop short of formal psychoanalytic interpretation. Anthony DeCurtis's "The Process of Fictionalization in Them" (1979) examines how Oates reshapes social reality to intensify emotional resonance, arguing that fictionalization heightens rather than diminishes truth by filtering experience through aesthetic design, while Barbara Micelli's "Two Downings in Comparison" (2020) compares *Blackwater* and *Mudwoman* to reveal recurring narrative patterns. Miceli's comparative approach highlights Oates's tendency to revisit and revise traumatic scenarios across texts, suggesting a patterned return to formative images. Together, these critics illuminate Oates's sustained investment in narrative transformation and recursive imagery. However, although they recognize

repetition, reconstruction, and emotional intensification, they largely interpret these phenomena in formal or thematic terms.

Only a handful of studies gesture toward psychoanalysis, and even these remain limited. Uroš Tomić's Lacanian reading of motherhood in select short stories is one of the rare instances where psychoanalytic theory is explicitly applied, yet it focuses narrowly on symbolic structures rather than neurosis, personality development, or anxiety. Drawing on Lacan's Symbolic and Imaginary orders, Tomić interprets maternal figures as sites of linguistic and symbolic mediation, emphasizing absence, lack, and the instability of subject formation. However, the questions of neurosis, anxiety, defensive structures, and personality formation particularly in relation to childhood trauma remain peripheral. While studies such as Ellen G. Friedman's "The Journey from the 'I' to the 'Eye'" (1980) acknowledge identity formation, they remain largely thematic rather than theoretically grounded. The "self" is treated as a narrative and philosophical construct rather than as a subject shaped by unconscious conflict, repression, or relational insecurity. More broadly, when psychoanalysis does appear in Oates criticism, it tends to rely on classical Freudian paradigms often invoking repression, sexuality, or the Oedipal family romance without extending into later psychoanalytic developments. Karen Horney's revision of Freud particularly her theories of basic anxiety, neurotic needs, and the formation of the idealized self-image has been almost entirely absent from Oates scholarship, despite its relevance to Oates's recurring portrayals of children shaped by hostile or indifferent environments, women constructing compensatory identities, and protagonists driven by compulsive striving or self-effacement. Across both early and later fiction, Oates repeatedly dramatizes dysfunctional parenting, emotional deprivation, and unstable self-concepts, yet these patterns have not been systematically examined through a psychoanalytic lens attentive to neurosis, defensive structures, and the long-term psychological consequences of relational trauma.

Research Gap

Although Joyce Carol Oates's fiction has been extensively examined through critical frameworks such as naturalism, feminist and gender studies, race and whiteness studies, gothic criticism, trauma theory, Cold War studies, and media studies, these approaches predominantly remain sociological, cultural, or thematic in orientation. Even when critics gesture toward psychology, their analyses rarely move beyond surface-level discussions of identity, selfhood, or emotional response.

The limited instances where psychoanalytic theory is employed reveal further constraints. Existing studies tend to rely almost exclusively on classical Freudian or Lacanian models, focusing on symbolic structures, repression, or subject formation rather than sustained psychological processes. These readings are often restricted to isolated texts or motifs such as motherhood, identity crisis, or trauma without offering a comprehensive psychoanalytic engagement with Oates's broader fictional universe.

More significantly, psychoanalysis in Oates studies has been treated as a supplementary interpretive tool rather than as a primary critical framework. Concepts such as neurosis, anxiety, hostility, compulsive behavior, self-effacement, and interpersonal conflict elements that recur persistently across Oates's novels and short fiction have not been systematically theorized within a psychoanalytic paradigm. As a result, Oates's characters are frequently read as products of social oppression or historical circumstance, while the intrapsychic dynamics governing their actions remain insufficiently explored.

Crucially, no substantial scholarly work has applied Neo-Freudian psychoanalysis, particularly Karen Horney's theory of neurosis, to Joyce Carol Oates's fiction. Horney's emphasis on basic anxiety, neurotic needs, idealized self-images, and strategies of moving toward, against, or away from others offers a particularly apt framework for understanding Oates's characters, who are often driven by intense inner

conflict, self-alienation, and compulsive attempts at self-preservation. The absence of such a framework represents not merely a gap in methodology but a missed theoretical opportunity to reinterpret Oates's representations of violence, gender, identity, and emotional disintegration.

Therefore, the present study addresses this critical lacuna by positioning psychoanalysis not as an auxiliary lens but as a central analytical framework to examine Joyce Carol Oates's fiction. By employing Karen Horney's Neo-Freudian theory of neurosis, this research seeks to move beyond thematic readings and offer a deeper understanding of the psychological structures shaping Oates's characters, thereby contributing a novel and necessary perspective to Oates scholarship.

Chapter 2

Theory of Neurosis: Issues and Challenges

Psychoanalysis is a profound and influential therapeutic approach that delves into the intricate relationship between the unconscious and conscious aspects of the human psyche. Developed by Sigmund Freud in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, this talking therapy employs various clinical techniques such as free association, dream interpretation, and transference analysis to explore repressed emotions and unresolved conflicts that may contribute to psychological distress (Mitchell and Black 12). By facilitating an understanding of these hidden aspects of the mind, psychoanalysis seeks to bring repressed thoughts and memories to the surface, thereby allowing individuals to achieve insight, catharsis, and ultimately, psychological healing.

Freud's interest in the unconscious was significantly influenced by the case of "Anna O.", a patient treated by his mentor, Dr. Josef Breuer. Anna O. exhibited various unexplained physical symptoms, including paralysis and speech difficulties, for which no discernible medical cause could be identified (Breuer and Freud 21). Through hypnosis and the retrieval of repressed memories associated with past traumas, Breuer observed a marked improvement in her condition. This seminal case study provided the foundation for Freud's development of psychoanalytic theory, particularly his concepts of repression, the unconscious, and the therapeutic potential of verbal expression (Breuer and Freud 100). Freud's work with hysteric patients led to the recognition that their symptoms concealed unconscious conflicts, ultimately giving rise to the "talking cure", in which patients freely expressed their thoughts while reclining on a couch. By uncovering repressed childhood experiences and fantasies, Freud developed psychoanalysis, which continues to influence modern psychology and neurological studies. His assertion that psychological suffering could originate from suppressed memories and unresolved emotional conflicts transformed the understanding and treatment of mental health,

shifting the focus from purely biological explanations to a more holistic, psychodynamic perspective.

Beyond its application in clinical settings, psychoanalytic theory has permeated various intellectual and cultural domains. Its influence extends into psychoanalytic literary criticism, where scholars examine unconscious motives and symbolic meanings in texts, as well as film analysis, which employs Freudian concepts to interpret narrative structures and character psychodynamics (Holland 24). Additionally, psychoanalysis has been integrated into broader philosophical and socio-political perspectives, such as Freudo-Marxism, which combines Marxist critique with psychoanalytic insights to explore the psychological dimensions of ideology and social structures (Marcuse 13). The theory also plays a significant role in understanding myths, folklore, and fairy tales, where hidden desires and unconscious fears often find symbolic expression (Bettelheim 37). In modern psychology, psychoanalysis has influenced attachment theory, object relations theory, and even contemporary neuroscience, which seeks to understand the biological underpinnings of unconscious processing (Fonagy and Target 92).

The continued relevance of psychoanalytic concepts in diverse fields underscores the enduring legacy of Freud's work and the profound impact of the unconscious on human behavior and cultural production. While modern psychology has introduced alternative approaches, such as Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT) and neuroscience-based treatments, psychoanalysis remains an essential foundation in the study of the human mind. Its emphasis on introspection, the therapeutic alliance, and the exploration of unconscious conflicts continues to shape contemporary psychotherapy, offering valuable insights into the complexity of human thought and behavior. Researchers continue to investigate the intersections between psychoanalysis and cognitive science, exploring how unconscious biases and early experiences shape cognitive processes and decision-making (Solms 110). Classical and Contemporary Freudian Psychoanalysis is one of the models of psychoanalysis which was the parent model. Sigmund Freud developed this model of the mind structured around fundamental drives. Initially, he

identified the sexual and self-preservation drives, later redefining them as the life (Eros) and death drives (Thanatos), representing sexuality and aggression (Freud, *Beyond* 38). These drives generate psychic energy, shaping desires, and interactions that influence mental structure. Freud's early topographical model divided the mind into the Unconscious, Preconscious, and Conscious systems, later evolving into the structural model of the Id, Ego, and Superego (Freud, *Ego* 20). These structures regulate drive and energy under the pleasure principle. Freud's metapsychology conceptualizes the mind through three perspectives: dynamic (drives), economic (energy distribution), and structural (topographical and later structural organization). The Budapest School and Sándor Ferenczi is another such model where Sándor Ferenczi emphasized the role of real childhood trauma, early mother-child relationships, and the "confusion of tongues", where a child's attachment needs conflict with adult desires (Ferenczi 162). His focus on intersubjectivity and the analyst's self-awareness became influential in French and relational psychoanalysis.

Ego Psychology was developed by Anna Freud and Heinz Hartmann where they expanded psychoanalysis by studying the ego's role in defense mechanisms and adaptation. Hartmann introduced the concept of a conflict-free ego sphere responsible for functions such as perception, motor control, and reality testing (A. Freud 47; Hartmann 15). This approach sought to strengthen the ego's capacity for impulse control and adaptation. Ego psychology aims to strengthen the ego, enhancing impulse control, frustration tolerance, and conflict resolution. Similarly, Kleinian and Bionian Developments was a model devised by Melanie Klein who introduced object relations theory, proposing that infancy involves primitive impulses leading to the projection of destructive anxieties onto external objects. She identified the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions as core stages in psychological development (Klein 99). Wilfred Bion expanded this framework by theorizing the mind's processing of raw sensory and emotional experiences through transformation into meaningful thought, facilitated by a caregiving figure (Bion 34). Object Relations as a model was developed by Donald

Winnicott, which highlighted the importance of the "good enough" mother in fostering a true self, allowing creativity and emotional growth. He introduced the concept of the transitional object, bridging internal and external realities, and forming the foundation for imagination and cultural experience (Winnicott 14).

French Psychoanalytic model was devised by Jacques Lacan who reinterpreted Freud's work, emphasizing language, desire, and the symbolic order. His theories on the imaginary, symbolic, and real realms reshaped psychoanalysis, particularly regarding the Oedipus complex and the role of unconscious structures in human subjectivity. Freud's psychosexual stages of development highlight the significance of early childhood experiences in shaping personality and future psychological health. According to Freud, unresolved conflicts during these stages can lead to fixation, which may manifest in adulthood as neurotic behaviors or deep-seated anxieties. Later psychoanalysts, such as Carl Jung and Lacan, expanded upon Freud's work, introducing concepts such as the collective unconscious and the mirror stage, which have had lasting impacts on psychology and cultural theory (Jung 48; Lacan 78). Self-Psychology which was developed by Heinz Kohut developed self-psychology, focused on the regulation of narcissism. He rejected Freud's structural model, proposing instead a tripartite self-shaped through empathic mirroring by caregivers, which facilitates self-cohesion and emotional stability (Kohut 94). Relational Psychoanalysis is another such theory developed by Steven Mitchell which shifted psychoanalysis from a drive-based model to a relational framework. He argued that personality is constructed through internalized relationships, which are continuously enacted in new interactions. Therapy, in this view, involves recognizing and reshaping these relational patterns within the analyst-patient dynamic (Mitchell 3).

The primary theorist whose work forms the foundation of this study is the distinguished German psychoanalyst Karen Horney, who spent the later years of her professional life practicing in the United States. Prior to engaging with her theoretical framework and conceptual contributions which constitute the core focus of this research,

it is essential to examine key aspects of her biographical background, as her personal experiences significantly informed her intellectual development. Karen Horney was born to Berndt Wackels Danielson, a devout Protestant and traditionalist who served as a captain in the merchant marines, and Clotilde, also a Protestant but notably more liberal in her outlook (Quinn). Horney's mother reportedly struggled with depression, a condition that often rendered her irritable and domineering toward her daughter. The relationship between Horney and her father was marked by emotional distance; she perceived him as a strict disciplinarian and authoritarian figure whose affection she deeply desired yet seldom received. From an early age, Horney exhibited remarkable intellectual curiosity and self-awareness. By the age of thirteen, she had begun maintaining a personal journal in which she articulated her aspirations with striking clarity and determination. Among her earliest ambitions was the desire to become a physician, a pursuit that, given the sociocultural constraints of her time, was largely deemed inappropriate and unattainable for women (Quinn). Additionally, Horney shared a profound emotional attachment to her brother, whose rejection of her affection precipitated the first episode of depression she experienced (Paris 43-45).

At the age of nineteen, Karen Horney's mother left her father and relocated with her two children, a pivotal event that marked the beginning of Horney's gradual assertion of independence. By the age of twenty-one, she resolved to fulfill her long-cherished ambition of becoming a physician and enrolled in medical school, defying her parents' opposition. During her studies at several universities, a customary academic trajectory for medical students of that era, she met Oskar Horney, a law student who would later become her husband (Quinn). The couple married in 1909 and settled in Berlin, where Oskar pursued his legal career while Horney continued her medical education. Within a year of their marriage, she gave birth to their first child but simultaneously endured the profound loss of both her parents, an experience that precipitated a severe depressive episode (Paris 46). To cope with the emotional turmoil of this period, she entered

psychoanalysis under the guidance of Karl Abraham, who became her first analyst and an early influence on her professional development (Quinn).

Horney went on to become one of the founding members of the Berlin Psychoanalytic Institute, where she was actively engaged in both teaching and clinical practice, offering private sessions to her patients. However, by 1923, her marriage had begun to deteriorate, largely due to her husband's declining mental health and financial difficulties, compounded by the death of her brother that same year, which deeply exacerbated her depression and led to suicidal ideation and attempts (Paris 47). In 1926, Horney formally separated from Oskar, with whom she had three daughters, and continued her work at the Berlin Psychoanalytic Society until 1932, when she relocated to Chicago to serve as an assistant to Franz Alexander at the Chicago Institute for Psychoanalysis. Two years later, she moved to Brooklyn, New York, where she joined the New York Psychoanalytic Institute and formed professional associations with prominent analysts such as Harry Stack Sullivan and Erich Fromm. It was during this intellectually fertile period that Horney developed and refined her theories on neurosis and personality, drawing extensively on her clinical experience as a psychotherapist. Her increasingly unorthodox and critical stance toward Freudian orthodoxy eventually led to her expulsion from the institute. In response, she collaborated with like-minded colleagues to establish the Association for the Advancement of Psychoanalysis and subsequently founded the *American Journal of Psychoanalysis* (Quinn). Horney remained professionally active, contributing significantly to the field of psychiatry until her death in 1952.

Horney's personal and professional experiences have been the subject of extensive scholarly analysis, which illuminates the ways in which her life informed her theoretical contributions. Bernard J. Paris, in his article "Karen Horney: A Psychoanalyst's Search for Self-Understanding," published in *The American Journal of Psychoanalysis*, examines Horney's personal struggles, including her experiences with

depression and her complex familial and marital relationships, and explores how these experiences may have influenced her theories on neurosis and personality development. Paris contends that Horney's own quest for self-understanding was central to her departure from orthodox Freudian thought and the formulation of her distinctive psychoanalytic perspectives (Paris 45). Complementing this view, Susan Quinn, in her biography *A Mind of Her Own: The Life of Karen Horney,* provides a detailed examination of Horney's early life in Germany, her professional challenges within the male-dominated field of psychoanalysis, and her subsequent emigration to the United States. Quinn argues that Horney's personal encounters with gender bias, as well as her experiences with psychoanalytic treatment, were instrumental in shaping her theories on feminine psychology, including her conceptualization of "womb envy" as a counterpoint to Freud's theory of "penis envy" (Quinn 102).

Marcia Westkott, in her article "Karen Horney's Departure from Freud's Orthodoxy: The Influence of Her Personal Life on Her Theoretical Contributions," published in *Psychoanalytic Review*, examines how Horney's personal experiences including her strained marriage and her responsibilities as a mother shaped her critique of Freud's theories on female psychology. Westkott asserts that these life experiences led Horney to prioritize cultural and social influences over biological determinism in understanding the development of neuroses (Westkott 233). This departure from conventional Freudian concepts positions Horney as a prominent figure among Neo-Freudian theorists. Rejecting Freud's psychosexual framework, she contended that personality is shaped less by innate sexual drives or infantile passions than by environmental conditions and socio-cultural factors that define a child's experiences and influence psychological development. While Freud's concepts, including the Oedipus and Electra complexes, were groundbreaking at the time, they now appear overly deterministic and less consistent with contemporary approaches in developmental and social psychology. Nevertheless, Freudian ideas continue to exert considerable influence, particularly within literary psychoanalysis, where they are often treated as foundational

frameworks. Horney's contributions, however, broadened the scope of psychoanalysis by emphasizing the significance of interpersonal relationships, cultural expectations, and the anxiety stemming from feelings of insecurity and isolation, thus providing a more nuanced understanding of human psychological development.

This thesis aims to move beyond the entrenched reliance on Freudian psychoanalysis in literary studies by adopting Horney's framework as a central analytical lens. Her theory of neurotic needs and corresponding personality types: compliant, aggressive, and detached offers a more dynamic and humanistic approach to understanding character motivation and development. Although the term "neurosis" has largely disappeared from contemporary clinical psychology having been replaced in diagnostic manuals by more specific categories such as anxiety disorders, personality disorders, and trauma-related conditions (American Psychiatric Association), the conceptual concerns that the term once encompassed remain central to psychological inquiry. Modern psychology's move away from the term reflects a shift in diagnostic language rather than the disappearance of the underlying experiences of anxiety, inner conflict, compulsive behavior, and disturbed interpersonal relationships. Within this context, Karen Horney's formulation of neurosis retains critical relevance, precisely because it also marks a divergence from the traditional, pathology-driven usage of the term.

In classical Freudian psychoanalysis, neurosis was understood as the outcome of unresolved intrapsychic conflict rooted in repressed instinctual drives, particularly those associated with sexuality and aggression (Freud, *Introductory Lectures*). Neurosis, in this sense, functioned as a clinical label tied to symptom formation and psychic malfunction. Even among Freud's contemporaries, neurosis largely remained embedded within a medicalized framework that emphasized internal conflict over social causation. Horney's intervention marked a decisive departure from this tradition. For her, neurosis was not a fixed pathological condition, but a relational strategy developed in response to persistent

anxiety arising from adverse interpersonal and cultural environments (Horney, *The Neurotic Personality of Our Time*). What distinguishes Horney's concept of neurosis from both her predecessors and many of her contemporaries is its emphasis on adaptability rather than abnormality. She conceptualized neurotic patterns as exaggerated yet intelligible responses to hostile or emotionally impoverished surroundings, thereby reframing neurosis as a continuum of human behavior rather than a categorical disorder (Horney, *Our Inner Conflicts*). This redefinition allows Horney's theory to stand apart within psychoanalytic discourse, positioned neither within Freud's instinctual determinism nor within Jung's symbolic abstraction or Adler's individual psychology. Her approach foregrounds social context, emotional survival, and relational dynamics, elements that resonate strongly with contemporary psychological perspectives even if the terminology itself has evolved. In the present intellectual climate, Horney's theory remains viable not as a clinical diagnostic model but as a conceptual and interpretive framework. Contemporary psychology continues to emphasize attachment, relational trauma, emotional regulation, and the long-term impact of childhood environments concerns that closely parallel Horney's foundational insights. Her work anticipates modern relational and interpersonal theories by recognizing that psychological distress often emerges from sustained patterns of insecurity, alienation, and conflict rather than from isolated traumatic events or instinctual repression. As such, Horney's theory offers a flexible vocabulary for examining emotional experience without relying on outdated medical classifications.

This continued relevance makes Horney's framework particularly suitable for literary analysis, where the goal is not diagnosis but interpretation. Literary characters are not clinical subjects; they are narrative constructions shaped by environment, relationships, memory, and desire. Horney's understanding of neurosis as a pattern of coping with anxiety allows for a nuanced reading of characters' motivations, contradictions, and interpersonal behaviors without reducing them to symptoms or symbolic functions. Her theory thus occupies a productive middle ground between

classical psychoanalysis and contemporary psychological thought. In the context of Joyce Carol Oates's fiction marked by fractured family structures, emotional deprivation, interpersonal hostility, and compulsive behavioral patterns, Horney's reconceptualization of neurosis proves especially apt. Oates's characters often inhabit psychologically oppressive environments that demand adaptive strategies for survival, self-protection, and control. Horney's emphasis on relational anxiety and defensive patterns enables an analysis that remains sensitive to social context while foregrounding inner conflict (Horney, *The Neurotic Personality of Our Time*). Consequently, this study employs Horneyian psychoanalysis not as an anachronistic revival of an obsolete term, but as a theoretically resilient and methodologically appropriate framework for interpreting the psychological complexity that defines Oates's fictional world.

To grasp the full significance of "dysfunctional childhood" as articulated in the title of this thesis, it must first be understood as the generative core of psychic development within Karen Horney's theoretical framework. Within the psychoanalytic framework developed by Karen Horney, dysfunctional childhood constitutes the foundational premise of both her theory of neurosis and her theory of personality. Before examining the structural features of neurosis, neurotic needs, and personality organization, it is necessary to recognize that Horney's system is developmentally anchored in early childhood experiences that shape the emotional conditions under which the self emerges (Horney, *The Neurotic Personality of Our Time*). Horney's theoretical departure from classical psychoanalysis lies in her emphasis on social and relational determinants of psychic development (Horney, *New Ways in Psychoanalysis*). For Horney, the child's early environment particularly the quality of parent-child relationship determines whether personality develops along healthy or neurotic lines.

At the core of her theory of neurosis is the concept of "basic anxiety", defined as a pervasive sense of isolation and helplessness in a potentially hostile world (Horney, *Our Inner Conflicts* 41). Basic anxiety originates in childhood when caregivers fail to

provide consistent warmth, affection, respect, and emotional security. Parental indifference, domination, humiliation, inconsistency, neglect, or abuse generate what Horney terms “basic hostility” in the child (41). Because the child remains dependent on caregivers for survival, this hostility cannot be openly expressed and is instead repressed, transforming into “anxiety”. Thus, dysfunctional childhood is not merely contributory but causative: it produces the fundamental emotional condition from which neurosis develops. In response to basic anxiety, the child adopts coping strategies aimed at securing safety and reducing inner tension. These defensive strategies crystallize into what Horney identifies as neurotic trends: moving toward people (compliance), moving against people (aggression), and moving away from people (detachment) (Horney, *Our Inner Conflicts*). When these strategies become rigid, compulsive, and generalized across situations, they form the basis of neurosis. In this sense, neurosis is the exaggerated and inflexible continuation of childhood survival strategies into adulthood. This developmental trajectory also grounds Horney’s theory of personality. For Horney, personality is not a fixed structure determined by instinctual drives, but a dynamic organization of relational strategies shaped by early childhood experiences (Horney, *New Ways in Psychoanalysis*). The individual’s characteristic orientation toward others, whether compliant, aggressive, or detached, reflects the specific configuration of defenses formed in response to childhood insecurity. Moreover, the construction of “idealized self” and the emergence of self-alienation stem from attempts to cope with unresolved basic anxiety. Thus, the neurotic personality is organized around an idealized self that compensates for early feelings of worthlessness and insecurity rooted in dysfunctional relational environments. Accordingly, dysfunctional childhood operates as the theoretical origin of both neurosis and personality formation in Horney’s system. Neurosis represents the pathological intensification of defensive strategies developed in response to early relational failure, while personality itself reflects the enduring organization of those strategies. In Horney’s framework, early relational dysfunction is therefore not a peripheral developmental disturbance, but the structural foundation upon which the architecture of the self is constructed.

While every individual may exhibit such defensive strategies to some degree, Horney emphasizes that a neurotic individual relies on them excessively, such that they become defining features of one's personality. In *Self-Analysis* (1942), Horney identifies ten primary neurotic needs, which can be broadly categorized into three groups: the need to move toward others, reflected in a persistent desire for acceptance and affection; the need to move away from others, characterized by tendencies toward isolation and aloofness; and the need to move against others, manifested as a desire to control or manipulate others. Karen Horney delineates ten specific neurotic needs in her book *Self-Analysis* (1942), which neurotic individuals tend to overuse, in contrast to non-neurotic individuals who employ similar coping mechanisms in a balanced manner. The first of these is "the neurotic need for affection and approval" (Horney, *Self-Analysis* 51). According to Horney, individuals exhibiting this need are primarily motivated by a deep-seated fear of rejection. This dependency often results in conflict avoidance, excessive concern for the opinions of others, and a pronounced desire to conform. Critics such as Nancy Chodorow argue that Horney's analysis underemphasizes the role of early maternal relationships in shaping this dependency, proposing that attachment theory offers a more nuanced understanding of such behaviors (Chodorow 112). The second need identified by Horney is "the neurotic need for a partner to take over one's life" (Horney, *Self-Analysis* 51). This tendency is characterized by the search for a dominant figure to provide guidance and protection, often at the expense of personal autonomy. Such behavior is rooted in profound feelings of helplessness and inadequacy. Scholars like Simone de Beauvoir contend that these tendencies are reinforced by patriarchal social structures, which condition individuals particularly women to seek security in male authority figures rather than cultivating self-reliance (de Beauvoir 241).

"The neurotic need to restrict one's life within narrow borders" (Horney, *Self-Analysis* 52) constitutes the third of Horney's identified maladaptive strategies, reflecting the behavior of individuals who withdraw from challenges and opportunities due to a fear of failure. Such individuals impose self-limitations, prioritizing safety and predictability

over personal growth and fulfilment. Contemporary critics, such as Erich Fromm, contend that this need emerges in response to an increasingly alienating society that discourages risk-taking in favor of passive conformity (Fromm 87). The fourth neurotic need, "the neurotic need for power" (Horney, *Self-Analysis* 52), characterizes individuals who seek control over others to compensate for their own insecurities. This compulsive drive for authority often manifests as aggressive, manipulative, or authoritarian behavior. Slavoj Žižek critiques this perspective, arguing that power-driven neuroses are not merely individual pathologies but are reinforced by broader ideological systems that emphasize competition and hierarchical social structures (Žižek 105). The fifth neurotic need, "the neurotic need to exploit others" (Horney, *Self-Analysis* 54), highlights the exploitative tendencies of individuals who view relationships primarily in transactional terms. This behavior parallels Machiavellian personality traits. Critics such as Richard Sennett argue that contemporary capitalist societies exacerbate this need by rewarding ruthless self-interest and undermining empathetic or collaborative interpersonal relationships (Sennett 134).

"The neurotic need for social recognition and prestige" (Horney, *Self-Analysis* 54) constitutes the sixth of Horney's neurotic needs. Individuals dominated by this need equate their self-worth with external validation and often experience chronic anxiety over the potential loss of status. Pierre Bourdieu expands on this perspective, arguing that societal structures cultivate such tendencies by linking individual value to various forms of capital—economic, social, or cultural (Bourdieu 67). The seventh neurotic need is "the neurotic need for personal admiration" (Horney, *Self-Analysis* 54), closely related to the pursuit of prestige. This need arises from an inflated self-concept that requires continual reinforcement through external praise. Sigmund Freud critiques this behavior through his concept of narcissism, asserting that it reflects unresolved childhood conflicts rather than an inherent psychological structure (Freud 98). The eighth neurotic need, the "neurotic need for personal achievement" (Horney, *Self-Analysis* 55), describes individuals who define their self-worth through relentless accomplishment. While ambition can be

constructive, this neurotic manifestation transforms it into an obsessive compulsion. Scholars such as Alain de Botton argue that contemporary society exacerbates this need by promoting hyper-competitiveness that equates personal value with productivity (de Botton 154). The ninth neurotic need, "the neurotic need for self-sufficiency and independence" (Horney, *Self-Analysis* 55), reflects the tendency of certain individuals to reject emotional dependence, perceiving closeness as a threat to autonomy. Critics like Judith Butler contend that this perspective undervalues the essential role of interdependence in human relationships for both psychological well-being and social cohesion (Butler 92). Finally, the tenth neurotic need, "the neurotic need for perfection and unassailability" (Horney, *Self-Analysis* 55), highlights perfectionism as a neurotic tendency rooted in fear of criticism and failure. Contemporary discussions on mental health corroborate Horney's observation, and scholars such as Brené Brown argue that perfectionism often functions less as a tool for self-improvement than as a protective mechanism against shame and vulnerability (Brown 63).

Building on the identification of neurotic needs, Horney delineated three primary personality types within her theory of personality: the compliant type, the aggressive type, and the detached type (Horney, *Our Inner Conflicts* 48-49). Each personality type reflects a characteristic orientation toward neurotic conflicts, which shapes the individual's specific needs, anxieties, and value system. Individuals classified as the compliant type, also referred to as the submissive or placatory type, exhibit behaviors oriented toward moving toward others. They display a pronounced need for affection and approval, alongside a need for a partner whether a lover, spouse, or close friend who assumes responsibility for them, makes decisions on their behalf, and fulfills their expectations in life (82-84). These two needs are particularly central to the compliant personality. Notably, a commonality across all three personality types is that their neurotic needs are compulsive, indiscriminate, and generate significant anxiety when unmet, highlighting the pervasive and self-perpetuating nature of these behavioral patterns (40).

These needs are totally independent of what are the actual desires and expectations of the neurotic from a certain person and from the intrinsic self. The needs operate differently from how they are expressed, but the driving force for all these needs is human intimacy and a desire to belong. Compliant type people are often found to overrate their congeniality because of the indiscriminate nature of the need and overlook all the separating factors from the other individuals (53). Since this need for affection is indiscriminate, they would seek affection equally from all whether important to them in real sense of term or not. Thus, this person would overrate their congenial nature, similarities, and common traits with others disregarding any differences or separating factors. They don't lack judgement or observant qualities to themselves, but it's the needs that make them act this way.

Karen Horney talks about one of her patient's dreams to aptly describe the state of mind of a compliant type person. This woman illustrates herself as a small baby who is surrounded by strange and threatening animals. The tiny helpless patient stands there with a huge bee ready to sting her, a dog to bite, a cat to jump and a bull to gore (Horney, *Our Inner Conflicts* 50). Thus, their congenial behavior can be explained here. The need for affection from the aggressive type is more as their tendency to hurt is stronger. Their needs can be summed up as a desire to be liked, loved and wanted, to be accepted, approved and appreciated and to be helped, protected and taken care of (96-98). When this person is confronted in therapy, they would defend themselves by bringing forth the argument that it is totally natural for all human beings to have such a need. But, more than the need for affection, this person has a hidden need for safety, and the need for affection comes to surface to fulfil the need for safety not for some genuine affection in real terms. The need is so compelling that all the action the person takes is compelled by this need. Thus, it is this need that shapes attitude and character in a certain way. The person becomes sensitive to other people's needs, somebody's need for affection, but might not be aware of some others' need for alone time.

The person tries to live up to the expectations of others by strangling his own feelings and expectations and making these unimportant. The person becomes self-sacrificing and selfless, undemanding, overly generous, over-appreciative, over-grateful, and over-considerate (103). Deep down, he believes other people are self-seeking and hypocritical. But he persuades himself that everybody is inherently good, nice and trustworthy. He gets hurt and loses his self-esteem and confidence while getting hurt. All these qualities of the compliant type are not as valuable to other people as they appear to him. Others might not need it but since he needs affection, he would show affection in the hopes of it being reciprocated to him. There are some other attributes of prime importance like avoiding any kind of quarrel or argument and avoiding participating in any competition. If at all they, do they will make sure not to threaten others and would prefer to lose. They would avoid taking first place and always subordinate. They will be easy-going, appeasing, and conciliatory. They don't hold any resentment for long or hold any grudges at all. In the face of an anticipated attack, they would apologize whether or they are or feel truly guilty. They apologize for mistakes that aren't there and always shoulder blame to avoid conflicts.

It is important to consider the inhibitions too to understand fully as it is to consider the needs. To be assertive, critical, or striving for any goal are the main inhibitions in this case. Any kind of aggressive behavior is considered taboo (Horney, *Our Inner Conflicts* 106). Inhibitions prevent him from enjoying things by himself. He considers himself to be weak and helpless, thus feels the need to be saved. This feeling of helplessness is real too to some extent since the person can't fight or assert his rights due to inhibitions leaving him more vulnerable. Besides, he uses it to get what he wants and fulfils his needs by using it as an appeal for love or care or using it as a defense against attack. Another tendency he has towards himself is a tendency to put him in second place or subordinate himself. To him others are just superior and worthy of all good things. He would underrate himself in fields he is good at, and that comes from lack of self-assertion. Aggressive people around would cause him to shrink his worthiness even more

and it is no different when he is alone, he would undervalue his talents, abilities and material possessions. The third characteristic feature of his attitude towards himself is his general sense of dependence on others where he measures his self-worth by the approval of others. Using the opinion of others to rate himself and his worth. Thus, it is very hard for him to take any rejection as it drops his self-confidence to zero, affecting him severely. All the characteristics discussed are far from his general set of values. Thus, it is evident that describing a person who tends to move towards people merely as submissive or dependent kind would be folly. They represent a whole way of thinking, feeling, and living their life. Simultaneously there are opposing trends too at work, but they are majorly repressed. It becomes important to understand their function and nature to understand the basic conflict of a moving towards personality type (compliant type). In real sense of the term, they have concern for others and even exploiting and manipulating tendencies which are heavily repressed. The nature of repressed tendencies varies depending on the childhood influence and the history of the person. The aggressive drives are not only repressed but actively checked for any sign showing up to the person himself or others. He is unaware and has no interest in getting aware of the existence of these opposing trends as it questions and threatens their entire mechanism for survival which is complacency. It is not possible for a person to like someone and be hostile to them at the same time, thus repressing hostility becomes very important. To him, any assertive behavior will invite condemnation from others, which is usually the last thing on his mind. Another purpose the repression of these drives serves is to give the feeling of temporary unity and wholeness (Horney, *Our Inner Conflicts* 113). Striving for unity primary to every individual neurotic or not as it will help run the course of life smoothly. It isn't possible for one to have unity when two opposing trends are pulling in different directions.

Repressing the opposing tendencies is the primary tool of a neurotic to solve his neurotic conflicts. If these tendencies come to the forefront, the artificial sense of unity for the complacent person will come crashing down. The more intense and destructive

these tendencies are, the stronger is the urge or need to keep them in check, further making the person a weakling as he would overdo the complacent behavior and get hurt and stepped over by others. Despite all the efforts, these won't stay in check but manifest in some less volatile way like demanding love and care and secretly dominating in the guise of love. If it gets more intense, there may be temper tantrums but to the neurotic they appear just as all he wants his need for affection to be met. This repressed hostility may appear sometimes as physical ailments when it doesn't get other outlets. A compliant type is doubly motivated when he takes up the role of subordination, one he wants to avoid any potential clash and other repressing his opposing tendencies to excel. Love and sex play an indispensable role for the complaint type that can't be overlooked. The neurotic need for a partner for the complaint type will be addressed there. To a complaint type, love becomes the only goal to be striving for and living for (Horney, *Our Inner Conflicts* 119-122). He would neglect anything and everything to chase the love of interest. Everything else takes a backseat in life, even the career, job or family becomes secondary.

Love is the only thing that can fulfil all his neurotic needs even the opposing tendencies. Love offers him to live his aggressive impulses without repressing them in an innocent justified way. The need to be liked and the need to dominate can be expressed both with the partner. Similarly, the need to excel and the need to take second place can both be taken care of too through this dynamic. He is unaware of how it is in his mind he is messed up; he looks at love as the only cure as it seems to be the only way to solve his conflict. Even it can be logically explained as it is one of the attributes of the compliant type to consider themselves weak and helpless. So, if they happen to find someone who truly loves them above all, they feel a sense of safety in the hostile world. There won't be a need to assert, as the person would know their needs. There won't be a need to take initiative and can totally lean on their love. They are of the view that they can muster the strength because it means taking the initiative for him or even if it means taking the initiative for their own self because their love wants so. Anything that was earlier

meaningless would be a joy because it means doing things together, not alone. He thinks that if I found someone who loves me, I would be somebody and won't have to deal with low self-esteem anymore. For a detached kind of compliant type who fears emotional attachment, sex would play the similar role because it would mean being wanted by others. In this case sex would play the role of being the ultimate saviour from the neurotic conflicts as it is the only source of human intimacy.

There is nothing wrong with finding love but for a neurotic person who doesn't want to deal with the conflicts and aims to overlook them and find a temporary solution in love, it is not a good route to take. He wants to get away from the harmful consequences of unresolved conflicts, without changing anything in conflicts. It is the same for every neurotic's attempt at solution. If the neurotic is fortunate enough that he finds someone whose neurosis fits in with his, he can find some amount of satisfaction and alleviation of the problems. But he ends up destroying it too by carrying the conflicts into the relationship. Thus, resolving conflict is primary for personal growth. The aggressive personality type holds the belief that the entire world is hostile and ready to get him in exactly the opposite way as the complaint type thinks that everybody is nice. He works by jungle philosophy, and his motto is survival of the fittest (Horney, *Our Inner Conflicts* 187). He is a composite of his actual feelings, pretenses and the neurotic needs. He comes across to people as a very good fellow but does his deed of manipulating them. Even if he has some neurotic needs for affection, he puts it to service for fulfilling his aggressive tendencies by appearing to be compliant.

As opposed to being put to action by fear of an anticipated attack in a compliant type, the aggressive type is driven by a tendency to appear and become tough. The world is an arena where strong annihilate the weak. His primary need is to control others. But the form of control may vary. It may be a direct exercise of control or through manipulation and obligation. It depends also on his neurotic structure. If he leans more towards detached type, he wouldn't take the method of directly controlling and the need for affection does the same. There may be a neurotic need for prestige and recognition,

but they lean towards power ultimately. Centre of gravity again is outside the person. His sense of balance depends on if others perceive him as the strong, powerful person he projects to be just as the compliant type was dependent on the outside approval for self-esteem. The key here is to exploit others and get the best of them. He rates people in accordance with how helpful they will be in terms of money, ideas, and contacts.

They would associate with people for getting something tangible and intangible out of them unlike a compliant type whose only goal is getting affection. Diametrically opposite to the compliant type, he would disregard the feelings of others including his own mere sloppy sentimentality. The way he associates with love is also different as he doesn't want love for the sake of love but with other merits and perks that come with it like the status of the partner. Thus, he would marry someone who is considered desirable in terms of beauty, status, and wealth. He puts on his show of being very brave and hates to have any display of fear. If fear happens to manifest in any form, he will go to any length to fight it by deliberately putting himself into situations where he must face his fear until he doesn't get rid of it. There is a sharp contrast between the complaint type and the aggressive type. One lives to appease and the other lives to fight. He would never shun from an argument but feels most comfortable in initiating a fight and then coming out victorious in contrast to the compliant type who fears victory and deliberately takes the second spot. The relationship to guilt for the two types though appears different but has a striking similarity. Where the compliant type never hesitates to take up the blame on self, the aggressive type is adamant on putting the blame on others no matter what. None of them in real sense of terms is convinced of either themselves being guilty or the other fellow for the aggressive type.

An aggressive type considers himself to be driven by realism and never shuns from calling himself the realistic one. He is always aware of qualities like ambition, greed, ignorance, and manifestation in other people as he is the realistic one and takes strict measures to ensure it doesn't obstruct his goals. His realism, besides helping him see through people, also helps him in becoming a master strategist good at planning and

foresight. He may come off as a person with very high work ethics but in reality, work means only an end to him. He doesn't enjoy or loves his work. He makes sure to have no feelings whatsoever. It helps him achieve his neurotic goals i.e., striving for more success and prestige as having feelings will make him take work which doesn't pay off that well and make connections with people based of feelings not a real benefit in terms of money or material goals.

Seemingly the unstoppable aggressive type person has no inhibitions which is barely true. But the structure of our society is such that those inhibitions don't matter. His inhibitions are around emotions like that of love, affection, friendship, and relationships. His set of values are strength, honesty and realism built around the philosophy of jungle. He might feel nauseated at the sight display of affection but somewhere he likes softness in others as it serves the pursuit of his goals. Even in some cases it is observed such a person is drawn towards compliant type and the latter is drawn towards him, both for their respective interests and neurotic needs. Sometimes it is observed that the reaction of the neurotic type towards any request for feelings is out of proportion to the request. He might not only turn away a beggar but abuse him too. The real explanation to this is that the beggar does arouse real feelings of pity in him and needs to keep away from any such behavior i.e. his inhibitions take over and gives his strong reaction of abusing along with refusing help. The way compliant type finds unity through love, for the aggressive type recognition is the means of achieving the wholeness (Horney, *Our Inner Conflicts* 198). His inhibition of receiving or giving affection is also fulfilled by being recognized as he is liked by people, and he likes them in turn, giving him a sense of artificial unity.

Then there is this third category of people who have a need for detachment or moving away from people. Neurotic detachment isn't same as a need to be alone or a need for solitude. Even the ancient, religions and philosophies support this view that meaningful solitude is necessary for personal growth and development of any person. A neurotic cannot face his true authentic self thus shrinks from any constructive solitude (Horney, *Our Inner Conflicts* 75). He keeps his expenses to a minimum because it means

spending time earning the money, which in turn means unwanted contact with other people. He would even hate dependence on other people to acquire knowledge and would prefer it first-hand. Another need is the need for privacy. One of the Horney's patients even resented the idea of god's omniscience because to him God would be an intruder to his privacy (76). He doesn't like being taken for granted and thus prefers to do activities like eating, sleeping, and working alone. His primary need is the need for independence and the need for self-sufficiency and privacy to serve this very need. He considers his independence to be of primary value, and it has some positives for it. But to this person independence is the end goal and once he gets it, he doesn't care what he does with it. If there is something that gives independence, its real value is how it is used. He doesn't want to get influenced, tied or obligated; thus, he wants his independence the way he wanted it. Like other neurotic needs the need for independence is indiscriminate and compulsive too. The neurotic shows hypersensitivity to anything if it poses the threat of influencing, coercing or obligating him. The intensity of hypersensitive behavior depends on the intensity of need for neurotic detachment. The stronger the need, the more intense the response of the hypersensitive person. It may also manifest in hate towards physical objects like collars, neckties, shoes etc. Besides, being in a closed space like that of a tunnel or an underground mine may induce anxious behavior. Even obligations of any kind such as a legal contract, a lease are even marriage are avoided to a great length. The detached type would go to any length to avoid marriage unless it is something that fits into his neurosis. It may be observed that the panic may take over the person before the consummation of the marriage. The neurotic need for detachment even affects the person's relationship with time as he looks at time as a coercion of sorts (Horney, *Our Inner Conflicts* 76-78). He has this inherent hate for timetables and would never ever run by any timetable. To ensure his sense of freedom, he would appear at work late by five minutes. When other people expect him and his behavior to be a certain way, he gets into this rebellious mode. He hates conformist ways thus shunning from following any traditional rules or traditions. If at all he displays any conformist tendency, it is only there to avoid friction which may cause him to be involved with other people. If somebody

offers him some advice, it appears in asceticism. Thus, they don't totally refute any emotional experience and can enjoy it within safe premises. The balance is thus achieved, unlike the other two types. Spontaneous emotional experience may be enjoyed through activities like creative writing. Thus, through therapy if inhibited, the creative flow is corrected and blocks removed, the person after finding his creative expression may find liberation of sorts but it isn't a complete cure as the neurotic conflicts are still in place and need to be dealt with for total salvation.

In the neurotic types who keep a check on their emotions, they give importance to logic and intelligence. They become advocates of reasoning to the extent that they are nurturing the belief that reasoning can cure all problems. A detached type is thus not capable of any real relationships or partnerships because of their tendency of aloofness. However, it might work if the partner has the same tendencies at work and is equally detached. He is capable of intense short- lived relationships where he can withdraw when faced with a threat. The same goes for sex, he would enjoy sexual affairs as they won't demand emotional intimacy and won't interfere with his life. When it comes to therapy, a detached person resents it with full intensity as it would mean the biggest intrusion in his life. But since he enjoys being subjective and observing the intricate processes going within mind, therapy can give him an opportunity to explore the same. When he gets confirmation on the meanings of dream symbolism that he himself deduced, he feels joyful. But he would be very resistant towards the therapist in undertaking anything forced upon him.

He rejects analyst's suggestions which don't fit in with his ideals though politely and indirectly. He is very rigid and does not accept any changes proposed by the analyst. He makes sure the analyst is only a voice by making appropriate distance between him and the analyst. He feels a sense of remoteness towards the analyst and the analytic process which manifests in his dreams as a long-distance call between reporters on separate continents (Horney, *Our Inner Conflicts* 85). This dream is basically a wish to not allow the process of analysis to touch him. One of the characteristics of such a

personality is defending the detachment with strength and vigor whenever it is threatened. The defense of these needs is the characteristic of other neuroses too but in this case, it is almost like a life and death struggle, such is the intensity of defense. He offers huge resistance to any analysis of his human relationships with others. The reaction may be freezing or becoming very abusive if their independence is threatened. The escape mechanisms this type has developed are usually more potent than a man whose life is at risk. They can even make any sacrifice big or small to defend their independence. The need to feel superior is equally important to the detached type as it is to other types. Detached behavior and a feeling of superiority are often complementary. To be able to sustain isolation, one either needs to be very strong or resourceful, or he needs to feel uniquely significant. It is evident when the feeling of superiority shatters for a detached type he enters a state of frenzy seeking affection and protection frantically from others.

Even his need for superiority has a special set of traits. He wants his talents to be recognized without him making any consistent effort towards developing them or bringing them to the forefront by presenting them to people. He even has symbolic dreams representing this desire where there are hidden treasures and people from faraway places come to witness and see them. Another trait of his superiority is his feeling of uniqueness. He wants to be perceived as separate and distinct. The first question in the mind of a detached type when coming across someone new is whether the person will interfere with him or leave him alone. The emotional life of a detached type person has a huge range of variations. Emotional life basically depends on the desires that were allowed to develop in such a person. The general tendency is to deny the existence of any feelings, be it the feeling of love or hate towards other people. It is aimed at keeping a distance as strong love or hate would keep them in the proximity of people. Their feelings would manifest in some other areas like that of love for nature, animals, books or food etc. It is evident in artists of detached type who are capable of representation of their

feelings through art in a splendid manner but might have gone through bouts of emotional numbness in earlier phases of life.

These creative periods come in their life when they take to detachment following some disastrous event pertaining to attempt to close relationships. Thus, for a detached type the feelings are allowed to the extent where they don't take away their need for freedom. If at all any situation poses the potential threat of dependence, the weapon of emotional withdrawal is used to stop it and safeguard independence (Horney, *Our Inner Conflicts* 84). He can have profound emotional experiences where all such threats are kept in check. He takes to asceticism of sorts which usually is not about self- tormenting thus better named self-discipline.

Karen Horney's *Neurosis and Human Growth* presents a profound analysis of neurotic development, and the psychological mechanisms individuals adopt to cope with internal conflicts. She examines how people suffering from neurosis struggle toward self-realization while often being trapped by distorted perceptions of themselves and their relationships with others. One of the most significant aspects of Horney's work is her discussion of neurotic needs and the potential solutions to them. This analysis delves into Horney's framework, exploring the origins of neurotic needs, their psychological manifestations, and the path to overcoming them. Horney defines neurotic needs as compulsive drives that individuals develop to cope with inner anxiety and conflicts. These needs are not expressions of authentic desires, but rather unrealistic demands imposed by an idealized self-image. She states, "Self-idealization, in its various aspects, is what I suggest calling a comprehensive neurotic solution i.e., a solution not only for a particular conflict but one that implicitly promises to satisfy all the inner needs that have arisen in an individual at a given time" (Horney *Neurosis and Human Growth* 24). This suggests that neurotic individuals attempt to create a self-image that fulfills all their emotional deficiencies, even if it is ultimately unattainable.

Horney discusses three major solutions neurotics adopt: the expansive solution, the self-effacing solution, and resignation. These solutions represent different ways neurotic individuals attempt to cope with inner conflicts and anxieties. “The Expansive Solution: The Appeal of Mastery” (*Neurosis and Human Growth* 187) is one of the solutions proposed by Horney where the approach is characterized by a neurotic pursuit of power, control, and superiority. Individuals adopting this solution often seek to dominate others as a means of compensating for their underlying insecurities. Horney states, “The most obvious and the most extrovert among the elements of the search for glory is neurotic ambition, the drive toward external success” (25). Neurotics who embrace the expansive solution often exhibit arrogance, exploitative behaviors, and an excessive need for validation through achievement. Another such solution is “The Self-Effacing Solution or The Appeal of Love” (Horney, *Neurosis and Human Growth* 214) where unlike the expansive type, neurotics seek security through dependence on others. They crave affection, approval, and validation to counter their deep-seated fears of rejection. As Horney notes, “The predominantly complying child, for instance, tends not only to subordinate himself to others and to lean on them but also tries to be unselfish and good” (21). This need for external reassurance often leads to submissiveness and an inability to assert personal desires or opinions.

Apart from the solutions that have been discussed there is one more solution used by neurotics which is “Resignation or The Appeal of Freedom” (Horney, *Neurosis and Human Growth* 259) where the resigned neurotic detaches emotionally from relationships and ambitions to avoid the pain of failure or rejection. This solution manifests in withdrawal, emotional detachment, and self-sufficiency at the expense of deep human connections. Those who adopt resignation as a coping mechanism often struggle with feelings of emptiness and lack of purpose. While these solutions provide temporary relief, they ultimately reinforce neurosis by alienating individuals from their real selves. According to Horney, the solution to neurotic needs does not lie in fulfilling them but in addressing their underlying causes through self-awareness and psychological growth.

One of the central themes in Horney's work is "the idealized self", an artificial construct that neurotic individuals develop to compensate for their perceived inadequacies. She explains that neurotic individuals often become trapped in their search for glory, which stems from an overwhelming desire to become their idealized self (Horney, *Neurosis and Human Growth* 24). This idealized image creates an unrealistic standard that the person feels compelled to live up to, leading to self-hate, inner conflict, and perpetual dissatisfaction. The consequences of self-idealization are profound. Individuals who identify with their idealized self-develop neurotic pride, which makes them hypersensitive to criticism and failure. They become obsessed with proving their worth, which fuels anxiety and intensifies their neurotic needs. Horney explains, "No wonder that, to use a good psychiatric term, it becomes compulsive. The regular occurrence of self-idealization in neurosis is the result of the regular occurrence of the compulsive needs bred in a neurosis-prone environment" (24). Horney argues that the fundamental solution to neurotic needs lies in reconnecting with the real self. This process requires self-awareness, self-acceptance, and a willingness to confront internal conflicts. There are several critical steps involved in this transformation:

Awareness and Recognition of neurotic patterns is the first step in overcoming neurotic needs. Many neurotic individuals are unaware of their distorted perceptions, as their compulsions feel natural and necessary. Horney emphasizes the importance of self-exploration and introspection, stating that "self-knowledge, then, is not an aim in itself, but a means of liberating the forces of spontaneous growth" (*Neurosis and Human Growth* 15). By understanding the root causes of their compulsions, individuals can begin to differentiate between authentic desires and neurotic drives. Instead of striving for unattainable perfection, individuals must embrace self-compassion and flexibility. They need to accept that they are valuable and worthy as they are, rather than defining their worth through rigid ideals. Developing genuine self-confidence is key as Horney notes that neurotic individuals lack authentic self-confidence because their self-worth is tied to external validation. The solution lies in building inner security by cultivating self-trust

and independence. She asserts that genuine confidence comes from living in accordance with one's true self rather than chasing an idealized image (Horney, *Neurosis and Human Growth* 335). This means engaging in activities that bring intrinsic satisfaction rather than seeking approval or superiority over others. By doing so, individuals can rediscover their authentic abilities and passions, which help restore a sense of personal identity.

Karen Horney's insights into neurotic needs and their solutions remain highly relevant in contemporary psychology. She highlights that the root of neurotic suffering lies not in the unfulfilled needs themselves but in the distorted ways, individuals attempt to satisfy them. By abandoning the idealized self, confronting inner conflicts, and embracing the real self, individuals can break free from neurotic compulsions and attain genuine psychological growth. Ultimately, Horney's work is a reminder that self-acceptance, emotional awareness, and authentic relationships are the keys to overcoming neurosis. Only by letting go of unrealistic demands and embracing personal growth can one move toward true self-realization. Some key concepts in Karen Horney's social psychoanalytic theory are: Basic Anxiety, Basic Evil, Real Self, Idealized Self, Neurotic Claims, Neurotic Pride, Tyranny of the Should, Self-Hate and Self-Idealization. The following text will introduce these key concepts with a brief explanation. Horney defines "basic anxiety" as a profound sense of insecurity and apprehension that arises in childhood due to unfavourable environmental conditions such as parental neglect, overprotection, or inconsistency. This anxiety makes the child feel isolated and helpless in a potentially hostile world: "As a result, the child does not develop a feeling of belonging, of 'we,' but instead a profound insecurity and vague apprehensiveness, for which I use the term basic anxiety. It is his feeling of being isolated and helpless in a world conceived as potentially hostile" (Horney, *Neurosis and Human Growth* 18). The term "basic evil" in Horney's theory refers to the parental behaviors that lead to "basic anxiety". These include domination, overprotection, intimidation, hypocrisy, and indifference. Such actions create a hostile environment that prevents a child from developing a sense of belonging: "The people in the environment are too wrapped up in

their own neuroses to be able to love the child, or even to conceive of him as the particular individual he is; their attitudes toward him are determined by their own neurotic needs and responses" (18). The "real self", according to Horney, is the "alive center" of an individual, representing the true source of feelings, wishes, and potential for growth. It is distinct from the actual self, which includes both healthy and neurotic aspects. Neurosis alienates individuals from their real self, leading to a lack of self-awareness and spontaneity.

Horney explains the "idealized self" as a compensatory creation that emerges due to neurosis. Instead of pursuing authentic self-growth, the individual clings to an exaggerated, unrealistic self-image. This leads to a relentless pursuit of perfection and fuels internal conflicts: "Eventually the individual may come to identify himself with his idealized, integrated image . . . The idealized self becomes an idealized self. And this idealized self becomes more real to him than his real self" (Horney, *Neurosis and Human Growth* 23). "Neurotic claims" are the unrealistic expectations of a neurotic about how the world should treat them. They feel entitled to special treatment and believe that they should not have to struggle with life's difficulties. This entitlement arises from their grandiose self-image and can cause frustration when reality does not conform to their expectations: "The difference between a need and a claim is a clear-cut one . . . He speaks of an understandable or natural wish when he really means a claim; and he feels entitled to many things which a bit of clear thinking could show him are not inevitably his" (Horney, *Our Inner Conflicts* 42). "Neurotic pride" is the exaggerated self-importance neurotics derive from their idealized self. It serves as a defensive mechanism to protect them from feelings of inadequacy. However, this pride creates vulnerability, as any challenge to their self-image provokes intense emotional distress; "Neurotic pride is unsubstantial, and it is based on entirely different factors, all of which belong to or support the glorified version of oneself" (Horney, *Neurosis and Human Growth* 88).

The "tyranny of the should" describes the rigid demands neurotic individuals place upon themselves to meet the unrealistic standards of their idealized self. They

develop a strict system of internalized "shoulds" that dictate their behavior, leading to chronic dissatisfaction and self-criticism; "The inner dictates comprise of all the neurotic should be able to do, to be, to feel, to know-and taboos on how and what he should not be" (Horney, *Neurosis and Human Growth* 65). Horney argues that "self-hate" develops as a result of the gap between the real self and the idealized self. The neurotic individual despises their actual self for failing to meet the impossible standards of the idealized self, and this self-hate often manifests as self-contempt, self-frustration, and self-torment. "Self-idealization" refers to the compulsive striving to become the idealized self, which can distort personal growth by shifting focus from authentic development to the pursuit of unrealistic standards: "The individual wants to or, rather, is driven to express himself. And this now means that he wants to express his idealized self, to prove it in action" (Horney, *Neurosis and Human Growth* 24). Despite the frustration inherent in failing to live up to an idealized image, Horney's theory is fundamentally optimistic. By conceptualizing neurosis as a patterned response to relational anxiety rather than a fixed pathological condition, she frames these conflicts as malleable and understandable, rather than immutable defects. Self-awareness and reflection allow individuals to recognize their neurotic patterns, confront unrealistic self-expectations, and redirect energy toward genuine self-development. Moreover, Horney emphasizes the potential for growth through improved relationships and supportive social contexts, suggesting that even the despondence accompanying failed self-idealization can become a catalyst for insight and transformation. In this way, her theory offers not only an explanation of neurotic conflict but also a constructive framework for personal and relational growth, highlighting the possibility of authenticity, self-acceptance, and meaningful change.

Horney's theory is particularly optimistic for the study of Oates because it highlights possibility amidst dysfunction. While Oates's characters often experience childhood trauma, fractured families, and profound emotional insecurity, Horneyian analysis allows these struggles to be read not merely as tragedy but as conditions that shape adaptive coping strategies and open avenues for self-reflection. The tension

between the real and idealized self in Oates's protagonists, often a source of despair, can thus be interpreted as a site for insight, growth, and potential transformation, rather than irreversible failure. By emphasizing the capacity for self-awareness and relational repair, Horney's framework foregrounds the latent resilience and constructive potential within Oates's psychologically complex narratives.

Chapter 3

Oates's Characters and Neurotic Needs

The term neuroticism refers to a wide personality trait dimension that represents how much a person perceives the environment to be upsetting, frightening, and hazardous. Every person may be found somewhere on this personality dimension between the extremes of flawless emotional stability and complete emotional anarchy. In this perspective, the human mind is the most intricate and sophisticated neurological entity in the creator's creation, comprising both invisible conscious and unconscious principles or entities. It directs the physical, emotional, psychological, spiritual, and mental bodies of humans, defining the personas of both men and women over the range of psychological order and disorder.

> In this matter of neurosis … neurosis is irritability, sensitive weakness, a disease of the endocrine glands … infection of the nose or teeth, of genital disease … the weakness of the nervous system … certain glandular diatheses, of birth trauma … conflict with the outer world, with religion, with ethics, with the bad unconscious and the compromising conscious, the suppression of sexual, sadistic, and criminal drives … the noise and dangers … of a sheltered or strict upbringing, of family training in general; of certain conditioned reflexes; etc. (Adler 318)

The term "neurotic behaviour" dates to ancient Greece and the Hippocratic doctrine of four fundamental temperaments (choleric, sanguine, phlegmatic, and melancholic, the latter most closely approximating neuroticism). The contemporary psychologist and the originator of psychoanalytical theory, Sigmund Freud indicates that the neurotic ordered human actions correlate with three regions of the human brain – the "id," "ego," and "superego". He defines the "id" as the unconscious realm of the human mind. The primordial and instinctual part of us includes all our hereditary traits such as instinct, wishes, dreams, wants, and even sex. The conscious region of the human mind that is influenced by the external environment is referred to as dispositions, etc." (Carter iv). Thus, it may be stated that all neurotic persons follow all these patterns, but one of them is prominent in the individual. The generally aggressive individual, for example, has a

desire for conformity and separation. Yet, dominant tendencies influence behavior, and the other two neurotic tendencies are deliberately suppressed, which causes further issues. to as the ego; “Ego itself that is also unconscious and behaves just as the repressed, i.e., expresses strong effects, without even being aware of it, and to achieve awareness, needs special work” (Freud 5). It evolves to serve as a bridge between the unconscious id and the Superego, which is the source of all our judgments and reasonable and logical thinking. The term “superego” refers to our conscience, which is generated from social contexts and cultural standards and impacts how the conscious operates and to achieve awareness, needs special work” (5). It evolves to serve as a bridge between the unconscious id and the Superego, which is the source of all our judgments and reasonable and logical thinking. The term “superego” refers to our conscience, which is generated from social contexts and cultural standards and impacts how the conscious operates.

Karen Horney, a German-born American psychoanalyst, sharply diverged from Freud’s view of neurosis and psychosexual development. She argued that Freud overemphasized biological instincts and sexual drives as the root causes of psychological conflict, neglecting the powerful role of cultural and social conditions. For Horney, neurosis did not stem primarily from frustrated sexual impulses but from disturbances in human relationships, particularly in early childhood. When a child experiences a lack of warmth, security, or consistent affection, basic anxiety arises, defined as a profound sense of helplessness in a world perceived as hostile. This anxiety, she maintained, is the foundation of neurotic behavior.

Horney also criticized Freud’s deterministic outlook, which implied that adult personality is rigidly fixed by early psychosexual stages. Instead, she emphasized the fluidity of personality development, shaped not only by early childhood but also by ongoing social interactions, cultural pressures, and personal coping strategies. Besides, she argued against Freud’s idea of penis envy, claiming that what Freud was detecting was women’s justifiable envy of men’s global power. While penis envy may emerge in neurotic women on occasion, she claims that womb envy “conveying the potentiality of

ego-body-spirit re-integration, psychosomatic-spiritual union" (Carter v), happens just as frequently in males.

As a result, she was perplexed as to why psychiatrists felt the need to lay so much focus on men's sexual equipment. Horney also desexualized Freud's oedipal complex, stating that clinging to one parent and envy of the other was merely anxiety induced by a disruption in the parent-child bond: "womb envy may arise in incalculable variations, as different people are influenced by individual prenatal experiences … different affective memories, distinct post-natal histories, unique genetic constitutions, and distinct characters, personalities, and dispositions, etc"(Carter iv). Thus, it may be stated that all neurotic persons follow all these patterns, but one of them is prominent in the individual. The generally aggressive individual, for example, has a desire for conformity and separation. Yet, dominant tendencies influence behaviour, and other two neurotic tendencies are deliberately suppressed which causes further issues.

Literature reflects human life and thus offers the reader the author's insight into human character and reveals the complexities and intricacies in which human character, action and circumstances interplay and correlate to generate a series of outcomes and consequences. Joyce Carol Oates is a renowned author in the history of contemporary American literature, noted for her presentation of realistic views of the modern human character via her craft. She is highly admired for her technical brilliance as well as the vernacular form of a book, in which she explores a broad range of topics and issues about the neurotic needs of her characters via her works. "There is never a clear realization of the powerful dramatic role … in the neurotic's life, or of the great part they have in accounting for his behavior and mental reactions" (Horney, "Culture and Neurosis" 222).

A brief enumeration of Karen Horney's neurotic needs is instrumental before the behavior of Oates's characters is scrutinized to find the presence of each one of these needs. The ten neurotic needs outlined by Horney in her work *Self-Analysis* are: the neurotic need for affection and approval; the neurotic need for a "partner" who will take over one's life; the neurotic need to restrict life within narrow borders; the neurotic need for power; the neurotic need to exploit others and by hook or crook get the better of them;

the neurotic need for social recognition or prestige; the neurotic need for personal admiration; the neurotic need for personal achievement; the neurotic need for self-sufficiency and independence; the neurotic need for perfection and unassailability (*Self Analysis* 51-55). The course of the chapter follows where the behavioral patterns of Oates's protagonists are studied to find the presence of these neurotic needs establishing them as Horney's neurotics.

What I Lived For, a novel, represents Horney's neurotic needs in the protagonist Corky Corcoran, a municipal councilor who, "is one of the most astonishing fictional creations in recent memory" (Stark). In the modern social milieu, success is frequently measured by tangible accomplishments. While many may desire an opulent lifestyle, Corky transforms this desire into an intrinsic part of his personality, allowing his sense of self to be wholly defined by wealth. As a city councilman in *What I Lived For*, Corky displays an obsessive and unorthodox attachment to material possessions that reveals a distinctly neurotic disposition. Karen Horney while talking about the neurotic need for social recognition and prestige in her book *Self-Analysis*, first published in 1942, says that for an individual driven by this need, "all things-inanimate objects, money, persons, one's own qualities, activities, and feelings [are] evaluated only according to their prestige value" (54). Corky Corcoran, the protagonist in *What I Lived For*, exhibits this tendency which becomes evident from the value he places on the material goods and the items he owns. He assigns a value to each tangible possession based on its prestige value and how it enhances his reputation. He also considers the locations and individuals he frequents in terms of how they contribute to his stature.

Much of the novel is devoted to Corky's ostentatious displays of pride in his automobile, an expensive Cadillac De Ville valued at thirty-five thousand dollars. The vehicle is the first detail the reader learns about him, underscoring its centrality to his identity. His initial appearance in the narrative is marked by this car, as he reacts aggressively toward a FedEx driver who obstructs it, an incident that highlights both his combative disposition and the symbolic weight he attaches to his possession (*What I Lived For* 37). The esteem Corky places on the vehicle appears to inform his driving

behavior, which is characterized by aggression and a heightened sense of entitlement. As the story develops, Corky continues to boast about the car, particularly emphasizing his admiration for its horn. He likens its sound to the trumpet of an enraged bull elephant, a simile that conveys his exaggerated sense of pride in the machine. The comparison itself is revealing by equating the mechanical sound of a car horn with the vocalization of a powerful living creature, Corky elevates the car to a status beyond that of an inanimate object. Such hyperbolic imagery underscores his deep personal investment in the vehicle, suggesting that it functions not merely as a mode of transportation but as an extension of his ego and social identity.

Corky's assertion that he feels like "a million dollars" when operating his Cadillac De Ville and blowing the horn speaks for itself when it comes to how his feeling of self is enhanced by the vehicle itself and reveals his compulsive desire to link pride with worldly possessions. Whenever he finds himself in adverse circumstances, he frequently views his automobile as a rescuer and redeemer. His nicknamed Caddy coming to his aid or more accurately, his considering it a haven, shows how much closer to him his automobile is than a living- being. He continues to base his worth on material possessions. This same impulse is evident in his attachment to his eight-shot, 7.65mm Luger automatic pistol, a rare World War II relic (Oates 41). By naming the weapon "Sweetie" and keeping it close at hand, Corky imbues the object with emotional significance while simultaneously emphasizing its market value as a World War II relic. Noticeably, he views the loss of any one of these tangible possessions as a blow to his reputation.

It's normal for a guy to enjoy his appurtenances, but Corky's passion of his material possessions isn't ordinary since he assigns value to them based on how they enhance his reputation and status. Beyond automobiles and weaponry, his identity is also constructed through lifestyle choices that signal affluence—his patronage of exclusive restaurants, nightclubs, and bars, as well as his penchant for luxury clothing and accessories sourced from high-end retailers. He derives pride not only from the things he owns materially, but also from the liaisons and associations he forms including his

romantic relationships. While driving through traffic, Corky reflects on his car and his romantic encounter with Christina Kavanaugh, as Oates narrates:

> Traffic moves forward a few jerky yards like hiccups then stops. Shit! Corky's all but stalled his heart pounding in fury as if he is been personally insulted in his gleaming-glittering Caddy that's the sexiest car he has ever owned the (Corky says this about all his cars and always means it: this one is) on his way to an assignation with Christina Kavanaugh who is the sexiest woman he's ever been involved with (Corky says this about all his women and always means it but in absolute truth, Christina is), God damn he's got to watch it his blood pressure's up. (Oates 38)

Corky proclaims that his Cadillac De Ville is the most alluring automobile he has ever owned, and he draws a parallel by asserting that Christina is the most alluring woman he has ever dated. In doing so, he places comparable value on both objects and people, treating them as possessions that enhance his sense of prestige. His language—describing the "gleaming glittering Caddy" as "the sexiest car" and Christina as "the sexiest woman"—reveals the extent to which he conflates material objects with human relationships (38). The ease with which he situates Christina, a living person, within the same framework as his automobile underscores his neurotic tendency to evaluate worth through external markers of desirability and status. Christina's appeal to Corky is not limited to her physical beauty but extends to the social and economic advantages her identity affords. As the wife of distinguished jurist Harry Kavanaugh, she embodies both wealth and influence, while her aesthetic attractiveness amplifies her social capital. These attributes combine to heighten Corky's sense of privilege, and he deliberately engineers opportunities to encounter her and cultivate her affection. This calculated pursuit reflects not genuine emotional investment but rather a desire to secure prestige through association.

Similarly, Corky derives immense pride from his connections with prominent figures such as Oscar Slattery, the mayor of Union City, and his son, Vic Slattery. His delight in attending their extravagant lunches, dinners, and parties illustrates the degree to

which he equates proximity to political and social elites with personal worth. Invitations to such gatherings are, for Corky, not simply opportunities for leisure but crucial affirmations of his identity, signaling his acceptance into circles of influence and power. Corky places immense value on demonstrating loyalty to Vic, a commitment that endures until the novel's conclusion. Although he initially entertains doubts about maintaining ties with the Slatterys due to their unscrupulous political dealings, he ultimately resolves to remain within their circle. In one striking instance, Corky endangers his own life by intervening in a gun attack to protect Vic, ultimately arriving at the hospital gravely injured (Oates 605). Such an act demonstrates the extreme lengths to which he is willing to go to preserve his association with the Slattery family. When an individual persists in cultivating a relationship that compromises personal morality and jeopardizes both physical safety and well-being, it signals not genuine loyalty but rather a compulsive, even neurotic, dependence on the social validation such ties provide.

Corky emerges as a man perpetually in search of opportunities to elevate his reputation, whether through business ventures or personal affiliations. At one point, he admits that his attraction to a wealthy widow in a graveyard stems not from genuine emotional connection but from her financial resources (Oates 410). This candid admission reveals the extent to which material gain dictates his choices in matters of intimacy. His marriage to Charlotte further illustrates this tendency. As a divorced woman with a child from a previous marriage, Charlotte might appear an unconventional choice for a young man without children of his own, particularly given Corky's expressed belief that fatherhood "is not his thing." Yet, his decision is clarified when viewed through the lens of opportunism: Charlotte is both attractive and financially secure, the daughter of Ross Drummond, and therefore represents a "best bet" in Corky's calculations. Oates describing Corky's obsession with Charlotte says:

> Corky was crazy about Charlotte Drummond his boss's daughter, not just he is ick hustler from Irish Hill with an eye for the best bet, but Charlotte was a knockout in those days and carried herself in so classy a way, you had to love her even if by the rules of common sense, you couldn't always like her. (Oates 166)

He describes himself as a "ick hustler from Irish Hill" and Charlotte as "a knockout" who "carried herself in a classy way" (166). He is often spotted hanging out in upscale restaurants and other settings that highlight his status. While traveling to meet Thalia, he recollects a dinner he once hosted for his daughter Thalia, his wife Christina, and friends, noting that these gatherings invariably occur at prominent, high-end establishments—further evidence that Corky stages social performance as part of his identity. Oates characterizes Corky's delight in hosting:

> Corky had taken a party of family and friends out to dinner never so happy as when he is hosting a big table at Brauer's Steak House, or The Cloverleaf or London's Seafood Res Restaurant, or the Mohawk Room at the Sattler, or the Elm Room at the U.C.A.C., …. (Oates 171)

Corky even places great value on the architecture of his company, Corcoran Inc., and takes pride in displaying the magnificence of his estate, describing it as marvellous when entertaining visitors. His indulgence in such grandeur contrasts with his disregard for those lacking privilege, as he shows interest only in individuals of influence and status. At one point, he rejects a business proposal and blacklists its author solely because the man does not meet his standards. Such actions firmly establish Corky as a living embodiment of the "neurotic need for social recognition and prestige" (Horney 54).

The compulsive nature of Corky's desire for admiration illustrates the pathological dimension of Horney's "neurotic need for personal admiration" (54). He has a need to be admired for what he assumes to be his image than his actual value. There is a sense of inflated image of self and a "need to be admired not for what one possesses or presents in the public eye but for the imagined self" (54). It is interesting to note how the title of the first chapter is "Nicest Guy in Union City, New York" which is his assumed image in his head. Being viewed in that light is very important to him. He worries that he may lose this respect which is characteristic to the one possessing this need which Horney calls the "dread of losing admiration" (54). He feels really embarrassed at club Zanzibar when the host doesn't entertain him and they won't give him a drink. He is a white man who is not accorded the respect he is used to receiving when he visits other

reputable areas of his choice where he is treated like a dignitary since Zanzibar is a place where there are primarily black people. His trip to Zanzibar leaves him with a sour aftertaste. Failure to win someone's admiration undermines the self-perception and feeling of self of a neurotic who craves adoration. Most likely because they believe he is a police officer or just because he is white, people in Zanzibar don't seem interested in him. He displays cash in his pockets to the host and the other guests to make a clue about his financial situation. He appears to be making a last-ditch effort to prove his financial position and recover his damaged self-esteem after the rejection by bringing out dollar notes.

When even after telling the other man that he means business, he receives no response, it leaves Corky astounded and perplexed. Despite his best efforts, he is unable to convince him to sell him the pistol, the main cause for his trip to Zanzibar. On one occasion Corky while speaking to Christina (his sweetheart) gloatingly tries to get her attention by bragging about his accomplishment in controlling the traffic. He leaves out the unpleasant details and only shares half of them with Christina, creating a favorable impression of himself. Her dazzling grin confirms his success. There, he discusses how all the men in the Corcoran family, including his father, grandfather, and great-grandfather, are talented storytellers. To his pals, he would relate big tales of everyday events in which he was either the hero or the villain whom one couldn't help but love. The neurotic who has this urge has an exaggerated sense of self, and they work to ensure that other people think the same way about them. Using Oates's remarks to illustrate Corky's exaggerated self-image:

> Corky's stories have one thing in common, of course, Corky's at the center. He's the hero, or he is the jerk you have to love. He is the victim, or the worm that – that turns, or the guy who loses his temper, or the dumb fuck who wins in the end. He's the sneaky counterpuncher. He's the mastermind. He's the man with aces, the royal flush. He's-who? Corky Corcoran. (Oates 68)

Corky appears to be extremely cautious in his dealings when he meets Greenbaum for a business lunch at the UCAC because he sees Greenbaum as a knowledgeable Jew who

should know better, and Corky goes on to project a specific picture of himself. When reprehended by Greenbaum on appearing late for the business lunch, he delivers a more exaggerated version of the story he told Christina about how he was controlling traffic while being caught up in the traffic. Corky Corcoran is shown meticulously constructing a persona of himself with Greenbaum, from whom he hopes to benefit professionally. Horney asserts that for such individuals, "self-evaluation [is] dependent on living up to this image and on admiration of it by others"(Horney 54). He starts off by talking about science and physics before moving on to talk about religion, which gives the impression that he is quite intelligent. Then, to give a hint as to how he succeeded, he continues by telling Greenbaum about his illustrious past and how he is well-known in Union City and has lots of connections with important figures. He is seen making an effort to gain the upper hand on Greenbaum.

Corky claims to know the significant individuals seated at the adjacent table and that he is also aware of their topics of conversation. He also makes a show of how the UCAC waitstaff and service personnel are at his beck and call. It may be inferred that the entire effort put into developing this impression of him is to convince Greenbaum of his importance and reputation in Union City, and that he merits to be treated with the same respect by Greenbaum. Budd Yeager from the adjacent table appears as Corky is about to say goodbye to Greenbaum and puts his hand on his shoulder before quickly turning to face the other guests he was with and waving at Corky. Budd Yeager asks Corky how he has been and how he missed him. When Budd makes a move like this, it surprises Greenbaum, which Corky witnesses, causing Greenbaum to recognize him for the success he is. Later as they head out of the Elm room and Corky goes into the men's room "revealing in the ease and warmth and rightness of Budd's unexpected gesture, perfectly timed, hinting to Howard Greenbaum Corky Corcoran's stature in Union City, in quarters where Greenbaum for all his brains and Jew sagacity wouldn't have a clue" (Oates 135). This displays his tendency to portray a likable image of himself to suit himself hinting at his neurotic tendency for personal admiration.

It is common in contemporary society to associate one's accomplishments with their sense of self-worth, even though these concepts may or may not actually be related. Some people exhibit extreme ambition and desire not because they appreciate success but because they want to be ahead of others so they can enjoy the mental advantage of feeling better and superior to others. According to Karen Horney, individuals with "the neurotic ambition for personal achievement"(55) exhibit similar types of mental processes. Such people constantly strive to be the greatest at all they do and evaluate their performance in that pursuit. After excelling in one field, they would pick up another and dominate that area as well as the "self- evaluation [is] dependent on being the very best- lover, sportsman, writer, worker-particularly in one's own mind" (Horney 55). They judge their value according to their achievements, and Corky Corcoran exhibits a similar type of compulsive demand by striving to be the finest stepfather, entrepreneur, and lover. No matter how much he may or may not fit each of these descriptions, in his mind he does, and this gives the appearance to others that he does as there is a "need to surpass others not through what one presents or is but through one's activities" (55). He would become frustrated and feel like a failure if he were unable to fulfil the standards, he sets for himself as there is a persistent "dread of failure" in this neurotic type (55). Achievement is important to him on all levels, not just in his work; he strives to excel in everything he does. He tells Christina that he wants to own and purchase the Griswold building, which would be the city's first skyscraper. Owning the first skyscraper in New York is not something that the average person would be able to do. Corky, though, reveals a desire and ambition to one day possess it. He claims to have a fascination for historical locations. Additionally, he states his desire to own Bull's Eye, for which he later strikes a deal. His excessive ambition and thirst for success are what drives him to want to own the best that is available.

Corky's inclination to surpass others in accomplishments is a result of his persistent determination to succeed. It is for this reason that he insists on making the deal with Chantal Crowe and later uses his ex-father-in-law's money to put down payment on

Bull's Eye. His anxiousness is influenced by his internal dialogue as he imagines how his financial advisor Greenbaum could respond to the deal.

> What the fuck is Corcoran Inc., doing buying a heavily mortgaged jazz nightclub in downtown Union City, not even checking out the books, the insurance, the actual condition of premises, what madness in the midst Corky' sown of financial problems in the depths of recession! (Oates 312)

Horney points this as "relentless driving of self to greater achievements, though with pervasive anxiety" (55). Exploiting others and getting the best of them is another technique to relate to people and connect with them. When the neurotic succeeds, he eliminates the potential that another person may succeed and take advantage of them. In order to be in a better position than others, people act on this propensity. People are judged based on what they can contribute, whether it is resources like cash, ideas, or sexuality. Almost the entire novel is spent with him taking advantage of people in order to gain something from them. His exploitative tendency towards women manifests in the statement, "Hard to keep your hands off when it's plentiful, ripe delicious fruit hanging from trees, and no fence around the orchard" (Oates 173).

Corky marries Charlotte for the help he gets out of her father and misses Drummond when he can't have anything to do with him as he divorces his daughter.

> A French Normandy mansion at 19 Lakeshore Drive, one of those big baronial homes in the Edgewater district of Union City just far enough away from the south south-west southwestial section on to be prime property. Those millionaire houses on grassy slopes overlooking Lake Erie that Corky knew from how many drives along the lakeshore, his heart stirred by raw yearning staring at the regal façade, the canopy, and the uniformed doormen of the Athletic Club-What must it be like, to lie in one of those houses! To be even a guest, to be known by such people. (Oates 167)

Corky's exploitation of Charlotte by having many affairs during their marriage and blaming her by labelling her neurotic is only a covert indication of his exploitative inclinations. He almost gets Christina ready to start a relationship with him. But later,

when he learns that Christina had told her husband about them from the beginning of their relationship, he feels betrayed and furious and even starts hating her which reflects the "dread of being exploited and thus of being "stupid"'(Horney 54). When he learns from Drummond that Greenbaum has never been truthful and honest in his dealings, he is devastated and regrets his desire to use Greenbaum for his ideas. He is seen arranging a lunch date with his financial advisor Greenbaum at the athletic club with the goal of becoming comrades. In general, Corky is interested in developing friendships with affluent and prestigious individuals, but in Greenbaum's case, he appears to be drawn to him because he is a Jew and Corky believes that Jews are one of the most intellectual people in the world. Therefore, no association would exist if the other person wasn't given something in return. In Greenbaum's situation, he is digging for ideas and knowledge as to such neurotic there are "various foci of exploitation-money, ideas, sexuality [and] feelings" (54). Thus, along with financial advice, he wants to learn from him valuable ideas, facts, and insights. Get the most out of the individual you are interacting with in a particular situation is the neurotic's motto for the neurotic driven by a need for exploiting others as they take "pride in exploitative skill" (54). It becomes clear here in his ruminations "Corky thinks fiercely, what's needed here isn't fucking financial advice but fucking wisdom" (Oates 106).

Corky even tries to develop a personal relationship with Greenbaum. In addition to the chef salad that Greenbaum requests, he also orders them a bottle of wine, with the understanding that they will split it. He opens with a physics remark in the hopes that Greenbaum, a knowledgeable Jew, will be interested and that this will help to break the ice. However, he receives a cold response from Greenbaum. Corky is frustrated because he keeps trying, but Greenbaum only seems interested in business and keeps bringing up the subject of his finances. As a neurotic with exploitative tendencies, Corky takes pride in his ability to exploit others and his inability to do so shatters his pride in this ability. Since Corky feels let down, he tries harder out of anxiety and makes every effort to persuade Greenbaum to divulge more of what he appears to have to offer. For next time, he suggests that they meet at lunch rather than in the office.

> Corky says, evenly, "So, Howard, you would rather meet me in your office, instead of have lunch? Having a look, why don't I meet with you first, then we can go out somewhere? Next week? I will have my secretary call". Greenbaum says politely, "Fine, Jerome". You know, you could call me 'Corky'. I've asked you. Corky-yes, fine. (Oates 132)

He is trying to get to know Greenbaum so that he can eventually take advantage of him for his thoughts and wisdom by asking him out to dinner. Later he is seen attempting to take advantage of younger women, including his stepdaughter and the friends of his stepdaughter where his exploitative tendencies become conspicuous; "*What I Lived For* as a daring portrait of male sexuality, I brought a suspension of disbelief to the novel somewhat unwillingly … Corky's lusty frenzy at first seemed created according to an abstract, wholly pejorative idea of American maleness, one rooted in the pages of Playboy" (Carroll). He intends to take advantage of Kiki and Marlie Plummer, but he feels like a fool when Kiki's antics get him into trouble when she puts an ear clamp on him. A neurotic with a propensity to take advantage of others experiences an overwhelming fear of being taken advantage of and appearing absurd or imprudent. He feels terrorized and intimidated by Kiki and Marlie Plummer since they are younger and quick-witted women. From the very beginning his intentions behind visiting Kiki were much more than enquiring; they were to find out more about Thalia, his step-daughter from his ex-wife, His objectives are quickly revealed when he sexually abuses her, and his neurotic fear is quickly shown when he is threatened by a furious Kiki. Besides, he has a very complicated relationship with his step-daughter Thalia that goes far beyond a regular father-daughter relationship and becomes evident at various points in the novel. He attempts to rationalize that he loves her and his interest in her purely due to his sense of responsibility for her; however, there are references interspersed in the novel where his fantasies and sexual interest in her emerge.

Corky has a need and inclination to be in the driver's seat of his life to experience a sense of control over his life, but he claims that he only feels in control when he is in the driver's seat of his car (Oates 37). Corky has the dread of uncontrollable

situations and the dread of helplessness. He has a propensity to abuse his power over others. He is observed doing that in the entire novel because of his ingrained need to exert control over everyone. As Horney says, these people have an "essential disrespect for others, their individuality, their dignity, their feelings, the only concern being their subordination (Horney 53). He attempts to acquire what he wants and dominate people by using his fame and friendship with the Slattery practically everywhere. While talking to Chantal Crowe when he was putting pressure upon her for making a deal about Bull's-eye, Corky thinks that he can get his way because he is a "high roller in Union City, a wheeler-dealer in local real estate, a close buddy of Oscar Slattery and the City Hall crowd that's been in power for years" (Oates 312).

A person with a neurotic propensity to control others can do so either directly or indirectly by using his mental abilities to do it as he has stern "belief in the omnipotence of intelligence and reason" (Horney 53). He believes he can outsmart and so dominate anyone by seeming to be better in cerebral thinking and foresight and resenting any tendency towards emotional forces as there is a "denial of the power of emotional forces and contempt for them" (53). He often tries to manipulate women because he believes they can be easily deceived as they are largely driven by emotion. He values rationality over emotion as a result and fears emotion. Throughout the course of the book, he appears perplexed and confused by his attraction to his stepdaughter Thalia, who seemed to matter to him more than any other woman. This unexplained pull towards her challenges his sense of reason and leaves him devastated as people with this need have a "dread of uncontrollable situations"(53). Even later, when he runs into Charlotte and she suggests getting back together, he doesn't feel anything; he lets reason rule, which is his method of maintaining power and a state of control. He avoids all feelings for his ex-wife Charlotte whenever he remembers her in the back of his mind.

Corky's behavior towards women demonstrates his neurotic need to control and subordinate others. He does this tactfully, but whenever he fails, he becomes enraged. Using willpower in service of meaningful pursuits holds a high regard as opposed to its neurotic counterpart which is observed in Corky as he overlooks the limitations of

willpower. Horney asserts that “the neurotic faith in the omnipotence of will is illusory, because it completely disregards the limitations that may defy even the most determined efforts” (58). However, a person with healthy yearning for willpower considers its limitations and uses it for meaningful pursuits. It is seen that Corky is consumed with disappointment when a TV anchor approaches aggressively and talks down to Corky, he resents it and thinks that such women can only be sexually dominated. He can easily understand ladies his own age and others, but he finds it difficult to understand younger women, who, in his opinion, are strong, independent women who are focused on their careers, like Thalia and her companions Marlie and Kiki. Because they are challenging to subordinate, he believes that titles these women “a new breed”. Horney calls it “dread of recognizing objective limitations of the power and reason” (53). He places more value on his mental abilities and tries to stay current with scientific and cosmological information which is fuelled by the “contempt for everything within self that lags behind the image of intellectual superiority” (53). He is often seen obsessing over the same book, which he keeps next to his bed, and thinking about passages from it practically everywhere, which looks more like a pretense than a genuine search for knowledge.

Being independent and self-sufficient is a desirable attribute in the current environment, but how much of a necessity it is, is determined according to its positive or negative outgrowth. As with all other needs, the neurotic need for independence is unhealthy because when a way of being and existing turns compulsive and takes more from a person than it gives them, it takes neurotic character. In Joyce Carol Oates’s *Zombie*, the main character Quentin exhibits a similar “neurotic need of self-sufficiency and independence”. He is shown misusing this independence by committing terrible deeds: “whose self-definition, whose sole pleasure” is killing (Oates, “I Had No Other Thrill or Happiness” 52). Q.P. is “the name the thirty-one-year-old man gives himself in his chronicle, brings the reader inside the mind of a person who lacks conscience, feeling and the ability to form relationships” (Brett 210), lives at his caretaker’s quarters in order to satisfy his neurotic need for independence and declines any request from his parents to visit him, go to a meal with him, or engage in any other type of association as there is a

"dread of needing others, of ties, of closeness, of love" (Horney 55). He dislikes when his father comes to visit him in his caretaker's room at the caretaker's quarters, and he refuses to go home when his father asks him as his mother also wanted to see him. The father says, "Quentin, the main reason I dropped by is how would you like to come home with me tonight? Your mom has made banana-custard pie," and I said, "Thanks, Dad, but I'm not hungry, I guess. I've already eaten" (Oates, *Zombie* 37).

Any voicemails left by the sister and parents are immediately deleted, seemingly refusing to communicate with them. He declines their invitation to join them on vacation with them. He would rather be a caretaker than do anything else because it fits his lifestyle and maximizes his independence. As seen by his relationship with his parents, he fears emotional intimacy and closeness. He finds it quite unsettling that his sister Junie can see right through him more than anybody else. He claims that no one is as adept at seeing through him as Junie is because they are genetically related and shared a womb, and this level of similarity makes him perturbed and distressed. He once got into a little altercation with a student called Bruce, and Bruce's parents went to Q.P.'s house to voice their concerns and to question him. When asked by the father if he intentionally wounded Bruce, he seemed very terrified and broke down in tears, assuring his parents that it wasn't him who meant to hurt Bruce, which is why he ran home. As a maternal instinct, his mother attempted to comfort him at this point, but he stiffly refused to press into her breasts or belly, resisting emotional intimacy.

Any attempt by an outsider to restrict one's freedom or any form of inquisitive attempt from anyone is met with anger from the neurotic who desires independence. In reality, he may or may not be craving proximity, but any suspicion of the sort that arises in the neurotic's head about the other person will cause him to react with hatred towards him. He would prefer a distance from anyone who appeared to try to get too close as the "distance and separateness [is] the only source of security (Horney 55). This need is what drives his desire to stop taking his medication and his desire to inform the therapist that he no longer requires his unnecessary prescriptions. When Q.P. saw Dr. E, he thought that the doctor was highly attentive and took note of nearly everything, as opposed to

prior times when he would primarily yawn for the entire 50 minutes. He became very inquisitive making Q.P. want to say that he didn't need his prescription anymore as if his alertness kind of repelled Q.P. Here, in addition to the therapist, the medications can be seen as an outside force attempting to restrict Q.P.'s freedom.

Q.P.'s lack of interest in Dale Tech classes reveals his anxiety about having his independence restricted and his fear of being enslaved by anything. Horney asserts that such people have a "necessity never to need anybody, or to yield to any influence, or to be tied down to anything, any closeness involving the danger of enslavement"(55). Family responsibilities are treated in the same way as outside ones, in addition to purposefully ignoring outer persons and outside activities. He is seen abandoning his grandmother's house because he feels that his grandson's responsibilities are nothing but a burden. Even his dream-related Zombie begins to seem like a burden to him because he doesn't want to be bound to anything. A person with "a neurotic need to restrict one's within narrow borders", in contrast to a neurotic need for ambition, avoids aiming for ambition as "they have a dread of having or asserting expansive wishes" (52). Since earning money and putting oneself out there to do so limit independence, all demands and needs must be suppressed to meet expansive demands. There is a "necessity to be undemanding and contented with little, and to restrict and ambitions for material things" (52). It appears that Quentin is limiting both his life in general and his needs and expectations in particular. Living off scraps from his parents and the occasional cash, which restricts his existence and removes any meaningful ambition. He was content with his job as a caretaker and wished he could do it forever.

> This property Q_P_ is CARETAKER for why can't I be such for life, if I so wish? The P_ family house, large and dignified red-brick Victorian, 118 North Church Street, Mt. Vernon, Michigan. None of the P_ family live here now except Q_P_ CARETAKER. It is a job that suits me. Like Mr. T says, such responsibility is good for a man. (Oates 102)

It turns out that Q.P. wants to live off what he has already inherited and isn't interested in setting his own goals or creating an aspiration that is worthwhile. In truth, he

has nothing to do with family or family values, but he portrays it as being a responsible thing to take care of the inherited property to back his claim that he is doing something positive with his life. He simply wants to remain unnoticed so that he can live his secret life and yet be able to support himself which is fuelled by the "necessity to remain inconspicuous and to take second place" in such individuals as Horney asserts (Horney 52). If Quentin had been a child or a young lad, doing chores for his grandmother—such as mowing her yard, doing her gardening, and taking her places—in exchange for minimal payment would have been considered appropriate. But he acts in this way because he needs to confine his life to a small area.

Although there are many ways to take advantage of other people, the protagonist Q.P. in the novel *Zombie* does exploitation in a different and is more overt manner. A person with this propensity is prone to assessing others' potential for exploitation, and Q.P. is no different. He considers using an ice pick to perform ice pick lobotomies on every other walking male he encounters to transform them into his zombie. As a serial killer, he has mastered the art of exploitation, and his approach is incredibly calculated. He employs his calculating strategy when selecting his victims to complete his task with the least amount of opposition; "others evaluated primarily according to whether or not they can be exploited or made use of" (54). As a result, he believes it would never be appropriate to assault anyone from his apartment when he sees guys in his caretaker's flats. He evaluates every male he encounters, considering his background, social standing, and proximity to his place of abode. He is aware that there will be major repercussions if the missing person is a white, wealthy, upper-class male because many people will be concerned and question him. However, there won't be much of an investigation if the victim is a foreign national, a poor Black boy, a hitchhiker, or some sort of drug addict, and he can get away with abducting them.

Exploitation for Q.P. extends beyond the young boys he ends up killing and may also be shown in his close connections, such as the one with his grandmother. In exchange for the occasional cash, she provides him; he does mow his grandmother's grass and drives her places in the car. He pretends to care about his grandmother even

though he doesn't since he thinks she will leave behind a sizable estate worth up between $80,000 to $100,000, which might include her house, investments, and savings. He believes she might want to leave something for him and his sister if not then their parents. "In any case, Grandma P_ would leave a sizable estate when she died to Mr. and Mrs. R_P_& they wouldn't live forever, either" (Oates 107). This makes it clear that he views his parents and grandma only as a source of money and inheritance. In addition to the occasional cash she provides him, this is one of the reasons he is so interested in helping granny out around the house. The only connection he has with his family is through the financial support they provide, such as his mother's occasional stipend and his father's assistance with his tuition. Thus, he is seen exploiting others both for their sexuality as seen in his crimes on his victims and in terms of monetary aspects as observed in his close relations.

Quentin's obsessive need for dominance and control is more akin to a basic instinct, and the most overt manifestation of "the neurotic need for power" where he uses physical force to dominate his victims as "domination over others [is] craved for its own sake" (52). He desires to perform an ice pick lobotomy on a male to make him his slave and create what he will refer to as his zombie. To acquire a zombie, he performs such lobotomies on several men, but none of them survive, making him a sort of serial killer. His quest for the ideal zombie specimen has become something of a goal for him. It blatantly illustrates his neurotic need for control and power as well as his obsessive need to dominate; "He would beg for his food and he would beg for oxygen to breathe. He would beg to use the toilet not to soil his clothes. He would be respectful at all times. He would never laugh or smirk or wrinkle his nose in disgust" (Oates 49-50). His need for complete dominance and control over his slave becomes abundantly clear, as does the severity of his psychopathology, as evidenced by the fact that he had to kill multiple individuals to achieve such an end. Aside from his direct control over his victims, he possesses passive power through his intelligence and reasoning skills. In a 1994 review, Oates remarks, "The serial killer has no free will, no intelligence, no self apart from the psychological predicament of his fate. The serial killer is an active pathogen in the

organism of society" (Oates, "I Had No Other Thrill or Happiness" 53), while criticizing Joel Norris' idea on the actions of serial murderers.

> Responding to the needs of others, of course, is a crucial part of normal social functioning. But people-pleasers are so invested in outside approval that they set their own wants and needs aside. They find it almost impossible to say no--even when saying yes wreaks havoc on their own best-laid plans.(Svoboda)

The main character Abby Hayman in the novel *Pursuit* exhibits such people-pleasing traits that she is shown being nicer to other people at the price of herself; "A compelling domestic horror story reaches into a young woman's nightmares of her childhood in search of what's real" (Reviews). Christian morals hold that loving and caring for others is a desirable quality; nevertheless, other religions also hold that having such altruistic impulses is desirable. The issue is where to draw the line, though. Abby Hayman has characteristics that are harmful to herself and don't advance anyone's better interests. Understanding her proclivities via the Horneyian lens helps to paint a clearer picture of the psychological factors at work behind her actions. According to Horney's understanding of her psychological processes, her neurotic desire for affection is fuelled by her fear of people's hatred. She wants to be alone on the first day after either wedding as she heads to work so that she can reflect on her new status as "a wife", but as a twenty-year-old girl with a sweet, pale face freckled with freckles she attracts a lot of attention from people who want to smile at her and engage in conversation. Although she would prefer to have this time to herself, she is forced to comply with these other bus passengers' requests to converse because she doesn't want to offend anyone.

Abby, Joyce Carol Oates's protagonist in *Pursuit* while talking about her dread of strangers, says "As a girl, you learn not to offend strangers by rebuffing them. Especially men. Strangers, but also employers. And when she'd been a student for what had seemed like forever, teachers" (Oates, *Pursuit* 11). These phrases paint a vivid picture of Abby's propensity to appease people to avoid upsetting them. And it holds true for everyone,

including her professors, employers, and random strangers, particularly guys as there is an "indiscriminate need to please others and to be liked and approved of by others" (Horney 51). She claims that people treat you nicely because they think you are attractive, but that if you don't smile back or say anything unpleasant, they can start acting badly towards you. She fears strangers, especially men. It is clear from the way she treats her husband. There is a fear of being forceful, therefore she does her best to avoid offending him in any manner. She felt uneasy when the elderly man tried to talk to her and pressed his weight against her seat on the bus, but she kept quiet out of fear of upsetting him. Despite her extreme discomfort, Abby believes that "She will not turn to him even with a sigh of exasperation, though he has begun to spread his weight ... Perhaps he is offended by her reticence. The rambling talk has ceased." (Oates 13-14).

Abby tries to meet others' expectations. This is clear from the way she interacts with others at work. She had the calmest demeanor when Willem first saw her, in his opinion. She treated the patients with an incredible level of love and patience. He describes her interaction with a blind patient who was really irritating and whose speech a normal person couldn't stand, but Abby would willingly put up with it and listen to his grievances. While referring to Abby's attitude towards the blind man, Willem says that the blind man was coarse and rough "… but the pretty girl with the freckled face did not flinch nor even try to stem the blind man's anger. With the wisdom of much older person, she simply let him rant until he was finished, with an expression of peeved satisfaction" (Oates 28). Her tendency to be loved and approved of won't let her be assertive even when she needed to stand her ground.

Horney asserts "to expect fulfilment of one's life from another person is regarded, atleast for a woman, as 'normal' or even virtuous" but the main character Abby's urge to have a mate who will take over her life takes a neurotic character in Oates's work (*Self-Analysis* 56). The need to communicate her astonishment at getting married and having a husband almost runs like a thread throughout the novel. She exhibits neurotic behavior on multiple occasions because she is so overwhelmed by the thought that she is married and

belongs to someone. As there is "overevaluation of "love" because love is supposed to solve all problems" (52). It is not a normal tendency but its neurotic counterpart. Abby is in awe, surprise, and amazement as the chapter begins as she considers the fact that it has only been exactly twenty-one hours since her marriage. She intends to secure a seat in the back of the bus, so she may reflect on her new life as a married lady when she boards the Raritan Avenue bus that will take her to downtown Hammond. It is the first morning of her married life, and to her, it is the most precious of all, therefore she dreads being interrupted by strangers, which she rarely wishes. "Like the filament in a light-bulb, glowing within. Her happiness of being married to a good, kind, decent man she loves, who adores her" (Oates 11).

Abby becomes overwhelmed with joy and amazement about her fate. This shows how dear to her heart the desire to be married and have a husband is because she is constantly in disbelief. However, her disbelief is almost neurotic in nature and haunts her constantly, leading her to wonder whether it is real and whether she is actually married, and whether it has actually happened to her. When they first meet and Willem declares his love for Abby, she gives assents as she feels content with the fact that someone truly loves her and she declares that she doesn't care about his background saying "… Whoever you are, who's Willem, that's all I care about. Not even your last name. That's the person I love-*you*" (Oates 44-45). She has a strong desire to submit to her husband and surrender control of her life to him, and it is conspicuous in this statement where she rejoices over her surname changing to her husband. Her awe in the remark "How Zengler swallows up Hayman. So grateful!" is perceptible (14).

It seems as if she is relieved from the burden of being herself, her life, and relinquishing her identity to be somebody else's which is a characteristic of "the neurotic need for a partner to take over one's life" (Horney 51), where the neurotic wishes their partner to take full responsibility for their life and be responsible for their decisions and meet all expectations. "Center of gravity entirely in the partner who is to fulfill all expectations of life and take responsibility for good and evil, his successful manipulation becoming the predominant task" (Horney 51). When she fails to be assertive towards the

man sitting next to her on the bus, she hopes that her husband was there and did it for her. What sets apart neurotic needs from normal tendencies is that "their value is only subjective, and lies in the fact that they hold the more or less desperate promise of safety and a solution for all problems"(58). While lamenting her spouse's absence and feeling wretched, Abby thinks, "Too bad her tall handsome young husband isn't with her this morning. Close beside her. Gripping her hand in his, she was aware that Willem would protect her with his life" (Oates 13). She finds it comfortable to be Willem's wife and not herself since she is so troubled by the idea of living as her actual self. Since being Willem's wife relieves her of the burden of having to live as herself, she depends on it for her future and her survival, and the idea that it might be a lie or otherwise unreal terrifies her. Thus, she takes refuge in the idea that by marrying Willem "… her life in all ways damned might in this way be saved" (21), reflecting a neurotic's obsession with a partner. She fights with her own self every time the doubt arises and convinces herself she is married, and it is the absolute truth. "Tears gather in her eyes. Tears of joy, wonder. That she is safely married. That she is safely loved. Protected" (21). She is secure and not doomed now that she is married. She always worries about losing her husband, which is normal for a neurotic who confides in their partner for their survival. Her life would be made worse by Willem's passing. On the first morning of their marriage, the average individual doesn't have thoughts like these. She is plagued by ideas of this type all the time which refers to "a neurotic's dread of being alone" (52).

Though she loves him dearly, she says, "she fears loving him, for loving is the prelude to loss. The fear that she will never see him again, one day. This very day, he may disappear from her." She fears loving him as what you love is prone to be lost and she can't afford to lose him as she can't bear to exist by herself. Her ruminations when she thinks "she could not endure it, her solitary life. To live in another is the only life possible for her" (Oates 213) makes it conspicuous that her dependence on her husband for giving meaning to her life is utterly neurotic. She believes she can't live by herself and thus chooses to live through him.

Abby Hayman exhibits a compulsive drive for independence and self-sufficiency. As she boards the bus for Hammond, Abby states that she needs some time to reflect alone. She wants to reflect on her newly discovered bliss of getting married while alone, so she decides to take the backseat and sit by herself. She has a predisposition towards neurosis, where distance and separation evoke feelings of security while proximity evokes feelings of anxiety. In order to commemorate the most special morning of her life in her imagination, she intends to sit by herself. Abby doesn't want anybody in this happiness but herself. Her introspections, "… it's a private happiness. She wants to cup it in both hands like a flame, to shield it from the wind" (Oates11) highlight her tendency to safeguard her happiness in privacy. Since closeness breeds fear, she wants to maintain her distance to cherish and feel secure in her happiness. Anybody would be flattered to hear comments like "you look like you could be in the movies . . . Except you are better-looking than she is. Younger" (11) but she chooses to ignore them and revel in her own joy. Any attempts to strike up a conversation with her are met with icy silence on her part. Even though she is extremely courteous and doesn't want to upset anyone, she must maintain her distance to feel free and secure.

Abby hurriedly goes to the rear of the bus after the inquisitive passengers get off, sitting on the outside seat while keeping the window seat vacant so that anyone who wants to sit won't be able to without tripping over her feet. She would go past and pretend like she wasn't interested in a discussion if they still decided to sit, which is undoubtedly an attempt to get away from them. However, as this desperate attempt to succeed and a person comes to sit by her side, she begins to feel uneasy. Her worst fear is that the person will start to initiate a conversation, and she will ignore them as if she is deaf. Even though she doesn't want to offend the other person, she convinces herself that hearing loss is widespread and may affect people of all ages, including herself. She states that she has made it a habit to avoid making eye contact with anybody in public, including friendly-appearing ladies. She fears connection with people in general because it is obvious that women too have this dread of proximity. Because of her neurotic

demand for independence, she fears intimacy despite having this neurotic urge for a mate. She is observed to be afraid of getting close to her husband Willem as well.

Abby claims that she never intended to like her spouse but ended up falling in love with him because of her propensity to find a mate while reminiscing about their first encounter. Abby while describing her first meeting with her husband and the first time she saw him says “Hadn’t liked him at first. Hadn’t wanted to like him. Just a glance of him-tall, blond, “boyish” handsome, kindly blue eyes- something inside her panicked. Shrank, curled up like a worm to protect itself” (Oates 17). This is clear from her strange reaction after awakening from the nightmare the morning following their wedding night when she initially struggles to recognize him and pushes him away before hurriedly going to the toilet. He is perplexed by this behavior, but he convinces himself that it is normal for a young, married couple. When she leaves the apartment early in the morning for work, Willem says “he understood that the newlywed wife was relieved to be leaving the apartment and the husband, calmed by the prospect of being alone again, if even for a few hours” (42).

Abby doesn’t discuss her tragic background with him since doing so may make her feel inadequate. She expresses her need for solitude on multiple occasions. Later when she confides in him, she expresses her wish to have never had; “almost, she wishes she has never told her husband what has festered in her heart. A risk, to open your heart to a stranger” (Oates 210). It is requisite to notice that despite her affection for him, she still refers to him as a stranger. This unmistakably spoke to her paranoid aversion of intimacy. She needed to be independent and didn't want any connection, as evidenced by the fact that she moved away from her aunt Traci as soon as she finished high school to have an independent life. When Abby later visits Chautauqua Falls, she reminisces about her aunt pondering that her aunt might be heartbroken because “Her beloved niece Miriam had left Chautauqua Falls as soon as she graduated from high school and never again called Traci and never wrote” (207). Later, she regrets it and wants to at least get in touch with her aunt to make amends. She took this action because she needed to be independent and not rely on anyone.

> *Pursuit* has a plot that is duly horrifying, but except for Nicola, the characters in the novel – like its title, perhaps – are unmemorable, indifferent. The stilted courtship of Abby and Willem provokes a shock when the reader realizes … that the novel isn't taking place in the 1950s. Suspenseful and disturbing, *Pursuit* will appeal to Oates' mystery fans, less so to the admirers of her literary work. (Tedrowe)

The protagonist Anellia in *I'll Take You There* is motivated by the tendency to live up to the expectations of others as the primary driving tendency. When someone has a neurotic need for affection, their focus changes away from themselves and onto other people, placing more value on their perspective than their own. Horney describes it as "center of gravity in others and not in self, with their wishes and opinions the only thing that counts" (Horney 51). She doesn't even care about herself; she is a stranger. She is only motivated by other people, and she is impacted by what others think and how they see her; "The narrator's implicit preoccupations with the role of the artist, the artist's relation to society and culture, and the question of what might constitute identity, reflect the central concerns of Oates's art and critical work, which focuses on twentieth-century American society and culture in particular" (Rachael Mclennan 130).

Anellia's main driving factor is the approval of the other female members of the sorority Kappa Gamma Pi, whom she refers to as "my Kappa sisters". They treat her brutally, yet she keeps calling them "my sisters", demonstrating her insatiable want for affection. She twice assumes responsibility for the wrongdoings of the other females. The housemother, Mrs. Thayer, was once enraged when some of the Kappa girls dispersed the magazines around the parlor, and she took responsibility for the mess:

> My voice cracked, nasal, and frightened. I am the only one who reads magazines, Mrs Thayer. I do the crossword puzzle. This was false, I had never "done" a crossword puzzle in my life: never would I waste my intelligence on a mere game. So I- must have done this. There was another pause, an awkward blank silence. (Oates, *I ll Take You There* 55)

Anellia's inner dialogue states that she never did these puzzles and still takes the blame to ensure the approval of her "Kappa Sisters". She completes their homework. She regrets turning down her Kappa sisters' offer to attend the chapel. Despite working extremely hard to pay for the sorority, she leaves her roommate's room for her and her visiting friends, using her visits only to change clothes while she sleeps in the basement. She assumes that it is required of her to leave her room rather than claiming her right to use it which is the manifestation of the tendency of "automatic living up to the expectations of others" (Horney 51). Talking about how she sleeps in the basement and returns to her room only for changing, the no named protagonist of the novel *I'll Take You There* says:

> I had more or less abandoned my room to Deedee and her friends, returning to it only to change my clothes. When the basement study room emptied out, after midnight usually, I tried to sleep there: on the battered old leather couch smelling of cigarette smoke and laced with burns. (Oates 57)

Her pin is misplaced. She is upset that her Kappa sisters are mad at her for losing the pin since no one loses their pin as a Kappa, and it isn't expected of her as a Kappa. She is not upset that she lost a 75-dollar pin that she can hardly afford to buy again and must live without. The same girls who were teasing her before are now beaming at her as they ask for assistance with their work. She doesn't see how she is being mistreated; instead, she takes comfort in the fact that they have made amends and are now grinning at her.

> A wish for affection from others is meaningful only if there is affection for them, a feeling of having something in common with them. The emphasis then will be not only on the friendliness received but also on the positive feelings one is capable of having for others and of showing to them. But the neurotic need for affection is devoid of the value of reciprocity. (Horney, *Self-Analysis* 57)

Horney asserts that the neurotic needs for affection can be visibly distinguished from its healthy counterpart of seeking affection by the virtue of the fact that there is no reciprocity in the neurotic yearning and hence it is meaningless. Anellia is seen seeking affection from Mrs Thayers whom she supposedly has nothing in common with and even

her feelings of affection towards her aren't really common to every neurotic yearning and are largely rooted in fear; "To be accurate he does not even really want the others' affection but is merely concerned, keenly and strenuously, that they make no aggressive move against him" (57). She falls into the trap that Dawn, a Kappa girl, sets for her. She tries to look presentable so that she won't let them down and seems like one of them. Professors resemble minor deities. She hurts herself with a pin or pen point to wake herself up to avoid upsetting her professors since she doesn't want to fall asleep in class. This need is also expressed in her interactions with the sorority mother and her need for her love and approval. Anellia invading sorority mother's room and space and taking her garment to the face says, "Why did you never like me? Why did you repel me? Wasn't I the one who read Punch? Did you never see how I adored you? Had you always seen through me, an imposter?" (Oates 90); this need is clearly not rooted in a genuine need for affection but only ensuring that the likes of Kappa girl, Mrs. Thayer and her professors don't make an aggressive move towards her.

Later, Anellia develops a tragically obsessive urge to be loved after falling in love with a black man on the university campus which ascertains to "the neurotic need for a partner". The partner becomes the new center of gravity, shifting away from the self. The goal of successfully manipulating the spouse takes precedence, and she creates a whole new character to impress the potential suitor, including a new name. The girl, who for the first half of the book almost goes without a name, suddenly thinks of a new name, Anellia, which would suit her well. For the first half of the book, the name of the girl is unknown to the reader, and even in the second, she invents a name because she feels that her birth name is unoriginal and unremarkable. Therefore, for the readers, the girl's name only enters the context when she develops feelings for a man. Before meeting him, she didn't give her life any thought, and the only meaning she gives it now is to that man.

The center of gravity for this lady has always been in relationships with other people "which Oates designates as 'adolescent', even as she has moved on to a more mature world view" (Rachael Mclennan 138), but after becoming interested in this man, it is solely focused on him and not on anybody else. She, therefore, keeps him at the

center of his existence in all she does and becomes. Horney depicts it as “center of gravity entirely in the “partner”, who is to fulfil all the expectations of life and take responsibility for good and evil, his successful manipulation becoming the predominant task (Horney 51).” Earlier Anellia didn’t essentially care about how she looked; the only reason she made any effort to be respectable was so that her Kappa sisters won’t be embarrassed of her. But after falling in love with Vernor, she undergoes a complete makeover, including getting a haircut and fancy second-hand clothing to ensure that she looks interesting enough for him to notice her. Even though she lacked the funds to purchase even used clothing, she can do so by borrowing money from other females, which she is aware she would never be able to return.

Though Vernor insists that she is not familiar to him, he saw her a long time ago, when she was scavenging for food behind a restaurant. He doesn’t mention that to her during their initial or subsequent encounters, but rather afterward. She ought to have been shocked and embarrassed by it. She continues by saying that even though she is astonished and upset, she will continue pursuing him regardless of how he views her. She follows him despite his repeated rejections and discouragement. She would interpret any indication that he does not despise her as a show of support. She felt rejected when he kicked her out of her apartment in less than five minutes, but she went back to the coffee shop and saw him playing chess with his pals. She keeps an eye on him and waits for him to notice her. Then she begins to secretly hope that he will win the game of chess because she believes that if he does, he will yell with excitement, and if he looks up, he might see her. If so, there is a possibility that he will want to share his joy with her and invite her to partake in his success. But if he loses, he will suffer, and her presence will make him feel even worse about himself. She awaits his triumph.

However, the game continues when she shouts good night at him. His response convinces her that he isn’t angry, and she is relieved that she still has a chance to get his attention after the earlier rejection. Anellia feels really elated when she notices her and her excitement and joy become obvious when she says “… I saw him glance up in my wake frowning, unsmiling, without recognition, yet without an expression of annoyance

or rejection either. I ran back to my residence hall, breathless and elated. He doesn't hate me. One day, he will love me" (Oates 146). Her neurotic yearning for love and a companion unquestionably drives her compulsive desire to pursue him and win his affection. She feels the need to make someone the center of her world and win his love to give her life purpose by giving her something to strive for, in this case, this man's love. She behaves differently and defends their relationship and herself in the Dean of Women's office than she did in the past. A girl who feels the need to satisfy others and live up to their expectations would never consider speaking up in front of an authoritative figure like the dean of women. But instead of doing that, she threatens to sue her for violating her civil rights to love and be with a man of any race, class, or background.

Anellia even snatches papers and reports from her hand to see what remarks people have made for her when the Dean of Women tells her people have reported her for her sociopathic tendencies. As she gets to read the remarks of her professors and others, she sees the one from Mrs Thayer as well where she gets to see it is her who has reported her as having sociopathic tendencies. She makes insulting comments about Mrs. Thayer, which is contradictory for someone with such extreme people-pleasing qualities, where her prior self would get upset, outraged, or cry out. It is undoubtedly her rage at the Dean for criticizing her for being involved with a black man while a white girl on a college campus. She warns her that she and the institution will be sued for their discriminatory actions. Vernor Matheius's connection with her is urgently in need of defense. She is taken over by her obsessive yearning to be with someone.

The center of gravity which earlier was other people in general shifts to the one man as the neurotic need for a partner overtakes the neurotic need for affection. But it can be seen that the center of gravity shifts outside of oneself in both the needs whether it is towards people in general or a specific love interest and Horney points out that "a trend presented as an autonomous entity may turn out to be a mere variety of some other" (Horney 51). Thus, these two needs may stand autonomous but are derivatives of each other and interlinked as are the other trends or needs. Undeniably, a girl with such demeanor would have responded in this way to demonstrate to herself her allegiance to

Vernor. She often says that Vernor would be proud of her if he had seen her protect them in that way. She concentrates more on her academic career and even studies the scholar who caught his attention since she thinks he is interested in her because of her intelligence.

> I understood too that Vernor Matheius could respect only an intelligent woman, a woman of academic accomplishment approaching his own; this was the root of my motivation, for my high grades. If my lover admired Wittgenstein, I must learn all I could of Wittgenstein. Though not daring to think He will love me for my intelligence, he will have no choice. (Oates 193)

At various instances, she is seen contemplating that if Vernor Matheius wasn't a part of her life, it would be meaningless and what would she do with such a life.

> And what of my life in those months that was not Vernor Matheius, what of the vast incalculable world not Vernor Matheius, what of a girl whose body I inhabited who was not Anellia but another individual entirely, what connection, what vision seen through skeptical eyes, had she no future, had she no hope, did no other possibility exist?. (Oates 205)

In the initial days she is caring for sick Vernor Matheius in his flat, she finds some old pictures on his desk where she finds this picture of younger Vernor Matheius with a young woman carrying a baby and another child beside them in the frame. She instantly realizes that it is his wife and family feeling a stab of hurt in her heart that he lied to her about not having anyone. He shouts at her and kicks her out of her flat when he comes out of the bathroom and sees her with those photographs. She should have left right away in the wake of such shocking revelation and humiliation, but instead she sits outside Vernor Matheius's flat and muses over her misfortune. She blames herself for not knowing that and looking into all those things, and she fears that as a result, she will lose his love forever referring to the "dread of desertion" as proposed by Horney in the neurotics with a "neurotic need for a partner" (Horney 51).

Anellia sitting at the staircase of Vernor Matheius's apartment after being expelled from the apartment by Vernor thinks "I'd destroyed that, I'd destroyed my own

meagre hope of happiness. I'd destroyed the purity of my own love for him; I'd destroyed Anellia, who was such a fool" (Oates 235). It is obvious from her self-blame and wretched reaction to her man's deception how much her neurotic desire for a companion, controls and dominates her life. Rachael McLennan finds the influence of Sylvia Plath in the analysis of character's adolescence; in her own words Oates asserted:

> Let us assume that Sylvia Plath acted out in her poetry and in her private life the deathliness of an old consciousness, the old corrupting hell of the Renaissance ideal and its "I" -ness, separate and distinct from all other fields of consciousness, which exist only to be conquered or to inflict pain upon the "Where at one point in civilization this very masculine, combative ideal of an "I" set against all other T's-and against nature as well …. (Rachael Mclennan 131)

Violet Rue Kerrigan is the protagonist of the novel *My Life As A Rat* which exhibits how "vulnerable girls and young women can fall prey to domineering men and how loyalty to family can lead to the betrayal of the self"(Miller). She was exiled by her family; sent out of the house for unintentionally leaking information about her younger brothers' involvement in the death of a black kid. She is perceived as needing affection from her family, who she feels have wronged her so severely, to the point that it almost acts as a driving force for her to succeed in regaining their love and being welcomed back and included in the family. She seemingly exhibits a neurotic need for affection and approval. She sends her family postcards even after being kicked out of her house to rekindle their relationship. She mostly writes to her sisters, Katie and Miriam secretly, hoping that somehow, by some miracle, her father will see the card and take the time to read the message, which she knows he would never do and in the unlikely event that he does, he will tear it to pieces. Contrary to her expectations, even Katie or Miriam don't respond to her cards. She puts a lot of work into achieving high grades when she goes to live with her aunt because she thinks that somewhere down the line, it could be her ticket back home. She presumes that performing well at school is key to get family's acceptance as she thinks that " the high grades will impress my parents and shorten the period of my exile" (Oates, *My Life As A Rat* 137).She is grateful that at least her sister

Katie phoned and spoke to her for a long time even if it was one-sided and haphazard, thereupon she never stops writing to her sisters, even if they don't respond with the same reciprocation of sentiments; "Grateful for the emotion in her voice, even if it was an emotion of impatience and repugnance" (155).

Voilet really wanted to ask Katie whether she missed her, but before she could ask, Katie hangs up saying she must go as the mother could be home soon. She is content that at least one of her sisters responded, even though her sisters' connection with her at that time was almost non-existent and that their response was motivated by duty rather than true concern for her. That's why on seeing faded shrinking blue morning glories of Octobers on her aunt's fence, she compares them to her relationship with her sisters saying "… Withered, desiccated. Barely alive. But still, it existed" (156). Her need for affection keeps her hopeful that their relationship might improve. Even in the later part after repeated ignorance on the part of her sisters, she says, "But I would forgive them and immediately love them again, if they were nice to me" (191).

It is innate or instinctive for a little female child who has been ostracized by her family and banished from them to make attempts to regain their affection but her demand for acceptance and affection becomes so compulsive that it borders on being neurotic. She would consider how any family event would affect her prospects of being returned, as is obvious from the events with her grandfather's passing and her response to it. When Violet comes home one day and overhears her aunt Irma on the phone, she realizes something isn't right. She nearly seems to go blank when her aunt Irma informs her that her grandfather has passed away not from the shock of it, but rather from trying to remember who her grandfather was. Later, as she considers her grandfather's passing, Violet weighs the possibility that it may soften her father's heart towards her, thinking that the resulting void could improve her standing with him:

> No emotion at all about my grandfather's death except a small stab of hope- Now Daddy will have one less person he cares about. Family meant so much to Daddy, even the old sod. One less person in his family would increase the value of exiled daughter. (Oates 212)

It can be discerned that her obsession to win back the love of her family is so overpowering that she even views the tragic event of her grandfather's death as an opportunity to win back her father's devotion. She puts a brave front to her aunt, telling her it's terrible that her grandfather is gone and asking her when exactly he passed away to show care, but her body language and internal conversation reveal otherwise to the reader. Her joy at the idea of a funeral, a gathering where all her relatives would be there and she could be requested or required to come as well illustrates how desperate she is to see them; "Like something swelling, opening in my brain: an American beauty rose, a sunburst. I will go to Grandpa's funeral" (213). It is comparable to the pure excitement of a child imagining a trip to Disneyland. It is apparent here that her demand for her family's love has taken an obsessive character. She is disappointed when her aunt later informs her that they cannot go since they are not welcome there, but she perseveres and makes plans to drive to her family's home in South Niagara by herself so that she may attend the burial. She expects that her family will welcome her there, but as soon as her sister Katie catches a glimpse of her from a distance, she orders her to go, claiming that it isn't the proper moment for her to be there. So, she gets disappointed and leaves but never gives up hope to be taken back in and keeps writing to them.

Voilet's desire for love and acceptance is further demonstrated by the fact that she always agrees when her maths instructor, Mr. Sandman, forces her to go to his house after school under the pretext of a mathematical club and a special tuition. She accepts his offer to drive her home, gets in his car, and later notices that he is taking a different route. She speculates that perhaps he knows a better route, but when it became clear that he is not taking her home, she chooses to remain silent out of respect for him "… I didn't know what to say for I feared offending Mr. Sandman" (Oates 168). The fear of offending comes from a neurotic need for love and acceptance, and Horney puts it as the "dread of hostility on the part of others" in such type (Horney 51). There is also an urge to fulfil and uphold the expectations of others in this neurotic with need for affection. She behaves as requested by Mr. Sandman when she arrives at his home. She accepts his offer of a hot chocolate when he makes it "… I couldn't imagine declining. Daring to add that I

needed to use the bathroom, please" (Oates 171). She hesitantly mentions her need to use the loo, at which Sandman mutters "Even Sleeping Beauty is required, sometimes, against all expectations, to pee. Yes …" (171) because urinating is an unnatural act and is not expected of her. When she was given the mug of hot chocolate, she started to drink; "Shyly I lifted it to my lips since Mr. Sandman expected me to drink it; he would observe closely, to see that I did" (173).

At Sandman's, she completely conformed to what was required of her due to her compulsive desire for acceptance. She was startled to awaken in a blue silk robe on Mr. Sandman's bed, and she wanted to take leave from him. However, when he explained that he had to wash her clothing since they were filthy, she began to believe him once again "So grateful to see my clothes! I'd been clutching the silk robe around me, in terror that Mr. Sandman would snatch away. But he was a gentleman, you could see. The cobblestone house on Craigmont Avenue. So many books" (189). She wasn't resisting or fleeing from him because she was powerless at the time; rather, she chose not to think he was awful because she didn't want to lose his love. She didn't want to think that he was doing anything improper or wrong with her because she hadn't seen it, so she continued visiting him. She even refused to testify against him when it was later discovered that he was assaulting her which as Horney asserts could be due to the "dread of self-assertion" in the neurotics with need for affection (Horney 51). She thinks of her assault by Sandman a punishment as she says, "I'd thought –Not abuse but punishment. And not the worst punishment either" (Oates 201). She believes that Sandman was always nice to her, so it didn't matter if things happened without her knowledge. Perhaps he punished her because she didn't live up to his standards in the things that were required of her. After being abused, no normal person would have those kinds of thoughts. It is the neurotic obsession with love and acceptance taking control. She flatly declines when asked to testify against him, claiming that she couldn't recall saying "But I did not remember. And Mr. Sandman was my friend. No one else was my friend. "The only person who treated her properly and shielded her from others, giving her the impression that he was her friend, was Mr. Sandman. She wanted to be treated with compassion and affection, but

other pupils and others never showed it to her. She misses him and becomes upset when she thinks about his getting a term, which demonstrates how much she cares for him. She repeatedly hears him in her head saying he loves her; “Violet! You know, of all the girls I loved only you” (203).

Voilet’s attitude towards her boss Dr. Metti whom she meets when she decides to move out of her aunt Irma’s home later in the novel also hints at her neurotic need for affection and approval. To satisfy her employer, Dr. Metti, she makes sure that nothing offends him; she puts tremendous effort and hard work into her cleaning and housekeeping duties. Any employee would typically behave this way towards their boss, but her actions were out of the ordinary. She enters Dr. Metti’s shower and begins to take a shower since she remembers him suggesting it once some time back and likely expecting it from her. This refers to the neurotic’s “automatic living up to the expectations of others” (Horney 51). She is herself surprised at her behaviour which may be a subconscious automatic drive to live up to her boss’s expectations. Later, when Dr. Metti elevates her from the role of a housemaid to that of a girlfriend, she is ecstatic to have won his love. She feels delighted when he refuses to answer calls from his ex-wife and other ladies while she was around him. When he treats her rudely and tells her to leave, she leaves, but she lets him back into her life because she feels like she needs his love and affection and can't let him down. Moreover, her reaction towards the dog belonging to Metti’s daughter demonstrates her intense need for attention, even from animals. She exhibits sadness as the dog doesn’t recognize her when she meets him after a week; Horney calls it an “indiscriminate need to please others” (51) and in this case she doesn’t even discriminate if it’s a human or an animal and yearns to secure the affection.

When the dog becomes sick, Metti only gives her $75 for the treatment and instructs her to have the dog put down if the cost surpasses that amount. But she pays the bills with the money from tips she earlier received from Metti to save the dog as the bill surpasses that amount. She lies to Metti that the treatment didn’t cost more than $70 since she could never allow this to happen to the dog she loved so much. However, Violet

believes that the reason Metti started acting strangely when her daughter, who was supposed to pick up her dog, cancelled her visit, was because she had lied to him and he had somehow found out. She manages her behaviour ensuring that she never infuriates Metti since she didn't want to lose his love. Thus, she feels very wounded when Metti later accuses her of stealing the stuff he gave her as gifts and parts ways with her on bad terms. She tells the man at Maids Service that she accepted the items from Metti because she loved him and that she didn't steal any of them. The analysis of her relationship with Dr. Metti further affirms her neurotic need for affection and approval.

Conclusion

Corky Corcoran in Joyce Carol Oates's *What I Lived For* embodies several of Karen Horney's neurotic needs, his life dominated by compulsive desires that define his identity and relationships. His fixation on prestige and status reflects Horney's concept of the neurotic need for recognition. The Cadillac he flaunts, a gleaming emblem of power and success, represents his belief that material possessions validate his worth. His insistence on being seen in elite circles and his devotion to the influential Slattery family further reveal his dependence on social prestige. Corky also displays the neurotic need for admiration, constructing an idealized image of himself as universally liked and morally superior. His habit of making himself the central figure in every story, whether as hero, victim, or mastermind reveals his craving for admiration and his fear of losing it, particularly in moments when others fail to acknowledge his status.

Corky's relentless ambition demonstrates the neurotic need for personal achievement. Corky's drive to acquire prominent properties and to excel in every role, from businessman to family man, reflects a compulsive pursuit of superiority. The neurotic need to exploit others is equally apparent in his relationships, which are often transactional and self-serving. He marries for influence, manipulates acquaintances for financial or social gain, and views women as objects to be used for his satisfaction or advancement. His troubling behavior toward Christina and his stepdaughter Thalia exposes how deeply this exploitative mindset runs. Finally, Corky's neurotic need for

power manifests in his aggressive and manipulative interactions. He attempts to control others through social connections and persuasion, convinced that his intelligence and will can dominate any situation. Together, these overlapping needs, for recognition, admiration, achievement, exploitation, and power define Corky's character. Oates presents him as a man consumed by his own compulsions, whose obsession with control and prestige ultimately leads to his moral and psychological collapse.

Quentin P., or Q.P., in Joyce Carol Oates's *Zombie* exemplifies multiple neurotic needs as outlined by Karen Horney, most prominently the need for self-sufficiency and independence, the need to restrict life within narrow borders, the need to exploit others, and the need for power. His compulsive avoidance of emotional intimacy, deleting his family's messages, refusing meals with his parents, and stiffly resisting his mother's attempts at comfort, demonstrates his dread of closeness. This detachment aligns with his preference for a caretaker's job, which allows him to remain inconspicuous and avoid ambition, reflecting Horney's description of those who confine life to narrow borders and fear expansive wishes.

At the same time, Q.P. channels his compulsions into destructive exploitation and domination. His calculated selection of victims, targeting those least likely to be missed, such as poor Black boys or addicts reveals how he views others solely for their usefulness, either as expendable bodies or as means of inheritance, as with his grandmother and parents. Most disturbingly, his obsession with creating a zombie slave through ice-pick lobotomies epitomizes the neurotic need for power. By seeking total control over another's body, will, and even breath, Q.P. exposes the extreme and pathological outgrowth of Horney's theory: a personality consumed not by healthy independence or ambition, but by compulsive detachment, exploitation, and the destructive pursuit of power.

Abby Hayman in Joyce Carol Oates's *Pursuit* demonstrates several of Karen Horney's neurotic needs, most prominently the need for affection, the need for a partner, and the need for independence. Her people-pleasing tendencies, complying with strangers on the bus despite her desire to be alone, accommodating the intrusive speech of a blind

patient at work, and suppressing discomfort when a man presses against her seat illustrates her compulsive drive to gain approval and avoid disapproval, especially from men. This inability to assert herself, even when uncomfortable, underscores Horney's point that neurotic compliance is fuelled by the fear of rejection or hostility. At the same time, Abby's overwhelming attachment to her husband Willem reveals her neurotic need for a partner. Her constant amazement at being married, her relief in surrendering her identity to become "Willem's wife," and her conviction that marriage "saves" her from a doomed life all exemplify her dependence on Willem to provide safety, meaning, and protection. Her fear that his loss would make life unbearable highlights the neurotic intensity of this attachment.

In contrast, Abby simultaneously exhibits the need for independence, often dreading intimacy even with those closest to her. She seeks solitude on the bus to reflect privately on her marriage, avoids eye contact with strangers, and initially recoils from Willem after their wedding night, reflecting her fear that closeness compromises her security. Her estrangement from her aunt Traci, whom she abandoned after high school to live independently, further demonstrates her tendency to sever ties in order to preserve autonomy. Yet this independence coexists uneasily with her craving for affection and partnership, producing a psychological tension at the heart of her character. Through Abby, Oates portrays the destructive interplay of contradictory neurotic needs, compliance, dependence, and detachment, each compulsively pursued, yet ultimately leaving her vulnerable and fragmented.

Anellia, the unnamed protagonist of Joyce Carol Oates's *I'll Take You There*, is primarily shaped by Karen Horney's neurotic need for affection and neurotic need for a partner, both of which place her center of gravity outside herself. Early in the novel, she orients her identity around the approval of her Kappa sisters, enduring their cruelty while repeatedly seeking their acceptance. She takes responsibility for misdeeds she did not commit, sacrifices her own comfort by abandoning her room for others, and labors to maintain an image that aligns with the sorority's expectations. These behaviors illustrate her compulsive willingness to erase her own needs in order to secure approval, even

when the treatment she receives is exploitative. This self-effacing compliance reflects the absence of reciprocity Horney associates with neurotic yearnings for affection, since Anellia's devotion to her sorority sisters and housemother yields no genuine care in return.

As the narrative progresses, her compulsions consolidate into the neurotic need for a partner, embodied in her obsessive attachment to Vernor Matheius. She renames herself, reshapes her appearance, borrows money to buy clothing, and even tailors her academic ambitions to match his intellectual interests, all in the hope of gaining his attention and love. Despite repeated rejection, humiliation, and even discovery of his family, she persists in pursuing him, interpreting even the smallest gestures of neutrality as signs of hope. Her dependence becomes so absolute that she views life without him as meaningless, embodying Horney's description of a partner as the sole source of stability and value. Taken together, Anellia's trajectory shows how her life is governed by external validation, first through the approval of peers and later through an idealized partner, with both needs illustrating the destructive displacement of selfhood onto others.

Similarly, in *My Life as a Rat*, Violet Rue Kerrigan's life is governed by Karen Horney's neurotic need for affection and approval, which becomes the central compulsion shaping her relationships and decisions. Exiled by her family, Violet continues to send postcards and pursue high grades in the hope of winning back their love, interpreting even minimal or dismissive responses from her sisters as meaningful signs of connection. Her yearning is so intense that she even views her grandfather's death and funeral as possible opportunities to be accepted back into the family, revealing how her longing overrides natural grief. This compulsive desire for inclusion leaves her vulnerable to exploitation by authority figures. With Mr. Sandman, she complies with his every expectation accepting his offers, enduring his abuse, and later refusing to testify against him because she frames his attention as affection in contrast to the neglect she experiences elsewhere.

The same pattern recurs in her relationship with Dr. Metti, where she works beyond ordinary diligence to please him, complies with unspoken expectations, and

accepts his shifting treatment in exchange for the illusion of love. Her attachment even extends to his dog, showing how indiscriminate her need for affection has become, with disappointment arising when even an animal fails to recognize her. These examples illustrate how Violet's compulsive drive to please others and secure approval not only distorts her perception of relationships but also perpetuates cycles of harm. Her trajectory underscores Horney's claim that the neurotic need for affection lacks reciprocity, as Violet repeatedly offers loyalty, sacrifice, and compliance without receiving genuine care in return.

The characters of these novels all obviously have one or more neurotic needs and there are a wide variety of combinations of neurotic needs that are present in each of them. After further analysis, these combinations identify a specific personality type in them. Karen Horney in her book *Self-Analysis* calls these neurotic needs or trends "focal points" of a neurotic character structure which is supposed to be the essence of a neurosis (65). Standing away from the crowd, Joyce Carol Oates, constantly, pinpointing not only the cultural but also the socio-economic decline of American society. Her works are criticizing James Walcott for having "something wrong" (qtd. in. Brett 244), as she put interest in the lower level of living. Greg Johnson in the biography of Oates writes, following Anne Tyler, "A hundred years from now, they'll laugh at us for taking [Joyce] for granted" (qtd. in. Brett 244). Her writing is intricate and multi-levelled. They both reference her forebears in the English canons of literature and advance the novel's creative form: as Annie Proulx stated, "an omnivorous intellect, a taste for experimentation and a raptor's eye for American society and culture"(qtd. in. Brett 246)**.** Oates excels at immersing the reader in the character's head. Her psychological investigations are more like road maps that reveal the subconscious as it links memories to experiences rather than standard internal monologues. She effectively demonstrates "inferiority complex" has made one of the loopholes and how the loopholes in their character traits and the unhealed injuries influence their lives as she reveals the reactions of her characters to tragedy; "The presence of these feelings of inferiority is one of the most common psychic disorders of our time and culture" (Horney, Culture and Neurosis

224). The enclosed pieces that shield Oates's protagonists' hearts from emotionally reliving pain are a constant obstacle they must overcome.

Oates's protagonists under scrutiny, while varying in background, circumstances, and behavior, consistently demonstrate overlapping and conflicting neurotic needs. The presence of multiple neurotic tendencies in each character illustrates the complex ways in which unresolved basic anxiety manifests in adult life. Furthermore, these combinations of needs form recognizable patterns that, when interpreted through Horney's framework, point toward specific personality types—compliant, aggressive, or detached, thereby setting the stage for deeper personality analysis in the following chapter. This multi-dimensional portrayal affirms Oates's psychological realism and Horney's theory as a valuable interpretive lens for character analysis

Chapter 4

Typology and Diversified Personalities

This chapter aims to study the protagonists of Joyce Carol Oates's novels and classify them into three personality types as proposed by Karen Horney, who "is known as a Neo-Freudian for her revision of Freudian thought; a social psychological theorist for her emphasis on cultural and social influences; a humanist for her holistic view and emphasis on self-realization; and a feminist for her development of feminine psychology" (O'Connell 81), in her "Theory of Personality": "… a clinically based theory which can potentially aid case conceptualization psychotherapeutic intervention" (Coolidge, Moore, and Yamazaki 1388-1389). It primarily involves the behavioral analysis of the characters and assorting them a personality type based on the inclination of characters towards certain patterns of thought and action. Moreover, there is a comparative analysis of three personality types, as proposed by Horney, considering the protagonists of Joyce Carol Oates. Each personality type, being driven by different motives and inhibitions, has similarities and differences that come to light during the analysis of each of the personalities in comparison. The theory of neurotic personality structure, developed by Karen Horney, provides a rich conceptual framework for understanding psychopathology and human development. Horney's theories have had a lasting impact on the psychoanalytic landscape and are recognized in contemporary thought, though her contributions are often underappreciated. Horney described "neurotic personality" in terms of underlying character disturbances, caused by social and cultural circumstances, rather than specific behavioral symptoms. She contended that, despite having distinct neurotic personalities, all neurotic patients shared fundamental disruptions in their personality structure. Different personality "types" or "styles" were thus viewed as variations on a fundamental underlying conflict rather than as conceptually distinct conditions.

Karen Horney defined three personality types based on the neurotic needs that were prevalent in each individual. These personality types have one or more prominent trends, which she has named accordingly. For example, the "compliant type" has a tendency to move towards people, and the primary need that works here is the need for affection and approval. Furthermore, the compliant type indicates the need for a partner. These are compulsive and indiscriminate needs. "Moving toward people" (Coolidge, Segal, and Benight 363), also known as the "compliant personality", includes needs for affection and approval, as well as a special need for a partner who can meet all of one's life expectations; "Compliant types appease others at any interpersonal cost including self-subordination and the dropping of any claims to individuality. They also evaluate themselves by what others think and become overly dependent on other people for love and safety" (Coolidge, Moore and Yamazaki 1388). These needs are typical of neurotic tendencies: they are compulsive, indiscriminate, and cause anxiety when they are frustrated. Furthermore, they function independently of one's feelings or value for the person who is the object of those needs. The compliant individual will do almost anything to maintain relationships in order to ensure the continued support of others. Still, they give themselves over so completely that they may enjoy nothing for themselves. They begin to feel helpless and weak, and they subordinate themselves to others, believing that everyone is smarter, more attractive, and more valuable than they are. They judge themselves based on the opinions of others, and any rejection can be disastrous. As love becomes their biggest compulsion, but their low self-esteem makes true love difficult. As a result, sexual relations become a substitute for love, as well as "evidence" that they are loved and desired.

> Just as the compliant type clings to the belief that people are 'nice', and is continually baffled by evidence to the contrary, so the aggressive type takes it for granted that everyone is hostile, and refuses to admit that they are not. To him(,) life is a struggle of all against all, and the devil take(s) the hindmost. (Horney, *Our Inner Conflicts* 63).

The “aggressive personality”, as mentioned in the preceding quote, is motivated by a desire to exert control over others or “against other people” (Coolidge, Segal, and Benight 363). They see the world in “Darwinian terms”, as a world dominated by survival of the fittest, with the strong annihilating the weak. The aggressive person may appear polite and fair-minded, but this is mostly a ruse to facilitate their own goals. They can be openly aggressive, or they can choose to manipulate others more subtly, sometimes preferring to be the power behind the throne:

> “… these people accept the hypocrisy and underlying hostility in their environment, and they fight, either consciously or unconsciously, to protect themselves and to seek revenge. They automatically distrust other people’s feelings and intentions, and they rebel in whatever way they can” (Coolidge, Moore, and Yamazaki 1388).

Love, which is such an urgent need for the compliant person, is of little importance to the aggressive person. They may be in love and may marry, but they are more concerned with what they can gain from the relationship. They choose mates based on their attractiveness, prestige, or wealth. What matters most is how their mate can improve their own social standing. They are fierce competitors who look for any sign of weakness or ambition in others. Unfortunately, they also tend to suppress emotion in their lives, making enjoyment of life difficult, if not impossible.

Those who withdraw from people, the “detached personality”, are looking for more than just meaningful solitude; “They consciously and unconsciously avoid emotional involvement with others and have a strong need for self-sufficiency” (Coolidge, Moore, and Yamazaki 1388). Instead, they are compelled to avoid or “away from other people” (Coolidge, Segal and Benight 363) due to the unbearable strain of interacting with others. They are also estranged from themselves; they have no idea who they are or what they love, desire, value, or believe. Horney described them as zombies, capable of working and functioning like living people but devoid of life. Their desire to

put emotional distance between themselves and others appears to be a critical factor. They develop a strong sense of independence and privacy. Because these individuals seek negative goals, such as not being involved, not needing help, and not being bothered, rather than having clear goals (such as needing a loving partner or needing to control others), their behavior is more variable, but the focus remains on being detached from others in order to avoid facing the conflicts within their psyche.

"Karen Horney (1946) developed a theory of different interpersonal styles that people use to maintain social security. These are defined as: moving toward people, moving against people and moving away from people" (Nettmann and Deventer 41). Each of these three types of personalities has some worth. Maintaining relationships with others is important and healthy (moving toward), ambition and a drive to excel have definite benefits in many cultures (moving against), and peaceful solitude, a chance to get away from it all, can be very refreshing (moving away). Each of these solutions is likely to be available to the healthy individual in appropriate situations. When someone requires our assistance, we reach out to them. When someone tries to take advantage of us, we defend ourselves. When the stresses of everyday life wear us down, we seek solitude for a short period of time, perhaps by exercising, going to movie theatres, or listening to our favourite music. As Horney attempted to emphasize, the neurotic individual is defined by a compulsion to use one style of relating to others, to their detriment.

A compliant personality type has a tendency to be congenial and has similar interests to other people, but this congeniality is forced by the subconscious and not genuine. In the words of Luce Irigaray, "… maternal function underpins the social order and the order of desire, but it is always kept in a dimension of need. Where desire is concerned, […] the role of maternal-feminine power is often nullified in the satisfying of individual and collective needs" (Irigaray 36; López 221). The compliant type's claim that their need for affection and approval is natural has some truth to it, that is why "… the portrayal of mothers as compliant to the needs of others" (López 221), but their desire for affection isn't genuine because what they crave is a sense of safety, not love or

approval. The urge to feel safe is the primary driving force behind all their actions and the attitudes they develop are in response to fulfilling this urge. His overall personality is the result of this primal desire to feel safe, and the traits he develops are sensitivity to others' needs, or what his emotional intelligence leads him to believe are others' needs. According to Horney, these needs are primarily aimed at seeking safety and developing a sense of security in a hostile world more than aiming at gaining real affection from other human beings. A neurotic with a "compliant tendency" feels like he is surrounded by strange and threatening animals. Horney, while talking about one of her female patient's illustrations of her situations, says, "There she stood, tiny and helpless, in the middle of the picture, around her a huge bee ready to sting her, a dog that could bite her, a cat that could jump at her, a bull that could gore her" (Horney, *Our Inner Conflicts* 50). This illustration of a neurotic's mental state by one of Horney's patients depicts how a neurotic with a 'compliant tendency' perceives their mental state and feels threatened by others.

In Horney's words, "He tries to live up to the expectations of others, or to what he believes to be their expectations, often to the extent of losing sight of his own feelings" (51). The general characteristics that are active are mostly being overly appreciative, grateful, and generous. He appears to be considerate of others, but in reality, he is unconcerned about others. Oates's Anellia in *I'll Take You There*, who was born motherless and bears the blame for her mother's death at her very birth, appears to seek validation from other people throughout the novel. According to Marilyn C. Wesley:

> . . . while the father symbolizes power, the mother stands for nurturance. Traditionally, the daughter is the one to be opposite or unlike of her father; therefore, she embodies impotence. This is what Freud also agrees by claiming that girls feel impotent when they realize the fact that they lack [a] penis. Moreover, the figure shows that it is boys who must be unlike the mother; therefore, while mothers are associated with nurturance …. (Wesley 9; UĞUR 34)

A compliant type's desire to feel safe is heightened, causing her to pursue people-pleasing with greater zeal. As Horney puts it, "Obviously, then, the real nature of other beings does not matter, except in so far, the more aggressive ones, being the more frightening, are the ones whose "affection" is the most necessary" (*Our Inner Conflicts* 50-51). This is seen in Oates's novel, where Anellia's attitude toward her sorority housemother, Agnes Thayer, depicts how desperately she needs her affection and will go to any length to ensure she is not offended.

A neurotic with a compliant type personality doesn't have affection for other people and doesn't really care about them in his subconscious, but consciously he/she convinces himself that he/she does care and has affection for everyone; "He blinds himself to the fact that in his heart of hearts he doesn't care much for others and tends to regard them as hypocritical and self-seeking" (Horney 52). Oates's Anellia being the compliant type exhibits this tendency to be affectionate but subconsciously is aware of the true nature of other people; "I wanted none of their pity, sympathy, or solicitude. They felt sorry for me because they took a certain pleasure in feeling sorry for one so deprived, so disfigured; because I had no mother, alone of the girls of my generation in Strykersville I had no mother . . . . " (Oates, *I'll Take You There* 108). A similar instance can be spotted in *My Life as A Rat,* where the protagonist, Voilet, realizes the true intentions of Mr. Sandman but would convince herself otherwise:

> I was very confused. Sitting up, foolishly clutching the silk robe around me. It was shocking to me, to see my bare feet. You can't run away. Can't run far. He would catch you. He could kill you if he wished. Strangle you. The man was waiting for me to realize. To scream. To become hysterical. His fingers were poised. It was up to me. Lying very still trying to summon my strength. Like water, that falls through outstretched fingers. Despair filled me, yet the calm of reason- silly bare feet, I couldn't run far . . . But he was a gentleman you could see. The cobblestone house on Craigmont Avenue. So many books. (Oates, *My Life as A Rat* 188-189)

Voilet knows about the real intentions of Mr. Sandaman which is clear from her anguish in her internal dialogue, but she convinces herself that Mr. Sandman can't be bad and reasons with herself that he is a gentleman. It is noted that Anellia is seen pondering her past and unfortunate situation at her birth at various points in the novel, and she considers it a curse and carries it with her, lowering her sense of self-esteem, deeming herself inferior to others, and thus wanting to subordinate to other girls and other people. She says, "sometimes it seemed to my horror that my mother had died before I was born, not after; if such a fairytale could be, it would apply to me as the cruellest of curses: The Girl Whose Mother Died Before She Was Born" (Oates, *I'll Take You There* 108). Anellia is seen returning to her birth circumstances and the fact that her mother died when she was born.

The compliant type of person requires affection and approval from others, and this need is indiscriminate and compulsive, requiring approval from everyone regardless of their actual value and worth. Observing protagonist Anellia in Oates's *I'll Take You There* it is revealed that she has a tendency to seek affection and approval from everyone. It all starts with the family, with her being born motherless and seeking affection from her older brothers and father, who barely meet her emotional needs as a child. Later, when she joins the sorority, she seeks affection and approval from the girls in the sorority, whom she refers to as her Kappa sisters, despite the fact that they are cruel to her. Because the indiscriminate nature of neurotic tendencies becomes generalized and directed towards every individual they encounter, making them want to come across as congenial with everyone, they become like or pretend to be like everyone else they meet. These needs, which are aimed at establishing a sense of belonging and experiencing intimacy with the other, vary in expression due to the variation in the individual situation.

The more aggressive tendency a person has, the more the compliant type feels threatened by them, and, the more likely, they are to win their affection. While observing Oates's Anellia and her desire, to be around and seek affection from the sorority house mother, Agnes Thayer, shows how she, being the authority in the sorority, makes Anellia

want to win her over, and she is seen acting very compliant towards her throughout her entire stay at the sorority in the novel. Because she, is the authorial figure, having her affection and approval, will reduce her anxiety because she will feel less threatened. Despite Agnes Thayer's disdain for Anellia, she works tirelessly to win her affection. Anellia's obsession with Mrs. Thayer began the moment she met her. When Mrs. Thayer spoke to Anellia while she was pouring tea, it sparked something in her. "Mrs. Thayer murmured in reply, her blue gaze passing through me as it's said those infinitesimal sub-atomic particles called neutrinos pass through solid matter continuously, "My dear, you are welcome. My dear! No one had ever spoken to me, even in jest, in such a way" (Oates, *I'll Take You There* 11). Anellia appears to be drawn to Mrs. Thayer because former is a compliant type and would gravitate towards someone who appears to be aggressive. Mrs. Thayer addresses her as "My dear" and she feels overwhelmed with joy to be addressed in this manner. A similar observation appears to be true for Abby in the novel *Pursuit*, where she is afraid of men, as men in general, as they have a proclivity for aggressive behavior. Thus, she ensures not to offend them, and gain their approval:

> As a girl, you learn not to offend strangers by rebuffing them. Especially men. Strangers, but also employers. And when she'd been a student for what seemed like forever, teachers. Smiling and friendly seeming because you are pretty but if you say the wrong words or fail to smile with the expected vivacity, a man can turn nasty. Fast. (Oates, *Pursuit*, 11- 12)

The more of a threat somebody appears to be, the more the compliant type wants their approval. This explains why she feels the same way about teachers because they are the authoritative figures, and why she feels the same way about strangers because they can be perceived as a threat. It is interesting to note that Anellia in *I'll Take You There* considers her teachers as minor deities. The mental processes are similar to these two protagonists. It has been observed that Voilet Rue Kerrigan in *My Life as A Rat*, turns out to be the carbon copy of Anellia and Abby. The episode of getting manhandled physically at the hands of her maths teacher and, not being able to accuse him for the same, establishes a

compliant type tendency to fear authority and work towards gaining the affection of the authority.

In Horney's words, "In sum, this type needs to be liked, wanted, desired, loved; to feel accepted, welcomed, approved of, appreciated; to be needed, to be of importance to others, especially to one particular person; to be helped, protected, taken care of, guided" (*Our Inner Conflicts* 51). The compliant personality develops certain characteristics that shape their personality and govern all of their interactions with others. One of the main traits of a compliant type is, striving to live up to the expectations of others and, doing everything in their power to meet these expectations, even if it means sacrificing their well-being. Oates' Anellia fails to enforce the curfew while on Procter duty in the sorority because she does not want to disappoint her Kappa sisters. She would jeopardize Kappa housemother's authority while also becoming the one to blame if anything happened to any of the girls who arrived late. But she yearned to be liked and to behave as others expected of her, so she let them break the rules and arrive late. In this respect, Anellia says, "for they seemed to know that I would be waiting for them, uncomplaining and compliant as a handmaid" (Oates, *I'll Take You There* 15). Since compliance was expected of her, she would do as expected and let them in after curfew without reporting to Mrs. Thayer, preferring to support them in turning off the parlour lights to fool Mrs. Thayer into thinking that everyone was in and on time.

Anellia's attitude toward Mrs. Thayer, the housemother, who is the authoritative figure and is perceived as a threat, makes meeting her expectations all the more important; "[S]he becomes unselfish, self-sacrificing, undemanding-except for [her] unbounded desire for affection" (Horney, *Our Inner Conflicts* 51). The compliant type becomes undemanding and sacrifices their own well-being to ensure others are not bothered while meeting their demands, thus limiting and constraining themselves even if they need to seek help. To ensure that she doesn't bother Mrs. Thayer and others she doesn't tell her about being chased by a man on the way while returning from the library. Her statement, "I did not rush to Mrs. Thayer's door, which was closed at this time of

night; I did not bring her the gift of female distress after all" (Oates, *I'll Take You There* 51) speaks about how she did not want Mrs. Thayer to be in a state of distress because of the incident. So, she preferred going unnoticed as she entered the sorority, even by the proctor on duty. This tendency to be self-sacrificing is amplified, to the point where they do not care about their feelings. The statement "my feelings can't be hurt where there's no one" is repeated several times throughout the novel, emphasizing the compliant type's tendency to be so self-sacrificing that they sabotage their own feelings entirely.

Speaking of the characteristic traits of a complaint type, Horney asserts, "He becomes compliant, overconsiderate – within the limits possible for him – over appreciative, over grateful, generous" (*Our Inner Conflicts* 52). These characteristics are mirrored in every interaction with other humans by the compliant type. Anellia at the sorority who embodies these qualities appears strange to others, but because she is driven by neurotic tendencies that are inherently compulsive, she becomes a laughing stock and a specimen worthy of pity. When she took the blame for causing chaos and disorder in sorority for the second time, she was perceived as mad by others. Other girls were aware that it wasn't her but them who created the mess, but she was taking the blame, leaving them in disbelief. In Oates's words of Anellia's condition:

> . . . on all sides the Kappas were regarding me with dread, and embarrassment, the behaviour of Kat and her roommates was widely known; it could make no sense that I was confessing; Lulu, boldly lighting up a cigarette, her diamond engagement ring flashing, glanced at me disapproving, as if she'd never seen a pathetic specimen in her life. Who the hell are you? Why are you here? What are you doing among sane people? (Oates, *I'll Take You There* 70)

Though the compliant type tends to act, to meet the expectations of other people, but they, themselves, don't know what are the expectations of other people, they act upon their perceived expectations of other people, which may or may not be their real expectations leading to reactions contrary to what is expected by them. As shown in the

preceding excerpt, Anellia ends up disappointing everyone, causing even more chaos, when her original intention was to lessen the chaos by shouldering the blame, further straining her relationships with others, "Following that hour, neither my Kappa sisters nor Mrs. Thayer ever trusted me again" (Oates 71). There is another instance where Anellia was trying to be kind to one of the Kappas Mercy who was unwell from over-drinking. When she was trying to assist her and held her hand, the girl disapproved of it and shrank from her in turn hurting Anellia's feelings and further assisting Horney's statement that neurotics tend to treat others how they expect to be treated and when they fail to receive that treatment, they end up hurting themselves. Mercy telling Anellia to take hands off her which hurt her severely, but all she was trying to do was, to help Mercy, whom she assumed needed her help, a faulty assumption that neurotics frequently make because their judgements are clouded by their faulty neurotic design or structure, which enslaves them and sets them up for disappointment. This disappointment sits deep in Anellia. While placating herself, she says, "And trying not to cry. For you are not a child. Nineteen years old an adult. Yet so hurt! Heartbroken! fated to recall the sting of that rude drunken rebuff for a lifetime . . ." (Oates 16),

Besides being over-considerate, overly generous, and self-sacrificing, a compliant type also tends to avoid any quarrel or competition making them always sub-ordinate and at times shoulder the blame. In the words of Horney, "important in this context is his tendency automatically to shoulder blame" (52). This automatic tendency to shoulder blame explains Anellia taking responsibility for the wrongdoings of others twice in a row, setting the stage for her expulsion from the sorority. Her acceptance of blaming on her begins with her birth; at the beginning, she was blamed for her mother's death because her mother died while giving birth to Anellia, and her father, siblings, and the rest of the family blamed her. Later when she took blame for others wrongdoings in sorority, she says, "I did not want her to be publicly shocked and humiliated, I did not want the poor woman's trembling to be more visible, how the Kappa girls would giggle, mocking the Brit-bitch behind her back. Without thinking I said, "I-I must have done it,

Mrs. Thayer" (Oates, *I'll Take You There* 54). The preceding lines highlight Anellia's tendency as a compliant type to be overly considerate of Mrs. Thayer and to take on the blame in order to rule out any possibility of discord or disharmony. Similarly, Voilet seemingly, takes up the blame of her own molestation, when she says, "If it was abuse as they charged it did not seem so, usually. It was something that I could recognize as punishment (Oates, *My Life As A Rat* 158). By characterizing the abuse as punishment, Voilet shifts the blame from the abuser to herself, claiming that the assault was something she deserved. In the novel *Pursuit*, Willem, while speaking of his wife Abby, says, "He saw that she was kind, patient, sympathetic with an irascible individual whom another might shun. He saw that she was good" (Oates, *Pursuit* 28). These lines give Willem's first impression of his future wife Abby when he sees her for the first time, she is talking with an old patient, whose attitude would make anybody flinch, and this is the impression a compliant type gives on the outside with the values they idealize in themselves.

There is a set of inhibitions that function in both the compliant and aggressive types, but their natures are, diametrically, opposed. These inhibitions function to keep the conflict to a minimum by giving a specific direction to the traits that are in the forefront, and which largely comprise a personality type and pushing the opposing traits away, and these opposing traits are, in fact, inhibitions. ". . . being assertive, critical, demanding, giving orders, making an impression" (Horney, *Our Inner Conflicts* 53) are all considered to be inhibitions for the compliant type by Horney. Anellia even fails to correct Mrs. Thayer when she calls her by the wrong name because she is afraid of being assertive around her, an inhibition at work; "I had not the audacity to tell Mrs. Thayer that my name was not Mary Alice; nor did it sound anything like Mary Alice; I knew Mrs. Thayer would be offended" (Oates, *I'll Take You There* 12). When Voilet in *My Life as A Rat* fails to blame Mr. Sandman despite the fact that he pleaded guilty, it is the inability to be assertive, an inhibition at work for the compliant type. These inhibitions stop the compliant type from doing things for himself as he is largely oriented towards the other.

It is the neurotic inhibitions that explain Anellia doing the assignment work for her fellow Kappas while she was lagging in her own work; “It was strange: I could not complete my own work, yet glance quickly through others’ work and see what was required. Errors leaped to my eye. As punishment for missing meetings, I was assigned proctor duty” (Oates 62). She would help others with their work at her own expense, which would cost her heavily as she had to make up for the missed meetings by doing other chores further adding up to her workload. A regular person with a healthy brain function wouldn’t put themselves through such pain and turmoil. Constituting of the things they appreciate in themselves and the things they abhor, they develop a value system. Horney while talking of this value system of the compliant type says, “They lie in the direction of goodness, sympathy, love, generosity, unselfishness, humility; while egotism, ambition, callousness, unscrupulousness, wielding of power are abhorred” (*Our Inner Conflicts* 55).

A compliant personality develops an attitude toward themselves and sees themselves as such. They see themselves as helpless and weak. Their inhibitions contribute to their helplessness because they are unable to fight or assert themselves, and they tend to tell themselves and others about their weakness. Anellia in the novel *I'll Take You There*, frequently expresses her helplessness and says:

> They wouldn’t want a girl whose mother was not only deceased but disfigured. They wouldn’t want a farm girl from Strykersville, New York, a girl who had somehow managed to receive a scholarship and whose grade-point average was A and yet who had failed to help as many of her Kappa sisters academically as she might have done if she hadn’t had a breakdown. They wouldn’t want so selfish a girl. They would not want a girl with a leper’s rash. A girl $322 in debt to the sorority and barely able to pay the monthly bill for room and board. (Oates 87)

She feels a sense of pity for herself and a sort of weakness because of her unfortunate birth and other circumstances. In the words of Horney, “You must love me, protect me, forgive me, not desert me, because I am so weak and helpless” (*Our Inner Conflicts* 53),

this is the appeal compliant type makes to others on account of their helplessness. They believe that others ought to like them and love them because they owe them this due to their weakness and helplessness. Anellia while visiting Mrs. Thayers's quarters and visiting through her closet and belongings, says, "I pleaded Why did you never like me? Why do you repel me? Wasn't I the one who read Punch? Did you never see how I adored you? Had you always seen through me an imposter?" (Oates, *I'll Take You There* 90). Mrs. Thayer being the authority made Anellia yearn for her love and approval even more, because authority implies the ability to impose threat. When observing Voilet in *My Life as A Rat*, her feelings of helplessness towards herself come forth in this excerpt:

> It is true that I am slow witted in this new school. It is true that I am often lost. Sleepwalking with eyes open. Wandering corridors in the wrong part of the school. Ninth grade? Eighth grade? After weeks still confused where the gym is, and where the cafeteria is. Sleepy-headed. Also, hearing-impaired. "Voilet? Voilet! The bell has rung, you should go to your next class now . . ." (Not asking Is *something wrong?* -they all know that something is wrong). (Oates 137)

Horney says that this sense of helplessness is even emphasized in dreams. The protagonist, in *Pursuit* talking about these feelings, states: "In the dream[,] there is only the child self, her truest self, unprotected, as a newborn deer is unprotected, lacking even a scent . . . unprotected as a child whose mother has abandoned her . . . Unprotected as a child taken into the home of an aunt out of pity after her parents have abandoned her" (Oates, *Pursuit* 7). The word "unprotected" appears in three consecutive sentences for a reason: it refers to how weak and helpless she feels as a compliant type, which is one of the compliant type's characteristic traits in their attitude toward their own selves. The narrator in her conscious considers herself as somebody unprotected whom the people around her own protection.

Apart from having a general sense of helplessness towards oneself, they also have a tendency to subordinate themselves and regard others as superior in every way. This

attitude of subordination to others promotes compliance and a need to be in the good graces of others because others being superior can pose a threat, and for a compliant type, generating a sense of security for self is the driving force. In Anellia's words, "More urgently I felt an obligation to be good- or to be so perceived by Mrs. Thayer and by others. I was too poor and plain not to be 'good'; my sorority sisters with well-to-do parents, and numerous boyfriends, could be as careless as they wished without the thought of being 'good'" (Oates, *I ll Take You There* 30). She implies that her sense of inferiority which was partly real and partly self-generated pushed her toward compliance; "*I'll Take You There* offers more potential to the protagonist's self-critical relation [with the others] …" (Lotta Kähkönen 158). Even in other areas where the compliant type is good, he tends to undervalue his abilities. Anellia says, "I did not believe I belonged in Kappa Gamma Pi, a Christian sorority, I was an imposter in this gathering and these, older Kappa sisters laughed thrilled as if I'd said something witty, it might have been my face, people wished to believe that I was being witty and not something else" (Oates 85). She downplays her wit and humour, believing that others regard her as incapable, but this is a self-created belief. Despite her intelligence and ability, she believes she does not belong in Kappa Gamma Pi.

A compliant type also has a sense of reliance on other people's perceptions of them. The acceptance or rejection of others has a significant impact on their self-esteem. In Horney's words, ". . . any criticism, rejection, or desertion is a terrifying danger, and he may make the most abject effort to win back the regard of the person who has just threatened him" (*Our Inner Conflicts* 54). Thus, their source of happiness and peace is external, as it is dependent on other people's acceptance or rejection of them and their actions. To feel good about themselves again, they must return to the source of their unrest, which has made them overly reliant on others.

One of the most significant challenges for women, according to Karen Horney, is a desperate need to be in a relationship with a man, a theme she addresses in her seminal papers on feminine psychology, "The Overvaluation of Love (1934/1967)" and "The

Neurotic Need for Love (1937/1967).” Horney observed that many of her patients fixated on securing a relationship, often to the exclusion of other aspects of life, and she argued that such traits were culturally and traditionally influenced rather than innate. The compliant type, in particular, channels their focus through love and sexual relationships, using them as a vehicle for expressing repressed drives in a controlled manner. Love becomes a means to satisfy the need to be liked while simultaneously exerting influence over others. As Horney notes, “In fact my weakness would be an asset, because he would love my helplessness and I could lean on his strength” (*Our Inner Conflicts* 60). This dynamic is evident in the novel *Pursuit,* where the protagonist Abby perceives her husband Willem as a protector who mitigates her sense of vulnerability: “Too bad her tall handsome husband isn’t with her this morning. Close beside her, Gripping her hand in his. Willem will protect her with his life. No one could sit beside her if Willem were here. Intrude upon her private happiness” (Oates, *Pursuit* 13). Here, the compliant type’s overvaluation of love manifests in a belief that a loving partner can shield them from the threats of the world, allowing them to navigate inner conflicts with a sense of safety.

Abby’s relationship with Willem exemplifies the compliant type’s use of perceived weakness as a relational asset. Following her accident, Willem’s care and protective instincts intensify; “Willem glances over at Abby to see that she has fallen asleep. Slack-mouthed, a glisten of saliva on her chin. He is suffused with love for her, his dear wife” (Oates 59). Abby’s physical vulnerability and diminished beauty, rather than reducing Willem’s affection, heighten his desire to nurture and protect her, reflecting Horney’s assertion that a compliant type’s weakness can elicit love and strengthen relational bonds (Horney 60). Similarly, Abby views Willem as a savior, echoing biblical connotations: “he looks more like a biblical prophet” (Oates, *Pursuit* 57), which aligns with Acts 13:23’s depiction of Jesus as a redeemer. This perception allows Abby to externalize her inner sense of helplessness, creating a dynamic in which her dependence fosters intimacy while her partner’s strength complements her vulnerabilities.

However, the compliant type's reliance on love for self-affirmation has limitations, particularly when inner conflicts remain unresolved. In Abby's case, despite finding a supportive partner in Willem, she continues to grapple with self-doubt; "But she knows: she doesn't deserve the happiness of marriage and of love" (Oates 20). Horney emphasizes that a compatible partner, one whose neurosis aligns with the compliant type's disposition, can mitigate suffering: "If the compliant type is fortunate enough to find a partner who has both strength and kindliness, or whose neurosis fits in with his own, his suffering, may be considerably lessened and he may find a moderate amount of happiness" (62). Willem's demeanor, including his initial surprise at their marriage, "Wife? Do I have a wife? -he is about to blurt out but decides against it" (62) demonstrates compatibility with Abby's inner conflicts. The couple's matched neuroses and Willem's strength and kindness allow Abby to experience temporary relief and fulfillment. Nevertheless, Horney cautions that true relational satisfaction depends on the resolution of underlying conflicts; otherwise, love alone cannot foster lasting development or psychological integration.

Oates while talking in her interviews about her character Corky Corcoran in the novel *What I Lived For* states:

> Certain women have had power over him and when he gets the chance to have power over a woman, he takes it. I've known men like him. He walks into a room and shakes hands with everyone. He's very charismatic. The room lights up when he comes in. Everyone wants to meet him. But he's got this machismo thing-this white male thing. He has to have this mask, this pose. (Oates and Brookes 559)

Being recognized by others provides a solution to an aggressive personality type's conflict of being pulled in two different directions. When others recognize his success and accomplishments, it serves a dual purpose. The first is receiving affirmation from others, and the second is being liked by others, which causes him to like others in turn. He cannot like other people because it is one of his inhibitions, but when he is recognized

and liked by others, he develops a sense of liking them to some extent, thus balancing his conflict. While observing the character of Corky Corcoran in Joyce Carol Oates's novel *What I Lived For*, it is seen that he places special consideration on being recognized wherever he goes. Joyce Carol Oates while assorting a separate chapter to Corky's dinner at Union City Athletic Club (UCAC) establishes it as one of his favourite places besides literally mentioning it as one of his favourite places at various instances throughout the chapter. The reason for this is that he is recognized in UCAC by the staff and even the other members of the club, as displayed by his confidence and happiness while at UCAC, where he is constantly grinning and shaking hands, exuding an air of pride. Corky's pride at UCAC is expressed in the following excerpt:

> Exchanging greetings with the kid who parks his Caddy, the black doorman Archie, the house manager A.G Rickett, the Elm Room's Maitre de' and the wine steward and the god knows who all else, the uniformed pack of them, brass buttons and braid and black tie and smiling their sunny expectant smiles seeing it's him, Corky Corcoran, one of the "new" type of UCAC member, businessman, City Councilman, civic minded friend and associate of the Slatterys, a good-natured guy with no pretensions or airs and, not least generous with tips- he's feeling good already, like the air leaked out of him, is being blown back in. (Oates, *What I Lived For* 99)

It is observed that Corky experiences a sense of calm when he is in UCAC as he doesn't feel conflicted by his mental anguish. Corky, when discussing his fondness for UCAC, says, "Every man has to have places that, the very thought of them, no matter how demoralized he is or how shitty his circumstances, makes him happy" (101). The significance he places on being recognized by others is emphasized further in the lines:

> The Elm Room of the U.C.A.C One of Corky's places. Uptown, Swanky. Corky is a guy familiar with any number of local clubs, restaurants, cocktail lounges, and bars. Welcomed, well-liked. Faces light up when he is sighted. Sometimes he

> overhears his name as he passes a table- the murmur of the lilt-Corky Corcoran! - music to his ears (120).

The other instance is at Bobby Ray:

> Bobby Ray's is one of Corky's cherished places. His reputation's known here and he's liked for who he is as a person not just the fact he's a generous guy, lavish tipper in the right mood." "Sometimes he thinks that's all there is to life, really: if you identify yourself on the phone or run into a friend, there's genuine pleasure in it. Smile, handshake, Hello. (Oates, *What I Lived For* 162)

Bobby Rae just like UCAC, is another place where Corky feels his best self as he is recognized there as well. The above excerpts establish Corky as Horney's aggressive type with his need for recognition.

An aggressive personality type, in addition to wanting to be recognized, wants to exploit others because they live by the jungle philosophy, as opposed to the compliant type, who believes everyone is good. He has a tendency to outwit people and use them to his advantage. Karen Horney, when discussing the mental processes of an aggressive personality type, says "Any situation or relationship is looked from the standpoint of "What can I get out of it?" –whether it has to do with money, prestige, contacts, or ideas" (O*ur Inner Conflict* 65). Observing Corky Corcoran's interaction with his financial advisor Greenbaum over a business lunch reveals many of these tendencies, where he is seen putting great effort into exploiting him. Throughout their interaction, he is seen attempting to outwit Greenbaum and make him useful to him; "Corky thinks fiercely, what's needed here isn't fucking financial advice but fucking wisdom" (Oates, *What I Lived For* 106). Even though Greenbaum is Corky's financial advisor, Corky is eager to make Greenbaum talk about anything other than finances to gain knowledge from Greenbaum in addition to the financial advice he provides. While closely observing their interaction, it is clear that Corky is extracting information from Greenbaum on a variety of topics such as politics, science, and even religion. He not only admires Greenbaum's

witty and insightful responses, but he also pays close attention to his word choice. His noticing his repeated use of the word "expedient" demonstrates his eagerness to learn new things from him. In Oates's novel *Zombie*, the protagonist Q_P has a similar tendency to exploit. He exploits not only the young men he uses as specimens for his lobotomies but also any close relatives, including family. The most obvious example is his borrowing money from his grandmother in exchange for minor favors.

The aggressive type's center of gravity, like the compliant type's, is located outside of the self. The only difference is that the affirmation required from outside is different for the two. They require others to see them as superior, and when a threat arises, their conflicts take over. He must have authority over others. Despite his tough exterior, Oates's Corky is afraid of what other people think of him. He has an obsessive desire to exert control over how others perceive him, which is subject to change and beyond his control no matter how hard he tries, so any attempt at control is futile.Corky replaying an interaction with the cop in his head says:

> Embarrassed remembering how he'd directed traffic, helping out the cop. Basking in the attention, Christ what an asshole, the cop smiled and waved at him when he drove past, "Thanks, Mr. Corcoran!" and Corky's thought no maybe the smile was a smirk, the thank-you sarcastic. And he has boasted of this to Christina, and who else, Greenbaum, probably Miriam. All of them humouring him. *What an asshole*. (Oates 259)

At another instance, "he overhears Lew telling somebody at the bar that he is "Corky Corcoran" and it gives him a little stab of satisfaction" (261). In the preceding lines, the name 'Corky Corcoran' has a sense of significance because of the way Corky has established himself in his town, the name itself is a brand that needs no introduction, and every time it is uttered, it gives him the affirmation and ego boost that an aggressive type personality requires from other people.

An aggressive personality type becomes very tough and rejects all kinds of feelings. In Karen Horney's words "He regards all feelings, his own as well as others', as sloppy sentimentality" (*Our Inner Conflicts* 65). In *What I Lived For,* Corky Corcoran is seen avoiding displays of emotion or sentimentality. He is seen on several occasions preferring logic over emotion. Even the emotion of love is insignificant. Reflecting Corky's worldview, Joyce Carol Oates writes, "Corky figures, there's the love-world, and there's the money-world. A man has got to have to space in both but, if it's a choice, maybe the money-world is it" (*What I Lived For* 149). When given the option, preceding lines express how Corky would choose money, which represents power over love. An aggressive personality would always choose ambition, success, and power over emotions in order to gain recognition. Corky mentions Thalia to Charlotte and suggests that her fleeing with Corky's gun could be one of her attention-seeking stunts, similar to when she was admitted to the hospital earlier. Charlotte rebukes him saying, "My God, you're so unfeeling, I can't believe what I'm hearing" (337). Several times, he is seen entering a state of mental conflict while being pulled in two opposite directions, which is typical of a neurotic with a fundamental conflict. He experiences a surge of emotions but suppresses them for fear of jeopardizing his temporary state of peace. When he feels concern for his ex-wife Charlotte, he finds it surprising and dismisses it, believing it is only because of his stepdaughter Thalia, whom he considers to be his responsibility; "But hearing her cry just now, envisioning her face crinkled and about to dissolve Corky is baffled at his own response" (338). Though the inhibitions may be unconscious, they are present and may surprise the neurotic when they emerge. Corky Corcoran behaves in an unsentimental manner when he abruptly rejects his wife's request to pay a visit, but later he feels a sting of guilt for having responded to her in that manner.

Q.P exhibits a similar lack of sentimentality toward his parents and sister, despite the fact that a normal son would be concerned. He saying, "there has been a special feeling between Big Sis and me. On her side atleast …" (Oates, *Zombie* 89) establishes his unemotional nature. The same could be said of his attitude towards his grandma,

which is very unfeeling. Though he appears to be well-spoken and kind, and does not harbor any malice toward her, his indifferent and unfeeling attitude is revealed in his inner dialogue when he says, ". . . returned to the kitchen where Grandma & the other old woman were talking about Q_P_,I know.& it crossed my mind I might kill them both now, & the other one out in the van, & dispose the three corpses at once & that would save time . . ." (Oates 148).The casual attitude with which he talks about killing his grandma and her friend speaks of his unfeeling attitude.

According to Horney, the aggressive personality type appears to be the least inhibited, but because their inhibitions are in areas that society does not consider inhibitions, they appear more liberated and freer than other neurotic types. Taking control, asserting wishes, and commanding others appear to be far from being in any kind of conflict. Looking at Joyce Carol Oates's protagonist Corky Corcoran, it can be seen that he exudes confidence and strength and commands respect wherever he goes, which is not how a neurotic is supposed to behave and act. However, a closer examination of his inner conflict reveals his neurotic tendencies as well as his daily struggle in his interactions with other people, where he is torn between his drives and inhibitions. For an aggressive personality type, avoiding any sympathetic or complaining tendencies keeps his conflicts in check and his personality organized. As a result, whenever he is confronted with life situations that necessitate a sympathetic response, he goes into fight or flight mode. Corky Corcoran's interactions with his ex-wife Charlotte show that, while he feels sympathetic towards her for mistreating her during their marriage, he avoids displaying any genuine affection or emotion toward her. When she asks him to pay her a visit, he initially declines, but when he pays her a visit, their entire conversation brings forth Corky's inner conflict. He appears to be extremely uncomfortable whenever he is required to demonstrate emotional closeness:

> Helpless tears, her shoulders shaking inside the silk blouse, Corky has no choice but to sit beside her and slip his arm around her, awkward as hell and he is burning with resentment and embarrassment but there is nobody else at 23 Quail

> Ridge Pass to comfort this woman, clearly the new husband is out of it, smart guy. (Oates, *What I Lived For* 444)

It is interesting to observe that he gets physically intimate with her, but a little display of emotion makes him extremely uncomfortable; “Asking him does he love her and Corky isn’t listening, Corky is grunting, sure, O.K.” (454). The words “sure” and “O.K.” are obviously ambiguous and have no meaning. And his response is the same every time his ex-wife presses him to say whether he loves her; “Made me love you. Didn’t want to do it” (455).

He tries to reason with her, a typical neurotic strategy to wash away any feelings through the power of reason, but when confronted with the same question, he becomes enraged while remaining sympathetic to her; “Corky thinks, No. Fuck it no but can’t say such words to this woman more open to him now than she’d been with her legs spread, poor sweet Charlotte. He’s been a shit to her in the past and maybe he can’t make it up to her in the future. Maybe” (Oates 459). He feels bad for being mean to her, but he refuses to feel affection for her because it would undermine the structure of the integrity he has built as an aggressive type. When confronted with the same question again, he would bring the word ‘sure’ to his rescue, saying it in an apathetic manner, demonstrating how he avoids all feelings when confronted with a conflict. To understand the methods by which aggressive types assert themselves, Horney describes their relentless pursuit of skill, intelligence, and effectiveness in all endeavors:

> Because he is driven always to assert himself as the strongest, shrewdest and most sought after, he tries to develop the efficiency and resourcefulness necessary in being so. The zest and intelligence he puts into his work may make him a highly esteemed employee or a success in the business of his own (*Our Inner Conflicts* 67).

Corky Corcoran exemplifies this efficiency and resourcefulness by first establishing himself as the best employee under Ross Drummond and later establishing his own successful business. He reiterates:

> And wonderful too, how Ross Drummond, the man everybody feared for his unpredictable temper, began to confide more and more in Corky Corcoran. Began to trust certain secrets at Drummond Reality & Insurance. A new office for Corky. Salary raises, opportunities for fat commissions. Promotions over the heads of older long suffering arguably more deserving employees. Stock market tips. Three-martini lunches at Drummond's clubs-the U.C.A.C., The U.C. Golf Club, the Lakeshore Yatch Club. Ross Drummond introducing Corky to his friends, an arm slung heavy and proprietary around Corky's shoulders-" My daughters' finance"- "My daughter's husband"-sometimes "my son-in-law. My, mine. (Oates 427)

In the excerpt above from *What I Lived For*, it is revealed what kind of power Corky Corcoran has over his boss Ross Drummond, who not only trusts him with the secrets of his firm Drummond Reality & Insurance, but also proposes to marry his daughter Charlotte. Charlotte's remark about Corky: "-Pawpaw says you're the only salesman in his office he doesn't have to, um –light a fire under his bottom" (425) speaks to how Corky Corcoran, being the aggressive type, is self-motivated and driven to establish himself as being very resourceful and efficient. Corky Corcoran later establishes his successful business Corcoran Inc., where he achieves great success.

As an aggressive type, Corky needs to exert control over others, and there are various strategies employed to exert control. According to Karen Horney, there are two primary ways of exerting control one being direct control and the other indirect control. Corky is seen mainly using the latter, which is seen in his interactions and relationships with other people. For instance, his conduct with his employees in Corcoran Inc. comes under an indirect way of exerting control which in the words of Horney is: "indirect

manipulation through over solicitousness or putting people under obligation" (Horney 64). The following extract speaks for itself about how Corky exerts strategies of indirect manipulation to keep his employees submissive and loyal.

> Why are Miriam Dunne and Jacky Ferenzi so devoted to Jerome Corcoran? well the man's sweet, he's funny, he's a little crazy, he's kind and generous, and even a spendthrift, takes them out to lunch every few weekdays and always for Christmas, Valentine's Day, birthdays, gives them time off with pay when they need it, asks them about their families and seems to remember what they've said . . . . (Oates 150)

His generosity and excessive concern towards them as an aggressive type is his need to exert control over them, and it definitely pays off as his employees are so devoted to him. His means of exerting control in his office are undoubtedly direct control too with him being the employer it naturally puts him in a position of power to exert this nature of control to assert; demand give orders to his employees him being the authority. Besides the office space in other settings with people who aren't his employees, he is seen exerting different strategies of control. To get a clear understanding of direct control, understanding Q. P's interactions with his victims comes to use. Exerting physical control is a form of direct control he would use on his victims.

An agressive type's "attitude on the score of his honesty comes partly from a shrewd debunking of current hypocrisies. Enthusiasm for a cause, philanthropic sentiments, and like sees as a sheer pretense, and it isn't hard for him to expose gestures of social consciousness or Christian values for what they are so often" (Horney, *Our Inner Conflicts* 68). Because the aggressive personality can see things for what they are, they are honest. They claim to be able to see society's hypocrisies, which they can, unlike the complainer, who can't see anything wrong with anything. The aggressive type can not only see, but also debunk and display it for all to see because they are not afraid to be assertive and express their wishes and desires. Because aggressive people can see things

for what they are, they are honest. They claim to be able to see society's hypocrisies, which they can, unlike the compliant type, who can't find fault with anything. The aggressive type can not only see but also debunk and display it for all to see because they are not afraid to be assertive and express their wishes and desires.

Joyce Carol Oates's protagonist Corky Corcoran can see things for what they are and never hesitates to bring it out to everyone else. He is seen exposing the hypocrisies of the "media people". Even though Marlie Plummer's family expressed their desire for their young daughter's funeral to be private excluding any outsiders and in particular made a request to the media people:

> No media please, please no media at our daughter's funeral the Plummers begged but fuck the family of the deceased, right? Fuck the mourners where there's a hot story…..Film crews, photographers, and reporters milling around hoping to engage mourners as they arrive and hurry into the church, what leeches they are, these "media people". (Oates 393)

Corky's description of them as "leeches" accurately describes the attitude of people in the media and other commercial organizations who are inconsiderate and inhumane. His observation of such hypocrisies is sounder because he is the aggressive type who believes in realism and honesty, and he exposes them with the same honesty. His anger and disgust for such things can be observed with him punching stations in disgust saying, "This is a funeral after all. For Christ's sake someone has died" (393). In another instance, he expresses his disgust at the words of post-mortem official Wolf Wiegler, "And what had that sadistic prick "Wolf" Weigler said sneering of Marlie Plummer-Nah it isn't so fresh, it'll be buried tomorrow-like spitting in your face, the shock of it, you're talking about a human being who has just died and he's talking about a corpse. Dead Meat" (397). Nothing escapes Horney's realism-driven aggressive type personality. Corky recalls how old Father Sullivan was mourned in Irish Hill when at last, deep in his eighties, he died.

> A lament among the men of Our Lady of Mercy parish in particular that they'd lost a good loyal friend, a priest who was one of them and understood their ways even to the point (drinking, gambling) of participating in their ways, yes but the deeper if the unspoken reason of mourning Father Sullivan was the many hundreds of dollars he'd owed them which were never then paid. (Oates 367)

The real reason for these people mourning Father Sullivan was not that he was a good sport or they genuinely had an attachment thus they felt the loss but he owed them money and his death meant they would not get their money thus exposing how everyone is looking out for themselves and nobody cares for nobody in the real sense of the word not only exposing the hypocrisies of society but also establishing his jungle philosophy where everybody is aiming at survival.

Establishing the clear contrast between the two types, Horney asserts, "while the compliant type tends to appease, the aggressive type does everything he can to be a good fighter. He is alert and keen in an argument and will go out of his way to launch one for the sake of proving he is right" (*Our Inner Conflicts* 66). Corky Corcoran, being an aggressive type, is a good fighter and takes pleasure in proving himself right at the expense of others. There is an instance of Corky visiting Bull's Eye restaurant in his young years, precisely aged sixteen with his other young friends. It is revealed there that Corky has a reputation of being a good fighter: "Corky's reputation among these rich kids is he's tough, he's short but scrappy, quick to flare up, prepared to fight" (Oates 315). Corky, it turns out, developed an aggressive personality early on, and by the age of sixteen, it was clearly visible in his interactions with others. He starts establishing contacts with people he can get something out of early on; "A terrific guy, everybody's friend. Everybody who matters in any case" (315). He is friends with everyone who matters in terms of his ability to extract anything from them. As a sixteen-year-old, his personality is already very detached, keeping any sentiments or emotions at bay and not allowing them to determine the course of his life; an aggressive type trait.

> Corky Corcoran, not Jerome Corcoran. Sure, everybody in Union City knows how his father was killed, but with Corky, it's never an issue, absolutely never comes up, he never talks about his family never even his mother who's alive but in some kind of restroom or mental hospital, you don't need to be embarrassed around Corky, he's just like everybody else, real normal like everybody else, it's like he's forgotten his background so you can forget it too. (Oates 315)

As a sixteen-year-old, having that kind of attitude toward something as grave and traumatic as a parent's murder indicates that such apathy is not normal. It would shock anyone of any age, let alone a child, to hear Corky speak about how he developed the aggressive personality trait of avoiding any emotional behavior early in his life, which shows up in his behavior even at sixteen; "He will never be so naïve as to overlook in others any manifestation of ambition, greed, ignorance, or anything else that might obstruct his own goals" (Horney, *Our Inner Conflicts* 67). Corky easily detects greed in Chantal Crowe's behavior while negotiating a deal for Bull's Eye with her. This aggressive personality trait is a manifestation of their sense of realism in that he is able to decode people's hidden motivations and true driving force for their actions so that he is always on the winning side and their intentions never thwart their plans". "Mr. Corcoran, I have turned down six offers higher than that!" which Corky knows is a shit-faced lie but he is too much the gentleman to challenge her" (Oates 314).

Karen Horney while describing the aggressive personality type says, "not that he is never "in love" or never has an affair or marries, but what is of prime concern is to have a mate who is eminently desirable, one through whose attractiveness, social prestige, or wealth he can enhance his own position" (*Our Inner Conflicts* 65). The aggressive type's basic tendency to avoid any emotion manifests itself in love, but he even uses love to serve his aggressive tendencies by choosing a mate who can boost his social standing; "Specific cultural factors may determine an emphasis on certain character traits, such as aggressive competitiveness in relationships, work, love, or penis envy in women due to cultural chauvinism" (Solomon 13). While watching Oates's

Corky, the tendency to marry for social status is evident when he marries his rich employer Ross Drummond's daughter Charlotte, despite the fact that she has a child from a previous marriage. Furthermore, the next woman he associates with after his divorce is the wife of a wealthy judge named Harry Kavanaugh. A strong need to exploit others, to outsmart them, to make them of use to himself, is a part of the picture. Any situation or relationship is looked at from the standpoint of "What can I get of it?"-whether it has to do with money, prestige, contacts or ideas" (Horney, Our Inner Conflicts 65). Karen Horney's aggressive personality type is also known as the "exploiting type", because exploiting other people and turning them to his advantage is a key trait in his personality. Observing Oates's Corky Corcoran, it becomes clear that he uses this tendency to advance his position and get whatever he wants from people he associates himself with. An aggressive type feels a lack of any consideration for other people and believes that people should fend for themselves and that he doesn't owe them anything; "She rejects Freud's Instinct Theory because aggression and sexual pathology are caused by frustration of fundamental needs for love, safety, and security and by an increase in anxiety" (Solomon 14). Horney included that:

> The instinctual … theory leads to seeing final limitations in therapy where they do not exist. By regarding biological factors as the *ultimate causa movens* [author's italics], one is bound to come to rock bottom in therapy because as Freud points out, one cannot change what is determined by biology. (Horney 71; Solomon 14)

Corky Corcoran while talking to Christina says, "I'm not your friend, Christina, I'm not anybody's friend, don't touch me" (Oates 89). The phrase "not anybody's friend" is of significance here as, it represents, his state of apathy for people in general. "Corky isn't Christina's kid or anybody's kid" (90). Again, the phrase "anybody's kid" further establishes his state of apathy and unwillingness that is to be associated with other people. Karen Horney, while describing the aggressive type, says that he is a good fighter, and "He may be best when his back is to the wall and there is no alternative but to fight" (*Our Inner Conflicts* 66). The aggressive type, as opposed to the compliant type,

takes pride in his fighting abilities. It applies not only to an argument, where he is always keen and alert, but also to a physical fight. In Oates's words "… in a reflexive motion quick and unthinking and unerring as a cat's Corky strikes out at her in return, he's a counterpuncher and counterpunchers love to take a hit because it pulls the trigger, gives them permission, all of the Irish you must say are counterpunchers, shrewdness in desperation, enormous joy in cunning" (*What I Lived For* 90). He is skilled at starting an argument, and ensuring his victory, as it is seen at several instances in the novel. He then goes on to win the debate to prove his point.

The perception of solitude and retreat as something necessary for the development of all human beings – as an essential component of a fulfilled life – came about in quite a specific way with the Romantic movement of the 19th century, when poets such as Wordsworth, Byron, Coleridge, and Shelley began to extol its virtues in their work (Clarke). The need for solitude has been stressed not only by the romantic poets but religious philosophies and ancient texts too, stressing its importance. But the solitude pursued by the detached type is different. Following an examination of two of Horney's three proposed personality types, the detached personality type is introduced. Neurotic detachment isn't the same as an occasional need for solitude. An occasional need for solitude is completely healthy and rather desired to connect to one's inner self and a path to self-fulfilment as per religions and ancient philosophies. But a neurotic shuns the prospect of connecting with the self. In Horney's words, "Only if there is an intolerable strain in associating with people and solitude becomes primarily a means of avoiding it is the wish to be alone an indication of neurotic detachment" (*Our Inner Conflicts* 73). They detach not to connect with themselves, but to disconnect from others.

One of the traits that is characteristic of highly detached people is a sense of general estrangement from people. Closer examination reveals that the other two types are also estranged from people with varying degrees but for the detached type, the estrangement is more on the surface and thus obvious. For instance, a compliant personality would be surprised to discover that he is estranged from people at his core,

which contradicts his value system in which closeness with people is everything, and would try everything to conceal it. Estrangement from people is a sign that human relationships are disrupted, which is a characteristic of all neuroses; thus, estrangement from people is seen in all neuroses to varying degrees, with the detached type being more prone to it. This sense of estrangement from people is seen in Quentin P and, his not making eye contact with people is repeatedly stressed throughout the novel. "Nor EYE CONTACT with anybody. It was observed how for that period of incarceration Q_P was not talking and not making EYE CONTACT with anybody" and there are several instances where the words "NO EYE CONTACT' appear in the novel. "Speaking no more than is necessary & MAKING NO EYE CONTACT" and "Take care NOT TO MAKE EYE CONTACT" (Oates 8, 11, 23) are a few of the instances where it appears.

Besides estrangement from people, there is also an estrangement from self. It characterizes, "a numbness to emotional experience, an uncertainty as to what one is, what one loves, hates, desires, hopes, fears, resents, believes" (Horney,*Our Inner Conflicts* 74). They become very objective and they develop a kind of onlooker attitude towards themselves and their own experiences, just as they do towards life in general. Because of this onlooker attitude, they develop into excellent observers of even internal processes, to the point where they can understand the dream symbolism in their own dreams. This is seen as Abby's dream of skulls and handcuffs in Oates's novel *Pursuit*. The detached personality prefers to maintain an emotional distance from others. They are unwilling to interact with others in any way; "More accurately, it is their conscious and unconscious determination not to get emotionally involved with others in any way, whether in love, fight, co-operation or competition" (Horney, *Our Inner Conflicts* 75). A guy from group therapy which Q.P was attending once tried to initiate a conversation with him while he was out on the street and Q.P having the need to avoid any interaction turns him down. ". . . I stood there staring at him not eye contact but chest level & he stares at me & comes a little closer his hand held out to shake & I am on my way rigid and not breathing & finally he backs off" (Oates, *Zombie* 44). In the first place he avoids

any interaction and if the interaction is mandatory like with the authority, he avoids any contradiction; “I never contradict. I am in agreement with you as you utter your words of wisdom. Moving your asshole mouth & YES SIR I am saying NO MAM I am saying” (3). A detached type doesn’t want to interact in terms of emotional intimacy even if it means disagreement with other because even disagreement triggers an emotional response and they don’t want to entertain any emotions triggered at the expense of other people. It is his alleged assumption that other people’s words are ‘words of wisdom,’ and thus disagreement is unnecessary.

They get along with people despite their aversion to emotional intimacy, but their relationships are superficial. They act with frustration and show anxiety when someone tries to enter their inner world. It is observed that Abby gets along with every one of her co-workers and other people but gets anxious when people on the bus try to get intrusive. They develop certain needs and qualities to sustain their need for not getting involved with other people. Among these needs and tendencies, self- sufficiency is one of the most prominent needs. Thus, this type tends to be resourceful, which is a manifestation of this need of self- sufficiency. Karen Horney compares the resourcefulness of detached type to that of Robinson Crusoe’s which helps to compensate for the isolation.

One way to be self-sufficient is resourcefulness, while another is to restrict one’s needs. Nothing or nobody should become indispensable. Eating, drinking, and living habits are restricted so that not enough time is spent on earning money to support them. Quentin P taking the caretaker’s job exemplifies how a detached type restricts himself from being able to enjoy independence. “This property Q_P is CARETAKER for why can’t I be such for life, if I so wish?” (Oates, *Zombie* 102) expresses the desire to work life long as a caretaker as it suits his detachment; “It is a job that suits me” (102). Though is not a very good career venture for a man of intellectual caliber restricting himself and his needs. He tells us how deliberate and diligent he is when he has a goal since he is so driven and ambitious to accomplish this. He feels compelled to take this chance, and he is willing to incur any kind of danger to take it. As he states, this is actually a tremendous

opportunity since destroying the suppressed Quentin and reviving his own self is what lies underlying turning him into a zombie. Quentin's inability to let go of his pasts are among his greatest life challenges; he says, “THE PAST IS PAST & and you learn to move on. I could be a REBORN CHRISTIAN is what I sometimes think …” (85). “Similarly, he avoids competition, prestige, and success” (Horney, *Our Inner Conflicts* 76). Quentin P is hesitant to enroll in the college that his sister insists on attending to avoid a competitive struggle.

Apart from the need for self-sufficiency, the detached person has a need for privacy. They would even be hesitant to share personal information. Horney describes it as: “He is a person in a hotel room who rarely removes the “Do-Not-Disturb” sign from his door” (*Our Inner Conflicts* 76). Because he cannot stand being taken for granted, such a person prefers to work, eat, and sleep alone. Quentin P’s need for privacy is reflected in his selection of tenants, where he favors foreign students as they are more polite and less intrusive. He asserts that they are shy and polite, “... don’t notice things American students would notice &don’t trash their rooms like American students … Quiet in the evenings. At their desks studying” (Oates, *Zombie* 12). As they are shy and don’t have a very watchful eye, Q_P doesn’t have to worry about them noticing his activities and thus doesn’t pose a threat to his privacy. Q_P prefers his private space to himself and expresses relief that these students even don’t use the kitchen as they have contracts elsewhere, and he can have the kitchen space to himself. He typically writes the phrase “caretaker” in capital letters because he feels significant and in charge of things when he has this obligation. Additionally, he gives the reader a photo of the white card that is taped next to his door and has his own writing on it, “O_P_ CARETAKER with a black felt-tip pen” (UĞUR 49). With his pen, Quentin has crafted this as a component of his new identity. His pen is his most valuable instrument throughout the book, helping him to create an identity for himself because the pen is symbolic of the phallus. The ice pick he employs to pierce the victims’ brains and kill their mental cognizance is another crucial tool in this identity construction process. Analogously, the ice pick serves as a penis

substitute by penetrating the victim's mind in the same manner that the penis does so through its rectum. Quentin uses the ice pick to deactivate the zombies' mental activity in addition to raping them to stop their active sexuality. As a result, his victims turn into his slaves and do as their master pleases. Therefore, Quentin needs to demonstrate his manhood, which is represented by the pen and the ice pick, which are phallic symbols (Oates 50).

There is this need for utter independence which is of stark importance and both the need for self-sufficiency and privacy are at its service. Though the need for independence has a positive value in that it bestows the person with unrivalled integrity due to his nonconforming ways, it is never used positively. It is considered as an end goal as he never does anything constructive with it as it aims at not being influenced, coerced, tied, or obligated (Horney 77). This need is compulsive and indiscriminate, just like other needs, and it manifests itself regardless of who or what the threat is. The need for independence manifests itself in a variety of ways. Physical objects that exert pressure, such as shoes and neckties, are despised because they restrict freedom of movement, eroding independence.

Similarly, anything that threatens to bind them, such as a long-term agreement, is feared and avoided. The same stands true for marriage but in certain cases where the detached type feels no such risk of coercion from the partner, they get involved in such a union. It is seen in case of Abby's marriage where she seeks protection from her husband and feels that he fits in well with her peculiarities. Still her detached nature somehow plays in their relationship as well; "Frequently there is an onset of panic before the consummation of the marriage" (Horney, *Our Inner Conflicts* 78). Because of this need for independence, the detached type views even time as a constraint. "Time in its exorableness is, for the most part, felt as coercion; the habit of being just five minutes late on the job may be resorted to, in order to, maintain an illusion of freedom. Timetables constitute a threat" (78). There is a clear passage in Oates' *Zombie* about protagonist Quentin P viewing time as a constraint, establishing his need for complete independence:

> Is Time outside me, I started wondering in high school. When things began to go fast. Or is Time inside me. If OUTSIDE you must keep pace with fucking clocks and calendars. No slacking off. If INSIDE you do what you want. Whatever. You create your own time. Like breaking the hands off a clock once so it's just the clock face there looking at you. (Oates 6)

Not having to keep up with time and the absolute freedom of doing 'whatever' makes Q_P break the clock's hands, thus freeing himself from the constraint of time and establishing his need for complete independence.

A detached type tends to get rebellious at the very prospect of other people expecting stuff out of him even if the expectation is merely an assumption. Horney illustrates it with the example of a person purposefully missing Christmas presents while giving gifts at other times when it is not expected of him. Similarly, advice from other people, regardless of its nature, puts him in a resistance mindset because he sees the advice as a means for the other person to establish dominance. All this behavior reflects a desire for complete independence. Furthermore, because superiority and detachment are linked, there is a need for superiority in the detached type. Horney points out that either feeling "uniquely significant" or "particularly strong and resourceful" is the precondition to isolation (Horney 79). His sense of superiority can be seen in a variety of behavioral patterns. The individual avoids all forms of competition because he regards himself as superior to all others. He believes that without him making a move or putting himself out there, his hidden greatness must be recognized. Apart from abhorring competitive struggle, the detached type takes pride in his uniqueness, which adds to his sense of superiority. In the words of Horney, "He feels himself akin to a rare oriental rug, unique in its pattern and combination of colours, forever unalterable" (81). He is afraid of losing his uniqueness due to the adulteration of interacting with others on a deeper level, and thus isolation promises to preserve his uniqueness, which he values and takes pride in.

When observing the inner emotional life of the detached type, there is more variation found than in the other two types. Majorly there is a tendency to suppress all feelings. It is seen that the suppression of feeling is not only around the area of human relationships but goes beyond it and takes over other areas like books, animals, nature, art, food, and so on. In an unpublished novel of Maria Armi, the main character says, "Souls seem to me temples that had to be guarded, and inside them there were always strange ceremonies going on, known only to their priests, their custodians" (Horney 82). Quentin P expresses a similar desire to preserve his soul and expresses his dislike for people staring into his soul. "Not that Junie knows me. Not that anybody in the Universe knows me. But if one of them, did it would be Junie staring into Q_P_'s soul" (Oates, *Zombie* 136). There is another instance of him being watchful of people getting access to his soul, "In that way, the fuckers slide into your soul" (8).

The suppression of feelings is not only limited to areas of human relationships but goes beyond it; "Artists of the detached type, who have demonstrated in their creative periods that they can not only feel deeply but also give expression to it, have often gone through periods, usually in adolescence, of either complete emotional numbness or of vigorous denial of all feeling" (Horney, *Our Inner Conflicts* 83). These feelings are suppressed during a traumatic life event, and when they isolate themselves, these feelings emerge in the form of creative expression; "It is as if every situation had to be carefully tested from the standpoint of a possible loss of freedom before feeling could be allowed full play" (Horney 84). Since emotions are kept under check, the emphasis is placed upon reasoning, and it becomes a sure cure of all things. Close and long-term relationships jeopardize his detachment, causing him to barely survive and gravitate toward short-term relationships where he can appear and vanish, as seen in Q_P wanting a Zombie; "Then wholly imaginary relationships may be substituted for real ones" (Horney 86). The entire concept of creating a "Zombie" can be explained by a desire to avoid genuine closeness. Having a slave who is brain-dead can ensure that kind of freedom and he can live his life

freely without having to tend to his emotional needs as he isn't a thinking-breathing human but a brain-dead slave.

Because of the need to stay private, a detached person resents analysis as it is considered the biggest intrusion upon his privacy. Q_P says he wished his analysts were women and not men as men are more alert and watchful; "If one of these was a woman, I would do better, I feel. They believe you, they aren't always watching you" (Oates 4). Q_P doesn't want to give away any private information and thus resents the watchful eyes of men analysts. The detached type defends their detachment more vehemently than any other neurotic type, whether it is against the analysis or against other people, "But the fight in this case seems more tenacious, almost a life and death struggle for which all available resources must be mobilized" (Horney, *Our Inner Conflicts* 87). If the analyst in the analysis mentions or tries to enquire about the relations of the patient to others, he resents it. "Does the analyst want to make the patient gregarious?" this is the question on the mind of the detached type if the analyst wants to probe into his relations with others. If a suggestion is made to join any group or any movement the response that arises in him is very hostile as he doesn't want to be bound; "Not only are they willing to defend their detachment by every means, but they find no sacrifice too great in its behalf" (Horney 88).

Detachment has some advantages, which is why it is so vigorously defended. It strengthens the person's integrity because remaining aloof requires a certain level of integrity. It restores the calm and serenity that would otherwise be consumed by inner conflicts. Furthermore, being alone allows for original thinking and ideas, which promotes greater creativity. As seen in Q_P, where he comes up with the idea of creating a Zombie, his aloofness can be bestowed with destructive creativity. Detachment like any other types has disadvantages too. Detachment is defended not only for the benefits it provides, but also because the fears a detached person experiences when his detachment is threatened make him want to defend it with greater vigour. Fear of losing one's uniqueness, fear of being exploited by aggressive individuals, and fear of going insane as

a result of confronting one's conflicts. They are afraid of being split wide open, and Horney compares him to a tree split open by lightning, as described by one of the patients' dream symbolisms.

When compared to the other two types, the operation of inner conflicts is more clearly visible in this type. There is a leaning towards the two opposing tendencies of compliance and aggression. These two operate in different phases of life but eventually the person resorts to detachment. The values in the other two types are more clearly defined, whereas the values in this type are contradictory; "... he may at some time in analysis expresses an extreme appreciation for human goodness, sympathy, generosity, self-effacing sacrifice, and at other time swing to a complete jungle philosophy of complete callous self-interest" (Horney, *Our Inner Conflicts* 94). It perplexes the analyst as to what the value system of this type is. This type is more complex, and seemingly more conflicted as compared to the other two types. This kind of person thinks that confrontations may be avoided by keeping the proper distance and being detached. As a result, he doesn't have to worry about the conflicts as long as he keeps a safe distance from the human relationships in which they operate ; "The all-important function of neurotic detachment, then is to keep major conflicts out of operation. It is the most radical and most effective of the defenses erected against them" (Horney 95).

Horney believes that neurotic detachment is the most effective of the neurotic's solutions to artificial harmony. As a result, it is the most potent and effective of the three types of methods for resolving inner conflicts; "What he leaves out and for a long time refuses to recognize is that he cannot possibly grow and develop in a vacuum" (Horney 95). Besides, detachment gives way to serious health issues as well on both physical and mental levels. "Recent research has shown that health-wise feeling lonely is equivalent to smoking fifteen cigarettes a day, having high blood pressure or being overweight and is very likely to lead to premature death" (Clarke). The neurotic is tormented by conflicts and conflicting forces that persist in operating in the detached type, just like every other

type, devouring inner peace and harmony, and ultimately preventing the attainment of true freedom and inner peace.

Conclusion

The aggressive personality type, as described by Karen Horney, is characterized by a drive for power, prestige, and recognition, coupled with an exploitative attitude toward others. Joyce Carol Oates's Corky Corcoran in *What I Lived For* exemplifies this personality through his obsessive need for affirmation in social spaces such as UCAC and Bobby Ray's, where he thrives on being recognized, greeted, and admired. His sense of self-worth is tied not to his inner stability but to the constant feedback of others, a hallmark of the aggressive type whose centre of gravity lies outside the self. Similarly, Quentin P. in *Zombie* embodies aggression in its most pathological form, asserting control not through charisma or social influence but through physical domination and the dehumanization of his victims. Both characters demonstrate that aggression functions as a neurotic solution to insecurity, though it manifests in radically different social contexts.

Horney notes that the aggressive type evaluates every relationship in terms of utility, a tendency sharply visible in both Corky and Q.P. Corky exploits business associates, friends, and even his employees, cloaking his manipulations in generosity or charm, while Q.P. extracts money, favors, and ultimately life itself from those closest to him. The difference lies in the scope of their ambition: Corky seeks prestige, respect, and social power, while Q.P. seeks absolute control over helpless victims. Yet both reveal the same underlying neurotic drive to dominate others as a safeguard against feelings of weakness or dependence. Their exploitation, whether subtle or violent, reflects the jungle philosophy Horney describes, where survival depends on outwitting and overpowering others.

A further dimension of the aggressive type is its rejection of sentimentality and emotional vulnerability, which both Corky and Q.P. display. Corky consistently

suppresses affection toward Charlotte, responding with evasive “sure, O.K.” when pressed about love, and redirecting feelings into logic, pride, or resentment. Q.P., on the other hand, treats his family with chilling indifference, casually contemplating the murder of his grandmother, whom he outwardly treats with politeness. In both cases, displays of emotion are perceived as weakness, threatening the fragile structure of control they have built around themselves. Their hostility toward feelings reveals the defensive core of the aggressive type: an avoidance of vulnerability that keeps inner conflicts at bay, even while deepening estrangement from others.

The compliant personality type, as outlined by Karen Horney, is ultimately shaped by an overwhelming urge to seek safety in a hostile world rather than genuine love or affection. This deep-rooted need compels such individuals to adopt behaviors of self-sacrifice, over-consideration, and submission, all of which function as survival mechanisms rather than authentic expressions of care. Anellia, in *I’ll Take You There* exemplifies this tendency through her constant efforts to win approval from her Kappa sisters and, most significantly, the housemother Mrs. Thayer, even at the cost of her dignity. Her eagerness to shoulder blame and suppress her own needs reveals the neurotic pattern Horney describes, where compliance masks insecurity and a desperate search for safety.

Similarly, Voilet in *My Life as a Rat* demonstrates how this compliance often manifests in distorted self-blame. By reinterpreting her abuse as “punishment,” she internalizes the guilt that rightly belongs to her abuser, aligning with Horney’s observation that compliant types shoulder blame automatically to minimize conflict. This false attribution not only reinforces her sense of helplessness but also reflects the inhibition against assertiveness that governs the compliant type’s psyche. Like Anellia, Voilet convinces herself that the intentions of threatening figures such as Mr. Sandman are benign, a rationalization driven not by genuine belief but by the need to maintain a sense of security in an unsafe environment.

Abby in *Pursuit* extends this pattern into the realm of romantic relationships, where Horney's insights into the overvaluation of love become particularly relevant. Abby's dependence on Willem to shield her from external threats illustrates the compliant type's reliance on a stronger figure to compensate for her feelings of weakness and helplessness. Willem's willingness to love her precisely in her most vulnerable state reflects how, in relationships, compliant types may transform weakness into a perceived strength. Yet Abby's lingering sense of unworthiness shows the fragility of this security, as inner conflicts persist despite external validation. This captures Horney's warning that compliance, though it may temporarily lessen suffering, cannot resolve neurosis or foster true growth.

Taken together, Anellia, Voilet, and Abby embody Horney's central argument: that the compliant type lives in service of others' perceived expectations while sacrificing authenticity, self-assertion, and autonomy. Their behaviors—whether Anellia's submission to sorority authority, Voilet's acceptance of blame, or Abby's overvaluation of protective love—demonstrate how compliance is not genuine altruism but a compulsive strategy to secure safety. As long as their actions are governed by fear and the need for approval, these characters remain trapped in neurotic cycles that prevent the fulfillment of their true selves.

The detached personality type, as conceptualized by Karen Horney, represents the most radical solution to the problem of human relationships, as it seeks not to compromise between compliance and aggression but to eliminate intimacy altogether. Both Quentin P. in *Zombie* and Abby in *Pursuit* embody this neurotic tendency, though in markedly different ways. For Quentin, detachment manifests as a complete repudiation of human contact—his avoidance of eye contact, his refusal of conversation, and ultimately his horrifying project of creating a brain-dead "Zombie" that will never threaten him with emotional demands. Abby, on the other hand, presents a more ambivalent detachment: while she craves protection in her marriage, her recurring anxiety in public spaces and

her instinct to withdraw into privacy show how deeply she fears genuine emotional involvement. In both characters, detachment is not a path to self-knowledge, as with healthy solitude, but a defence against the intolerable strain of human connection.

Horney emphasizes that estrangement extends not only to others but also to the self, producing a numbness to emotional experience and an "onlooker attitude." Quentin exemplifies this estrangement through his objectifying gaze upon his own life, his obsession with symbols of control like the caretaker role, and his attempt to suppress past traumas by reducing others to mute extensions of himself. Abby demonstrates a quieter but equally telling estrangement: though she maintains cordial relations with coworkers, her panic when others intrude upon her inner world reveals her fear of self-exposure and her compulsive defence of privacy. Both illustrate Horney's insight that neurotic detachment is a strategy for survival, but one that ultimately prevents authentic self-discovery or emotional growth.

The compulsive needs of the detached type: self-sufficiency, privacy, and independence are visible in both characters. Quentin embraces menial work, restricts his ambitions, and glorifies his caretaker role to ensure no one can demand too much of him. His destructive creativity, embodied in his phallic symbols of pen and ice pick, shows how detachment can give rise to a distorted sense of superiority and uniqueness. Abby too values self-sufficiency, evident in her reluctance to rely fully on others despite her marriage, and in her preference for superficial over intimate connections. These compulsions, though designed to shield them from coercion and vulnerability, ultimately bind them to lives of isolation and anxiety.

Ultimately, Q.P. and Abby demonstrate the paradox at the heart of the detached type: the very defences erected to preserve freedom and peace instead perpetuate fear, conflict, and loneliness. Quentin's radical detachment drives him into destructive isolation, severing any possibility of real human intimacy and leaving only perverse fantasies of control. Abby's milder withdrawal spares her from Quentin's extremes, yet

her compulsive avoidance of intrusion and intimacy prevents her from attaining genuine fulfilment. In both cases, detachment offers a temporary refuge from inner conflict but at the cost of growth, connection, and true freedom. As Horney concludes, the neurotic may defend detachment as if life depended on it, but in doing so, he remains trapped in a vacuum where neither love nor self-realization can flourish.

A close examination of the protagonists in Joyce Carol Oates's selected novels reveals distinct patterns that align with Karen Horney's typology of neurotic personalities: compliant, aggressive, and detached. Some characters exhibit a dominant alignment with a single personality type, while others display traits that straddle two types, showing a more complex psychological structure. Anellia, the unnamed narrator in *I'll Take You There*, and Violet Rue Kerrigan in *My Life as a Rat* both predominantly exhibit compliant personalities, marked by a persistent need for affection, approval, and belonging. Their behavior is largely governed by a tendency to move toward others in search of security, indicating a strong dependence on external validation. In contrast, Corky Corcoran in *What I Lived For* exemplifies the aggressive personality type, driven by the need for power, control, and admiration. His interactions are marked by hostility, competition, and a disregard for emotional vulnerability—hallmarks of Horney's "moving against people" trend. Meanwhile, two protagonists stand out for embodying dual typologies. Abby Hayman in *Pursuit* oscillates between the compliant and detached types, showing signs of deep emotional neediness alongside tendencies to withdraw and isolate herself from close relationships. Similarly, Quentin P. in *Zombie* demonstrates both aggressive and detached traits. His violent need for domination and control aligns with the aggressive type, while his emotional withdrawal and lack of empathy reflect a detached stance. Notably, detachment, in both characters, functions as a defence mechanism to mask vulnerability and maintain psychic distance from overwhelming emotional turmoil. This typological analysis also reveals a gender-based trend in Oates's fiction: female protagonists tend to gravitate toward compliance, while male protagonists are more often aligned with aggression. This observation may reflect larger societal

constructs in which women are conditioned toward submission and relational dependence, whereas men are often shaped by cultural ideals of dominance, power, and emotional repression. A further critical observation concerns the incompatibility of compliant and aggressive types within a single character. As Horney's theory asserts, these two trends are inherently contradictory in both their motivations and their inhibitions—one seeks love and approval, while the other rejects emotional connection in favor of power. Therefore, it is unsurprising that the more viable pairings in Oates's characters are between compliance and detachment (Abby) or aggression and detachment (Quentin), where the opposing tendencies are more defensive in nature and do not demand the same kind of emotional engagement.

A comparative study of the three personality types underscores both their similarities and their unique coping mechanisms. As Coolidge, Segal, and Benight assert, "Horney's theory also offers a holistic framework for the understanding of personality" (372–373), revealing how each type, though compulsive, extreme, indiscriminate, and unrealistic (O'Connell 89), embodies a distinct strategy for managing inner conflict. The aggressive type appears the least inhibited, particularly in a competitive society that rewards assertiveness while discouraging emotional expression. The compliant type, though often idealized for its alignment with traditional Christian values of kindness and morality, can suffer from excessive dependence and self-effacement. In contrast, the detached type seems to possess the most psychologically sustainable strategy, retreating from emotional entanglement to maintain internal stability, albeit at the cost of meaningful connection. Thus, Oates's protagonists, through their varied manifestations of Horney's neurotic personality types, serve as compelling case studies for understanding how childhood anxieties and internalized social roles shape adult behavior, neurotic coping, and interpersonal functioning.

Chapter 5

Basic Anxiety and Dysfunctional Childhood

It is, as is widely acknowledged in both literary and psychological discourses, an axiom of psychoanalysis that childhood constitutes one of its most pivotal and indispensable abstractions, indeed forming the very nucleus of its theoretical edifice. Psychoanalytic thought rests upon the premise that the experiences of early life whether tenderly nurturing or profoundly unsettling exert an indelible influence upon the trajectory of human personality, shaping the contours of subjectivity in ways that are at once subtle and profound. To put it more accessibly, one might assert that man is, in essence, the cumulative product of his past life. Margaret Drabble incisively remarks:

> Lord knows what incommunicable small terrors infants go through, unknown to all. We disregard them, we say they forget, because they have not the words to make us remember. . . By the time they learn to speak they have forgotten the details of their complaints, and so we never know. They forget so quickly we say, because we cannot contemplate the fact that they never forget (qtd. in Ratcliffe 46–47).

It is textually and contextually incontrovertible that psychoanalytic theory attains neither coherence nor depth in the absence of rigorous study of childhood, accompanied by a nuanced understanding of the hierarchies and stages inherent in child development. Psychoanalytical psychology and literature are inextricably entwined with the figure of the child, which functions as a linchpin for the very ethos of psychoanalytic inquiry. At its core, psychoanalysis is concerned with the study of human behavior, encompassing the manifold interplay of subjective impulses, objective constraints, and the myriad forces that collectively shape the moral, emotional, and cognitive architecture of the individual. As Blanchot elucidates, “It is tied to a philosophy that postulates that the

subject matter of psychology is the continuous interaction between any behaving organism and physical and social observable objects and events" (101).

Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic framework established the foundation for understanding the complex relationship between childhood experiences and adult psychopathology. Freud posited that the adult patient's recollections and emotional disturbances have their genesis in early experiences embedded within the child's formative consciousness. Accordingly, psychological abnormalities in adulthood manifested as anxiety, neuroses, or other mental dissonances derive largely from the child's empirical encounters with a harsh or neglectful reality. Psychoanalytical research and observation of infants and children have long substantiated this view, revealing how the emotional matrix of early life leaves indelible marks on later development. Although the Freudian school pioneered this understanding, it subsequently evolved and diversified into several analytical traditions including the Kleinian, Lacanian, and other post-Freudian schools that sought to reinterpret or expand Freud's ideas concerning the origins and operations of anxiety and the psychic structure of the child.

During the early to mid-twentieth century, psychoanalysis intersected with anthropology, further enriching the study of childhood and personality formation. Anthropological paradigms introduced cultural and social variables into the understanding of psychological development, thereby complementing the psychoanalytic emphasis on the unconscious. Notably, the emergence of attachment theory and mentalization theory represented a convergence of psychoanalytic and anthropological insights, emphasizing the significance of early emotional bonds and intersubjective understanding in shaping human personality. Within this intellectual continuum, Karen Horney's Horneyian theory emerges as a vital reformulation of the psychoanalytic tradition; one that foregrounds the social and interpersonal dimensions of childhood in the genesis of adult behavior and neurosis. Before situating Horney's notion of basic anxiety within this context, it is instructive to trace briefly the contributions of earlier

theorists such as Freud, Klein, and Lacan, whose views on anxiety and development laid the groundwork for her conceptual framework.

Freud regarded anxiety as a phenomenon central to the constitution and treatment of mental illness, identifying it as a crucial affective experience rather than a mere by-product of psychic disturbance. He conceptualized anxiety as an emotional state arising from both internal and external stimuli, governed by the autonomic nervous system. Freud distinguished anxiety from emotions such as sadness or pain, arguing that anxiety possesses a distinct cognitive quality rooted in consciousness. As he observed, "Anxiety, then, is in the first place something felt. We call it an affective state, although we are equally ignorant of what an affect is" (trans. Bunker 69). For Freud, anxiety was not an unconscious process but an acute affective response that connected bodily sensations with psychic awareness. He classified anxiety into three primary categories: real anxiety, neurotic anxiety, and moral anxiety. Real anxiety arises from genuine external threats such as the fear of physical harm and often manifests during childhood dependency, when the infant, powerless and reliant on caregivers, first experiences the traumatic state of helplessness. Neurotic anxiety emerges from internal conflict between the Id and the Ego, characterized by irrational fear and apprehension, often manifesting as phobia or panic. Moral anxiety, in turn, arises from the Superego's demands, when guilt and moral inhibition generate emotional distress.

Building upon Freud, Jacques Lacan reconceptualized anxiety within a linguistic and structuralist framework. For Lacan, the unconscious is "structured like a language," a formulation that contrasts with Freud's notion of the unconscious as chaotic. Borrowing from Saussure, Lacan proposed that meaning in both language and the unconscious is determined by difference rather than substance (Chandra and Samy 105). His theory of the mirror stage occurring between six and eighteen months illustrates how the child's identity is formed through recognition of the self in relation to the Other. In this process, anxiety arises from the disparity between the subject's imagined unity and the fragmented

reality of the self. Lacan further developed the triadic model of the Imaginary, Symbolic, and Real Orders. The Imaginary relates to self-image and identification; the Symbolic introduces social order and language, and the Real denotes that which resists symbolization and remains unattainable. Anxiety, for Lacan, is born in the crevice between desire and its object—when what is longed for remains inaccessible or unsatisfied. He famously asserts that "man's desire is the Other's desire," meaning that the human subject fundamentally seeks recognition from the Other (Waugh 285). Thus, for Lacan, anxiety is not merely fear but the psychic response to a perceived void in the fulfillment of desire; an existential condition that mirrors the child's earliest anxieties of separation and lack.

Melanie Klein, another pivotal post-Freudian thinker, extended the analysis of childhood by focusing on the infant's early relational world. Her object relations theory reoriented psychoanalysis from instinctual drives toward interpersonal experiences. Rejecting Freud's emphasis on the sexual pleasure principle, Klein maintained that an infant's emotional life is structured around internalized relations with significant others or "objects" which shape future attachments and emotional development. She argued that infants are born with innate unconscious fantasies that color their perceptions of the world. Klein's distinction between the "good breast" and the "bad breast" encapsulates the infant's earliest attempts to organize experience into categories of safety and threat. These early psychic divisions become templates for the child's later notions of love, hatred, trust, and anxiety. Her insights underscored the formative influence of early nurturing or its absence on the subsequent psychological health of the individual, thereby anticipating the later humanistic emphasis on security and attachment.

Following Freud, Lacan, and Klein, neo-psychoanalytic theorists such as Alfred Adler and Karen Horney shifted focus from instinctual drives toward social and interpersonal determinants of neurosis. Adler's theory of inferiority posited that "people are forever struggling to overcome their feelings of inferiority" (Morgan, King, Weisz,

and Schopler 585), a view that framed human motivation in terms of striving for significance and belonging. Horney, however, introduced a more socially grounded and gender-conscious model. Her theory of basic anxiety centers on the child's feelings of helplessness, isolation, and insecurity in a hostile environment. For Horney, the root of neurosis lies not in instinctual repression but in "disturbed human relationships during childhood," particularly within the parent–child dynamic. When parental indifference, domination, inconsistency, or hostility replaces genuine affection and warmth, the child experiences what she calls the basic evil, which in turn generates basic anxiety.

Horney's theory further delineates the behavioral strategies through which individuals attempt to cope with this anxiety. She identifies three neurotic trends or modes of adjustment: moving toward others (compliance), moving against others (aggression), and moving away from others (detachment). The first involves submissiveness and a compulsive need for affection, as the child seeks safety in dependency. The second manifests as hostility and domination, with self-protection achieved through power over others; here, "self-protection is provided via one's power over others… feelings of weakness and vulnerability are neither explored nor resolved" (Morgan, King, Weisz, and Schopler 588). The third trend reflects withdrawal and emotional isolation, wherein the individual seeks self-sufficiency by renouncing relationships altogether. Although these coping mechanisms may provide temporary relief, they ultimately fail to resolve the underlying insecurity and often lead to neurotic conflict.

Thus, Horney's contribution to psychoanalysis lies in her radical reorientation of anxiety from a biologically determined affect to a socially constructed condition rooted in dysfunctional childhood experiences. In her view, the failure of parental empathy and consistency deprives the child of a secure psychological foundation, forcing the developing self to construct defensive strategies against a perceived hostile world. Consequently, basic anxiety emerges as both a symptom and a condition; a psychic state

that defines the individual's lifelong efforts to negotiate safety, belonging, and autonomy. Horney's humanistic reformulation of psychoanalysis, while indebted to Freud and his successors, transcends their frameworks by situating neurosis within the ethical and relational dimensions of human existence.

Karen Horney in her book *Our Inner Conflicts* talks about adverse experiences a child undergoes which make him develop basic anxiety, which she explains as "the feeling a child has of being isolated and helpless in a potentially hostile world" (Horney 41). Speaking of these adverse experiences, Horney says:

> A wide range of adverse factors in the environment can produce this insecurity: direct or indirect domination, indifference, erratic behavior, lack of respect for child's individual needs, lack of real guidance, disparaging attitude, too much admiration or absence of it, lack of reliable warmth, having to take side in parental disagreements, too much or too little responsibility, over-protection, isolation from other children, injustice, discrimination, unkept promises, hostile atmosphere, and so on and so on. (41)

Prior to examining the manifestation of these elements within the fictional protagonists under study, it is indispensable to grasp the intricate psychological mechanisms through which these parental and environmental factors operate. Direct domination involves the overt exertion of parental authority and control, whereby a child's autonomy and individuality are suppressed under rigid expectations. Indirect domination, by contrast, is exercised through subtle manipulation and emotional coercion, compelling the child into compliance without overt force. Both mechanisms obstruct the development of self-determination and instill profound dependency and apprehension. Similarly, parental indifference exacts severe emotional consequences, engendering feelings of abandonment, insignificance, and mistrust that often persist as psychic residues well into adulthood. The child subjected to erratic parental behavior—marked by inconsistency in discipline, vacillating moods, and unpredictable expectations—is left ensnared in a state

of existential confusion, their inner world destabilized by the absence of coherence and reliability.

Moreover, when a child's existential validation becomes contingent upon meeting parental ambitions or serving as an extension of the parents' vanity, individuality and authenticity are thwarted. Horney pertinently asserts:

> Particularly important, a child may be lead to feel that his right to existence lies solely in his living up to the parent's expectations-measuring up to their standards or ambitions for him, enhancing their prestige, giving them blind devotion; in other words, he may be prevented from realizing that he is an individual with his own rights and his own responsibilities. (Horney, *Self-Analysis* 41)

A parental failure to acknowledge and respect the child's unique emotional and psychological constitution impedes the cultivation of autonomy and self-esteem. Likewise, the absence of genuine guidance leaves the child existentially disoriented, suspended in a chaotic psychological milieu devoid of direction and assurance. Parental disparagement compounds this affliction, eroding self-worth through humiliation and persistent criticism. Conversely, both the excess and deficiency of admiration prove equally deleterious: unrestrained adulation fosters narcissistic inflation and fragility in the face of failure, while the absence of appreciation engenders profound inadequacy and internalized shame. Familial discord, particularly when the child is compelled to assume sides in parental conflict, precipitates acute emotional dissonance, as affection becomes interwoven with guilt and anxiety. The imposition of disproportionate responsibility whether excessive or insufficient further distorts psychological growth: excessive responsibility burdens the child with premature maturity, while deprivation of responsibility inhibits the development of agency and decision-making. Overprotection, though ostensibly benevolent, functions as a form of psychological imprisonment that inhibits resilience and independence. Similarly, isolation from peers obstructs the natural

evolution of social competence and empathy, leading to alienation and self-consciousness.

The presence of injustice and discrimination within the familial environment further corrodes the child's moral and emotional equilibrium. Perceived inequity fosters resentment, cynicism, and a pervasive distrust of authority. As Horney observes, "as a consequence of such an environment the child doesn't develop a proper self-respect. He becomes insecure, apprehensive, isolated and resentful" (*Self-Analysis* 41). Moreover, unfulfilled parental promises constitute a form of emotional betrayal that fractures the foundation of trust and reliability essential to psychological security. Such experiences of disillusionment reverberate throughout later life, manifesting in relational detachment and existential despair. Collectively, these adverse experiences constitute the psychological substratum of basic anxiety, a pervasive sense of vulnerability and alienation that distorts the individual's orientation toward self and world. The child, deprived of consistent affection, justice, and affirmation, internalizes an image of the world as fundamentally hostile and untrustworthy. This existential insecurity, deeply embedded within the psyche, becomes the nucleus of neurosis, shaping the individual's emotional conflicts, self-perceptions, and interpersonal dynamics across the continuum of life.

In the novel Pursuit, the protagonist Abby as a child had the same recurring nightmare night after night, in which she wandered through a field ridden with human skulls and bones. Now an adult, Abby thinks she has outgrown her demons until the evening before her wedding, the terrible dream returns and forces her to confront the dark secrets from her past she has kept from her new husband, Willem. The following day, less than 24 hours after exchanging vows, Abby steps into traffic. As his wife lies in her hospital bed, sleeping in fits and starts, Willem tries to determine whether this was an absentminded accident or a premeditated plunge, and he quickly discovers a mysterious set of clues about what his wife might be hiding. Why, for example, is there a rash-like red mark circling her wrist? What does she dream about that causes her to wake from the

sound of her screams? Slowly, Abby begins to open up to her husband, revealing to him what she has never shared with anyone before, the story of a terrified mother; a jealous, drug-addled father; and a daughter's terrifying captivity.

This research undertakes a critical study of dysfunction in her childhood and dissects the basic evil she experienced in the troubled household of her childhood home. Abby's husband Willem is concerned about Abby's well-being and curious to unravel the mysteries of her past since her accident. He unfolds the unexpected. Abby, while narrating her experiences to her husband, takes a journey into her past and starts narrating her childhood events. She reminisces about a day in her early childhood when she was a mere baby, and her father returned home unexpectedly and started interrogating her about her mother's friends. Here is the central point on which Horney's thought works; she believes that past experiences acquired have a direct and serious bearing on the later life of a child that he cannot escape from. An anxious child develops anxiety throughout his life. That is why her belief finds similitude with the thought that, "an anxious disorder involves a crippling and lingering process that disrupts the normal course of life" (Moss 2). The following excerpt highlights the state of confusion experienced by the child upon being interrogated by the father on an incomprehensible subject matter:

> Though, strangely, Daddy has returned home so early from work. While Mommy is still at work. In the kind -Daddy voice, he says, "Does Mommy has a friend who visits her when Daddy is away?" The child sucks at her fingers not knowing what to say, because Mommy has more than one friend. To say that Mommy has one friend is not right. The child sucks at her fingers, not knowing what to say, because Mommy's friends are (mostly) women who come often to the house, but Daddy knows these women, so it is confusing what Daddy is asking her, if Daddy already knows the answer. (Oates, *Pursuit* 81)

The child sucking at her finger while being interrogated by the father symbolizes the state of confusion the child is in. She is not only perplexed by the subject matter of

interrogation but also by her father's motive behind the inquiry. The child's confusion is amplified by the fact that the father already knows the answer to his question, making her wonder why he is asking her in the first place. This situation creates a sense of uncertainty and unease for the child, as she struggles to navigate the complex dynamics of her parents' relationships with these women. In an attempt to elicit the answers from the child, the father ends up involving the child in his own dispute which suggests his ignorance and irresponsibility as a parental figure.

The physical pressure by the father on the young child adds a layer of distress and confusion to her already challenging situation. This physical imposition not only violates her boundaries but also exacerbates the mental dilemma she is trying to process. The child finds herself caught between her father's conflicting actions and struggles to make sense of the mixed messages she is receiving. Another excerpt describes the father's physical pressure imposed on the young child, besides creating a mental dilemma for the child which she has difficulty processing:

> Not sure what Daddy wants her to say. His fingers gripping her shoulders, not (yet shaking her), but she has learned to steel herself for the sudden shake, not (always) an angry shake, could be just impatience, exasperation. Annoying to an adult when a child who is getting too old for such behavior sucks at her fingers. Infact, Daddy slaps her fingers from her mouth, not a hard slap, not a slap to hurt, just a chiding Daddy slap of the kind Mommy makes too sometimes, a love slap. (Oates 82)

In the preceding excerpt, it is seen that the child says she has learned "to steel herself" implying that; she may have been subjugated to such atrocious behavior in the past by the father, and making herself steady is in anticipation of such an act. It becomes clear, that the father isn't shaking her currently to elicit answers; he may do so in the future, and the child has reacted to such shaking by preparing herself. This suggests that the child's response to her father's behavior is a defense mechanism against potential future harm,

demonstrating how basic anxiety can manifest in children. Though the child claims that the shaking is not hostile, it is unclear if it is, and the child defends her father's behavior as mere impatience or annoyance, not brutality. It is the parent's responsibility to take accountability for the moods and behavior of children but not vice versa. Here the child is forced to demonstrate the maturity expected of adults. The same is true for the mother, and it is seen that neither parent is gentle with the child, but because the young girl desires only affection, she interprets both parents' behavior as nothing but love, dubbing it a "love slap."

The father makes the child confused with repetitive questioning of a subject matter that is foreign to a young child and bombards her with physical cues to admit to the urgency of a response from her side. The child gives in, "before the Daddy smile fades entirely, the child murmurs "Uh-huh." Shakes her head yes" (Oates 82). Hence, the pressure from the father to answer makes the child give a response that she isn't certain about leading to problems in her parent's relationship which later become the source of her lifelong guilt. In Abby's words, "And so I know-it was my fault. What happened to my mother, my fault" (85). This hints at feelings of guilt for a crime she never committed. Horney says having to side with one of the parents in parental disagreement is a form of basic evil that propagates basic anxiety and hence neurosis. After answering the father on an unknown subject matter, the child expects an appraisal. Oates, while describing the eagerness of the child for an appraisal, says, "The child is released by Daddy's fingers. The child is eager to know whether Daddy is happy with her now" (82). This portrays how the child felt trapped and at the same time a need to make father happy by her response and after she answered she has a desire to know if this is what was expected from her and if the father is happy with her now. The father's moving around, acting aggressively, and trying to locate evidence of the mother's betrayal startles the child, yet she tries to stay composed hoping for the father to take notice of her and give her appraisal. The concept of moving towards others also finds its essential empirical groundings in the story. This moving towards others is an aptitude of seeking self-

security from the elders in being so submissive and docile. However, Horney believes that it, "may be a kind of security, but a costly kind that involves total repression of basic hostility and leaves the individual feeling depleted, exploited, and unhappy" (Morgan, King, Weisz, and Schopler 588). Apparently and clandestinely, one can locate this search for self-value and self-esteem in the following references; "The child tries not to be frightened. The child is shy in Daddy's presence. Yet she wants Daddy's eyes to move onto her. She hopes to be pretty enough" (Oates 83). Such a longing of the child discourses symbolically on Horney's basic anxiety with special reference to too little admiration. This longing is the result of the hostile attitude of the child's father who does not bother to praise and encourage her for what she possesses specially. Similarly, at the same time, she lacks the warmth of the affection of her father, which is one of the constituents responsible for fostering basic anxiety.

As the story progresses, it becomes clearer that the parents were irresponsibly pulling her into their disagreement and coercing her to take sides. It is seen that the mother Nicola threatens her husband and the father of the child to charge him with her daughter's sexual molestation to make her case strong in the disagreement. The father fears that she can successfully coerce the daughter as Nicola has custody. In the words of the father, "Meer-me is an impressionable little girl. If Nicola insists that Daddy touched her, giving her a bath (for instance), dressing her, hugging her, eventually Nicola will triumph, since Nicola has custody of Meer-me five days out of seven." (Oates, *Pursuit* 89). He thinks that if he gets more custody time, "he can convince the daughter to defend him. Accuse Mommy of lying. Of coaxing Meer-me to say Daddy touched me here. And here. . ." (89). There are further instances that establish both parents' attitudes to be negligent towards the child. The father says that he hopes that the mother of their daughter Nicola spends more time with the child and is not more invested in her job and other unnecessary affairs. The father states, "The wife's claim will be the job (again). After she has promised to be a better mother. Meaning, more loving to our (neglected) daughter. Meaning, home at least half the time" (98). The preceding quote speaks of the

father's disapproval of the mother's ways. The word "neglected" appears to clue here that the father admits inwardly that he is aware of their daughter's neglect. The child lives with the mother as she has custody of the child since the disagreement with the father and she fails to fulfil her duties towards the child. The father who is a war veteran was absent from the child's life for a greater part and when he returns home to live with them, they develop a disagreement which gives the custody to mother limiting the child's exposure to the father to a limited hours a week. The father himself is a war survivor and seemingly recovering from a P.T.S.D. There is a reference to him undergoing group therapy with other soldiers where they are taught, "You are not in a combat zone. You are no longer a soldier. You are a civilian, you are at peace. Nobody is trying to kill you. You are not trying to kill anyone. You are not in uniform. You are back home" (Oates 96-97). It suggests how a father's mental health is fragile from his war experiences, and he is a recovering PTSD patient.

Not only the father but the mother has a mental health condition too. Referring to the mother's family history of bipolar disorder, the father says:

> She has been trying to break a habit of drinking too much, taking more medication than she is prescribed, losing her temper with Meer-me. Bipolar disorder in her family. From what he'd heard, at least two relatives of hers, on her mother's side, have committed suicide. Though he is the wounded vet, he will not play that card. For he is healthier than Nicola, essentially. Mentally, physically. Spiritually. (Oates 103)

He admits that he is troubled but also unravels before the reader how it is the child's mother Nicola who is more unfit for being a parent. He admits how Nicola never wanted a child, and it was he who wanted kids. The father says he had to sit down with Nicola and convince her, and helps her, "through her fear of pregnancy, fear of her (sexual) body being deformed, fear of the agony of childbirth" (100). The mother Nicola had deep-seated anxieties about the physical and emotional toll pregnancy would take on her. It

took considerable effort from the father to alleviate these concerns and provide the necessary support for her to overcome her fears. This lack of preparation and mistreatment of the child Miriam may have stemmed from Nicola's unresolved fears and anxieties surrounding pregnancy and childbirth. It is possible that these fears affected her ability to fully embrace motherhood and provide the necessary care and support for her child. It turns out that it is not only some general fears but deep-rooted hatred at the prospect of bearing a child. Nicola while describing her hatred for the sight of a pregnant female body says, "The swell of the (female) belly. Can hardly walk, waddle. Nicola confessed how, as a girl, she'd looked quickly away from the sight of a pregnant woman, couldn't bear to see'' (Oates 100). The preceding quote speaks of her sense of disgust with the sight of a pregnant woman. This deep-rooted hatred and disgust towards pregnant women may have further intensified her fears and negatively impacted her ability to connect with her own child. Despite his wife's strong aversion to pregnancy, her husband coerced her to do it. "Impulsively he'd said he wished he could have the baby instead of her" (100) speaks for husband's desire to be a father so bad that he convinced a woman who hated the very idea of pregnancy to get pregnant. These dynamics may have further strained Nicola's ability to connect with her child, as she may have felt a sense of resentment or pressure due to her husband's desires. The situation rather worsened after her pregnancy. "It was alien life inside her she said. Could feel it thinking, plotting. Alien life sucking at her own" (101). A woman calling her own baby an alien life suggests her inability to connect with the baby further and her feelings of detachment and fear towards motherhood. This disconnection may stem from the overwhelming changes and challenges she experienced during her pregnancy, causing her to view her baby as something foreign and unfamiliar.

The father feared a suicide-homicide combination as the mother was asking for an abortion and repeatedly suggested killing herself during the first weeks of pregnancy. There is a mention of how the pregnancy was an accident. It can be deduced both parents were not on the same page and were not a prepared couple for parenting. Though the wife

got normal later but still mistreated the child losing her temper with Meer me. Nicola's neurotic condition comes out in various instances since the child's conception. Though the father admits to being more stable than the mother but turns out both parents are equally hazardous to the child's well-being. The mental health conditions of both the parents and their unstable dynamic created an unhealthy environment for the development of the child which resulted in her neurotic inclinations.

Corky Corcoran, as a young child of eleven years of age, witnesses the ruthless murder of his father, which changes the course of his life forever. When the novel opens, the reader is introduced to a gruesome and chilling scene of the murder of Corky Corcoran's father by gunshots. It was Christmas Eve when Timothy Patrick Corcoran was decorating his home for Christmas and hanging an ornamental wreath to the front door when he was attacked with several gunshots that entered his lower back, shattering vertebrae ripped through his lungs making the big six feet-two inches tall, large muscular man fall heavily to the ground coughing blood and choking in blood. Young Corky, who was nearby merely three feet from the glass window and the only witness of this murder, was dumbfounded, "as if the sharp cracking volume, had blasted his head empty" (Oates, *What I Lived For* 6). Not only does he have to live the trauma of witnessing the murder of his father, but he also must suffer his loss his entire life and the further investigations from him worsen his situation. Corky, while describing the incident, says it was something, "What you know but can't comprehend. What tears through you changing you utterly" (2).

Horney labels a hostile home atmosphere as one of the responsible factors of basic evil and basic anxiety which conjointly generate space for childhood dysfunction and neurosis. In this hostile atmosphere, the child is in a state of threat when he undergoes interrogation about his father's murder on Christmas Eve. This constant interrogation traumatizes and torments the child. His father's killing has proved therefore a hostile milieu that has left deep impressions on his mental faculty. It is because very soon he must go through inquiries about the incident. It is hard for the child to

comprehend how utter chaos took over the household, which was ready to host the first Christmas with guests and happy times. The weight of these inquiries becomes unbearable for the child, intensifying his discomfort and instilling a fear that any moment he may succumb to overwhelming emotions. Describing this state of discomfort of the young child, Oates says, “The child's voice might have been a girl’s voice, thin and taut. There was a male fear that he might burst into tears, and there was no woman in the room to comfort him” (Oates 2). Detective McLure pushes young Corky and asks him repeatedly to identify the murderers. Detective McLure’s relentless questioning exacerbates the child’s distress, as he is already traumatized from witnessing a horrific crime.

> They had not questioned him this morning, and would not, for this was the morning, of his father’s funeral. They had questioned him for two hours on Christmas Day and they have returned to question him the following day, though there was a female screaming in the house Let him alone! Let the child alone! Which seemed not to hear himself, let alone acknowledge. (Oates 28)

The only day the child was left alone was the funeral, rest he was questioned repeatedly since his father's murder. There is a repetitive use of the phrase, “Just tell us what you heard and what you saw. Not blind son, are you, Our only Witness” (22, 23, 25 and 27). This suggests the child is interrogated even in the face of no real response from him trying to push him to utter information that he is not even aware of. Not only the detectives and the authorities but his uncle Sean Corcoran tries to push him too with the phrases, “You know. You saw, and you know. For Christ’s sweet sake. and for your father’s sake, Jerome. Just tell us” (Oates 27). The already horrified child must go through the horrors of interrogation by irresponsible male adults, and it is only the female members of the family like that of his aunt Frances who truly empathize with him. The child's mother is hospitalized from the trauma of her husband's death; thus, she is not around the child, and he fears that he might lose his mother as well.

In the story of the novel, there is no direct mention of the boy's childhood before his father's death as the novel opens with the travesty of his father's death that hits the family on Christmas Eve. But there are subtle references that suggest his earlier life prior to the overwhelming big loss. Comprehensive analysis helps to trace the instances of Horney's basic evil in the form of a hostile home environment and too much responsibility and indifference towards the boy. The boy who was too young at the time was allowed to be present around adult dealings which presumably were the adult's way of nurturing him and grooming him for the business. There is a repeated mention of the phrase: "You knew certain facts without knowing you knew. Without having to ask" (Oates 27). It suggests that the access that the child had to adult business made him come to know things that he wasn't even aware that he knew. Describing the irresponsibility of the adults towards the young child, Oates says, "Sean lifted the bottle in the child's direction. The child would have said yes, he'd tasted whiskey and many times beer in the past, offered him by his father" (Oates 12). The preceding quote suggests that it was the father of the child who introduced him to alcohol in the first place when he was young, implying how irresponsible his father had been towards him. Oates used the word "child" here instead of "Jerome" referring to how he was the only one who was a child among the adults who were drinking alcohol. This could also suggest that the father wanted to bond with his child and create a sense of camaraderie by involving him in adult activities. Then there is a reference to black men attending his father's funeral that he believed his father introduced to him in earlier years. "Negro worker his father had introduced him to over the years, Jerome had forgotten the name almost immediately" (27). Oates here means to say that the child's immediately forgetting the name of the black man suggests that he was too young for the responsibilities of the nature, and his subconscious unwillingness to be involved in adult matters.

Besides being overwhelmed with responsibility, there is an instance that points in the direction of neglect and indifference towards the child. Describing the neglectful behavior of the father, Oates says, "Many times the child had ridden in the cab of one of

these trucks with Tim Corcoran at the wheel. Once, in a cement mixer. You were in terror that the truck would overturn, the globe containing the liquid cement might cease its grinding revolution" (Oates 13). The father being at the wheel suggests the indifference and neglectful behavior of the parent/father towards the child. The child not only endured too much responsibility when his parents were around, but it got even worse after his father's death and his mother being admitted to the hospital. The other adults saw the father Tim Corcoran in him and expected him to act like him and fill his place. Oates while describing his need to get the appraisal of the adults says, "He'd drunk it swiftly down and this pleased the men and uncle Sean laughed and poured him another, this time half-full, and this too Jerome drank, a little more slowly yet not less purposefully. Just like his old man, oh sweet fucking Christ" (Oates 32). He took the other shot because the adults seemed well pleased with him and so was his Uncle Sean who approved that his nephew's mannerism matches that of his father. The child feels obliged to act in a manner which pleases the adults:

> An eleven-year-old kid who'd just lost his father. But they saw the futility of it, coaching Tim Corcoran's son who was too much like Tim Corcoran, bulldog-stubborn, a mind once made up and not to be changed by persuasion . . . Always he would remember their disappointment in him, adult male pity tinged with exasperation and disgust. Fuck you, he thought, wiping roughly at his eyes. (Oates 7)

In addition to being under pressure to identify the suspects, the already traumatized boy from being a firsthand witness to his father's murder is also under pressure to carry on his father's legacy by acting like him. Besides feeling overwhelmed and frustrated, he feels guilty about having disappointed the adult males. But young Corky could not, and that inability comes to seem like the very definition of failure, haunting him as an adult and putting him, on the cursed weekend of the novel's action, in mortal danger.

Basic evil is not a structure of certain facets of subjective and objective life, rather it embraces all those life situations that are charged with the power of creating life hellish; it always is in its dynamic process representing objects of unfavorable-ness. Horney's notion of basic evil is manifest in the novel *I'll Take You There* as epitomized in the character of Anellia. She as the protagonist in Joyce Carol Oates's novel *I'll Take You There* lives a childhood filled with agony and anguish. The girl yearns for sisters/girl siblings thinking that it is the only thing lacking in her life whereas the truth is she suffers neglect and abuse at the hands of her own caregivers. As Anellia grows older, she begins to realize that her longing for sisters is merely a distraction from the harsh reality of her circumstances. Despite her desperate desire for familial connection, she finds herself trapped in a cycle of mistreatment and isolation, further deepening her state of distress. Understanding the role of her family primarily her parents and other care givers is primary to understand her ordeal. Basic evil is present in a significant way in her childhood in the form of erratic behavior by her father, indifference, lack of genuine affection and warmth, lack of admiration, discrimination, injustice, and a hostile environment.

Her grandmother tells the neighbors that her father blames the little girl for the death of her mother. In this discourse with the neighbors, the grandmother says, "He blames her, you know- the little one. For Ida dying. Even as a small child I understood the fatal juxtaposition of he (my father) and her (the "little one") who was myself" (Oates, *I'll Take You There* 18). The preceding quote introduces the reader to the relationship of the child with both the father and grandmother all at once. The grandmother who is speaking of this to a neighbor in the child's earshot has placed blame for her mother's death several times on her. Besides, she tried to humiliate and guilt-trap the child on various occasions. The child, while speaking of herself and her father, calls it a "fatal juxtaposition" which stresses their strained and troubled relationship as father-daughter. Speaking of the relationship with the grandparents, she describes them as "trolls peering at me in pity and reproach" (19). Since her mother's death which resulted

in their son's misery, Anellia's grandparents hate her for being the cause of it. She, while further speaking of how her grandmother would avail herself of every chance to humiliate her, says, "When I was eight, having annoyed my grandmother in some childish way, she told me in a bitter yet gloating voice that my mother had died of something eating her up: cancer " (18). Revealing such sensitive information to a child that too in a taunting way to put blame on her establishes the grandmother as an irresponsible and insensitive adult. This incident not only demonstrates the grandmother's lack of empathy but also highlights her cruel nature. By using her granddaughter's misbehavior as an opportunity to inflict emotional pain, she shows a complete disregard for the child's well-being and mental health. The child runs away from the house and hides herself in the field following that instance as this intensifies her feelings of guilt further.

Later it is revealed that it is not only the grandparents and the father who hold her accountable for her mother's death, but her brothers too feel the same way towards her. Speaking of her brothers' hatred towards her she says, "They hated me for having been born; having been born, I caused our mother's death; yet they could see I was just a little girl; I wasn't a worthy enemy. They argued it was only in snapshots of my mother that I knew her, not in my own true memory" (Oates, *I'll Take You There* 19). Her brothers not only held her accountable but also tried to take her mother's memories away from her by disregarding them. They believed that her understanding of their mother was limited to mere glimpses captured in photographs, rather than her recollections. In their attempt to erase her connection to their mother, they disregarded the significance of her own true memories. Though she desired to have emancipation from patriarchal negativity that tries to justify her being the cause of her mother's death at the hands of her father and brothers which aggravates her anxiety and trauma, it reminds one that though she fails in her efforts she tries for the betterment of her future life. This quality according to Horney makes one cognizant of the fact that it is a natural tendency to seek a favorable environment to evolve and that:

> All people develop strategies to deal with the environment, but in the usual case—in Winnicott's term the "good enough" environment—these can be flexibly taken up or discarded according to the situation. In the child who develops basic anxiety because of a pernicious or indifferent environment, strategies become extreme and rigid, giving rise to internal conflicts between and among strategies. The child attempts resolution of the conflict by making one strategy predominate, usually to his or her detriment. (Smith 59)

This attempt to erase her connection to their mother further intensified her feelings of being hated and unworthy in their eyes. A detailed analysis of Anellia's relationship with the parent who is present in her family dynamic, i.e. the father is integral to understanding the nature and the origin of her trauma. The following excerpt highlights the discord between the father-daughter relationship:

> He would seem to forget my name; never would he call by my name; you would have to do; "you" was as much as I could hope for; you was much desirous than I for I was uttered only by me, and "you" might be uttered, if only in a slurred, negligent voice, by my father. "You didn't see you here." Or, "You? not in bed?" (Oates, *I'll Take You There* 20)

Anellia's relationship with her father is characterized by a lack of recognition and acknowledgment. Her father consistently fails to remember her name and instead refers to her as "you". This lack of personal identification reflects a deep disconnect between them, with Anellia feeling invisible and unimportant in her father's eyes. His careless and dismissive tone further exacerbates the emotional trauma she experiences, leaving her longing for even the slightest recognition or affection from him and such a kind of apathy and disinterestedness towards the child has a drastic sort of bearing on mental health. Moreover, the child feels herself blamed for it all rather than her father. She says, "He was wary of me as one might be a wary of a puppy that might leap against the legs and dribble saliva onto hands and whine piteously when abandoned" (Oates 20). Her father

smoking cigarettes in the presence of a young child and telling her to leave if she coughs, she thinks it genuine to displace herself from the spot. This constant reinforcement of the perceived inadequacy and rejection from the father can have long-lasting effects on the child's self-esteem and emotional well-being. It may lead to feelings of unworthiness and a constant need for validation from others, impacting a child's relationships and overall development.

Referring to the father's unavailabilty, Oates states, "For always our father was going away. His car was backing out of the driveway, more swiftly and purposefully than it had turned in. Three days later my father was gone, . . . Gone again from the Strykersville, and the old farm. And wouldn't return this time" (Oates 21,25). The use of the word "purposefully" here suggests that there was more purpose in going away than there was in staying back with the family, which in turn suggests a father negligent towards his family and home. Similarly, the word "gone again" refers to the fact that the father would do that earlier as well and make disappearances, and the family wouldn't know when he would come back again. The constant uncertainty and unpredictability of his departure left the children feeling unsettled and unsure of when they would see their father again. It was a source of great confusion and bewilderment for them. They were left feeling uncertain and abandoned, never knowing when their father would reappear or what his next move would be. This constant unpredictability created a sense of unease and instability within the family dynamic. Erratic behavior by parents confuses the children.

There is a sense of injustice and discrimination prevalent in her family dynamic too besides other sources of "basic evil". The father would show signs of affection towards the younger brothers even if it was merely a slight punch but never touched Anellia. She longed for him to caress her head and would be curious about the broken hand:

> I imagined his hand touching me. Caressing my small head . . . He never kissed me. Never touched me (Even with the disfigured hand) if he could avoid it. My brothers he might punch -lightly yet hard enough to make them wince- on their biceps, in greeting or in farewell. (Oates 21)

It can be considered injustice perpetrated by her father towards her where he shunned from showing any affection towards her as a child. This lack of affection from her father may have left a lasting impact on her, causing her to long for physical touch and attention. It is possible that this injustice has affected her perception of love and intimacy, leaving her with a deep longing for the affection she never received. Speaking of her longing to establish contact with the father she says, "Anxiously I would wait beside Hendrick for my turn to speak with my father but often it happened that my father "ran out of coins"- was cut off by the operator "before I could take the receiver" (Oates 23). All the brothers got to talk to the father one by one but young daughter Anellia. It suggests discrimination and injustice towards the young child who would wait for her turn but would never avail an opportunity to talk to the father who was away from home. Besides being left devoid of affection and warmth, she was even blamed for her mother's death by the father. The following excerpt suggests his tendency to put blame on her:

> That's her, is it? The one to blame. There must have come a time in my father's life when he forgot what I was to be blamed for, but so ingrained was the habit of blaming the little one, so much was it part of my father's character as racial bigotry or left handedness might be in others, he couldn't have wished to change. Just as Dietrich was always his favorite son no matter what. (Oates 24)

Injustice and favoritism are other factors that determine dysfunction of childhood in Oates's novels and Horney's legacy; both are always adding to the intensity of "basic evil" and "basic anxiety". It can be observed how the father blamed Anellia to the extent that it became a part of his personality. While she was subjected to guilt shaming by her father, her brother received the favorite treatment. Favoring one child and belittling

another is a form of injustice by parents which can have detrimental effects on the psyche of the belittled child. This favoritism can stimulate feelings of inadequacy and resentment in the child who is constantly belittled. It can also create a toxic dynamic within the family, causing tension and division among siblings. The sense of inadequacy and hopelessness that Anellia feels is reflected in her statement, "How easy, never to have been born" (Oates 24). The child would assume that she was at fault for her father's neglectful behavior towards her. Thus, she would work hard in school to make sure that she could get her father's approval and affection. Referring to the hard work, she would put in at school to secure good grades she says:

> I was saving up surprises for my father though. Straight A's in school, shiny red stars after my name (which included his name) on the class bulletin board, even my picture now and then in the Strykersville weekly newspaper. He couldn't help but be impressed and proud of his daughter. Could he? (Oates 23).

The words "my name" and "his name" coming together suggest the yearning for a connection with her father, even if it was on the class bulletin board. This longing for recognition and validation from her father drove the child to constantly seek approval and attention through her achievements. The mention of her picture in the newspaper highlights her desperate need for his acknowledgment, even if it is just a fleeting moment of pride. Horney in the whole of her works acts as a pioneer and advocate for the self-actualization of an individual which can bear fruits of well-being to all however this self-actualization and transcendence in Oates's novel is sought through the excellence in schooling, for after all, it is education and proper channelization of human self that can actualize what a person ought to be. In its absence, there can be no positive change in the human self since:

> Attachment theory suggests that when parental behavior fails to make children feel safe, secure, and able to turn to and trust the parent in times of need, then

> children will be unable to regulate their emotions and needs adaptively and will develop negative, 'insecure' views of themselves and others. (Mukherjee 45)

To cope with the feelings of inadequacy fostered by the father's neglect and to secure his approval, Anellia would overperform in school; "This man who hadn't touched me years, and then only inadvertently, saying boastfully, "Helluva speech you gave, eh? I always knew you had it in you. Like her, you are. Smart as a whip but you can do something with it. Don't let no fuckers out there sell you short" (Oates, *I'll Take You There* 25). It suggests a selfish attitude on behalf of the parent to have acknowledged the child only when she excelled in her academics suggesting a conditional love for which too the child had to go through the mill for earning. The child was happy, but both surprised and unsure, smiling uncertainly my face exposed in the camera flash. The smile was uncertain because at first she was surprised and it was something that happened for the first time in years and secondly, she was not sure if it would last. And the same happened when the father disappeared from home within the next three days. There is injustice, discrimination, and lack of real warmth and affection which is not only from the father but brothers too. When Anellia says, "Dietrich voice was stunned yet embarrassed; there was no warmth in it, for me; no effort to console me" (26), it is one of the instances of older brother Dietrich speaking to the sister Anellia where she finds him lacking any warmth or affection towards her.

Since the mother Ida doesn't exist, the child feels she would have loved her better, thus she has more connection with her. The following extract describes how the daughter holds her mother in special regard:

> Yes I remember her. I am the only one who remembers "ida"-the name was magical to me. In the whispers, in the dark. Beneath bedcovers. Forehead pressed to a window pane coated with frost. "Ida." What a strange beautiful name: I could not say it often enough; it was easy to confuse "Ida" with "I"-the sharp simple

> sound I learned to make with my mouth and tongue when I meant myself. (Oates 18)

When she says she is the only one who remembers, their mother has a double connotation here. Firstly, it refers to how she feels very possessive towards her memory and secondly, it may refer to the fact that she feels too much responsibility in the household, thus she is the one responsible for remembering her. It can be seen how she compares "Ida" with "I" used for self to denote that she feels a sense of communion with her. The loneliness she feels from all the family, her grandparents, her father, and even her brothers' neglectful attitude towards her, she tries to fill up with a longing for her dead mother. She wants to fight for that and feels jealous when she sees other babies with her in pictures. Similarly, sisters are not there, so she has yearning for sisters. She does not have real affection thus she seeks affection from the people missing in her life. The collective approach of study unearths the fact that all psychologists directly or indirectly particularly Adler, Lacan, and Horney come up with confession and consensus on the point that anxiety is augmented when an object strived for is not obtained due to the sense of lacking. Such a kind of ordeal is faced by Anellia who longs for her mother who is dead already and seeks her through her sisters she does not have. The words mother and sisters are symbolically reminiscent of the reality that she finds a kind of relief in thinking about her mother and sisters. These two individuals mention her longing for peace, but this absence makes her weak and, "When someone fails repeatedly to overcome weaknesses and achieve some mastery or simply places excessive emphasis on some particular inferiority, the result can be what Adler labeled an inferiority complex… (Morgan et al. 585).

Violet Rue Kerrigan the protagonist in *My Life As A Rat* experiences basic evil in its most blatant and menacing manifestation. The novel follows Violet Rue Kerrigan, a young woman who looks back upon her life in exile from her family following her testimony, at age twelve, concerning what she knew to be the racist murder of an African-American boy by her older brothers. In a succession of vividly recalled episodes, Violet contemplates the circumstances of her life as the initially beloved youngest child

of seven Kerrigan children who inadvertently “informs” on her brothers, setting into motion their arrests and convictions and her own long estrangement. Following her banishment, she experiences the worst kind of abuse from both strangers and caretakers, which is a continuation of the maltreatment she endured in her home throughout her early years. Although Violet has been subjected to child abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, and violence at various points in her life, the focus of this research is on her early experiences at home prior to her family’s disavowal and abandonment. All these mentioned evils combinedly strengthen the changing but never-ending state of basic evil. This evil here is not only here at the family level, but it is there as a tool of suppression at the hands of strangers. Here a conscious being can realize that basic evil has other social backups Violet Rue Kerrigan is forced to undergo. In addition, she even is being victimized at her home along with her siblings by the hard-disciplined father that is what makes Violet realize both familial and the social worlds the projections of basic evil and there seems no chance of having mechanisms to lessen the intensity even if it had been it would not work realistically for, “Although these mechanisms can reduce anxiety they may impoverish personality” (Rezaei 3). Being aware of Violet Rue Kerrigan's connection with her siblings as well as her parents is essential. Unlike characters in earlier works, she encounters physical abuse in her family dynamics; therefore, the basic evil here takes on a more overt shape rather than just subtle manifestations like neglect or apathy.

As the novel opens, the protagonist starts narrating her childhood which she feels was happy and she misses it, but it was quite the opposite. It is ironic how the title of the sub-chapter is “The Happy Childhood”, but it begins with the description of her father’s tendency to physically attack the kids to discipline them. Describing the nature of physical torture, she says, “Yes, sometimes Daddy did get physical with us kids. A good handshake that made your head whip on your neck and your teeth rattle-that was about the limit with my sisters and me. My brothers, Daddy, had been known to hit in a different way. Haul off and hit” (Oates, *My Life As A Rat* 11). Despite the title suggesting

a happy upbringing, the initial description reveals a dark and violent side to her father's disciplinary methods. The author's use of vivid language further emphasizes the severity of physical abuse inflicted upon her and her siblings, with different levels of intensity depending on their gender. The father was a strict disciplinarian, but his ways of disciplining were bizarre and unacceptable, ranging from physical torture to emotional abuse. “Daddy's punishment would be swift and pitiless and for a certain space of time Daddy would withhold his love from the one he'd punished” (Oates 57). This excerpt highlights the author's portrayal of the father as a cruel and unpredictable figure, whose punishments were both harsh and manipulative. The withholding of love after punishment suggests a twisted power dynamic within the family, where affection is used as a tool for control and manipulation. Here is an instance of physical abuse perpetrated on Violet’s brother by the father:

> In an instant Daddy was on his feet too. Gripping Jerr by the scruff of the neck and shaking him as you might shake an annoying dog. Shoving him back against the wall so that the breath was knocked out of him. Glasses, silverware fell from the table onto the floor. There were cries of alarm, screams. Jerr scrambled to his feet ashen faced but knew better than to protest...It was frightening and yet thrilling, to witness our father so swiftly disciplining one of us who had disrespected him. (Oates 74)

It was not only abusive towards the boys but also gave way to a hostile home environment where the children lived in constant fear of upsetting the father and inviting his wrath. Not only the way of punishment of girls and boys differed but also the general attitude towards them was also different. Violet says it was not only the humiliation which the girls were exempt from “But girls were exempt from instructions too” (Oates 15) suggesting how the father had an attitude of discrimination towards Violet and other girl siblings. Discrimination towards the child, as Horney proposes, is a form of basic evil; “For Daddy treated my brothers differently than he treated my sisters and me. To Daddy the world was harshly divided: male, female” (16). It is clear that father’s

discriminatory attitude towards his daughters had a lasting impact on Violet and her siblings, shaping their understanding of gender roles and their place in society.

Violet's father was a war veteran and had sustained trauma just like the father of Abby in *Pursuit* further establishing the fact that parents with trauma wounds tend to be absent and make bad parents. His harshness and bullying attitude towards his children in the guise of discipline can be explained by his traumatic past. Speaking of her father's war veteran status Violet says, "Two facts about Daddy: He'd fought in Vietnam, and he'd come back alive and (mostly) undamaged. This was about as much as Daddy would say about his years as a soldier in the U.S Army" (Oates 17). He wouldn't open much about his years in the army and when one of his children, Katie wanted to interview for a project on war veterans, he got furious. Narrating that incident between her sister Katie and her father, Violet says:

> Calm at first telling her no, not possible but when Katie naively persisted losing his temper, furious and profane threatening, threatening to call the teacher, to tell the woman to go fuck herself until-at last-our mother was able to persuade him not to make such a call, not to jeopardize Katie's standing with her teacher or at the school, please just forget it, try to forget it, the teacher had only meant well, Katie was in no way to blame and should not be punished...Katie would remember that incident for the rest of her life. As I will, too. (Oates 18-19)

The father was calmly refusing at first, but when the daughter insisted, he became furious. This stipulates sudden mood fluctuations and outbursts. His anger and frustration from the war had a lasting impact on his family dynamics.

Besides subjecting the children to erratic behavior, he would also distance them from other children, which is also a form of basic evil. Speaking of this rash attitude of the father Violet says, "We did notice, my sisters and me, that girl-cousins with whom we'd been friendly, and liked, would sometimes become inaccessible to us- their parents were no longer on Daddy's good side, they'd been banished from Daddy's circle of

friends” (Oates 19). This would have a long-term emotional impact on children. “Personal questions annoyed our father, and we did not want to annoy our father whom we adored and feared in about equal measure” (19). It suggests how children were to navigate through the erratic moods of the father and act carefully around him. It directly refers to a hostile home environment where they couldn't freely express themselves. This environment created a sense of fear and caution in the children, as they were constantly aware of their father’s unpredictable reactions. Their desire to please him and avoid his disapproval further limited their ability to openly communicate and share their true thoughts and feelings. While comparing her family dynamic with her school friend Geraldine, Violet says: Geraldine was an only child. This seemed magical to me. As my sisters and brothers, all older than me, seemed magical to her." You would never have to be alone," Geraldine said wistfully. I tried not to laugh. For this was not true, and why would anyone want it to be true? An only child could have no idea of the commotion of the Kerrigan household. (Oates 87)

Though she had other siblings, she could not say that she was not alone. This excerpt further establishes the Kerrigan household as a dysfunctional home with a hostile home environment.

When analyzing the relationship of her parents, it was found that it wasn’t a loving one further impacting the home environment and family dynamics. Describing the relationship of her parents, Violet says, “When speaking to us our parents referred to each other as “your father”- “your mother.” Sometimes in affectionate moments they say “your daddy”- “your mommy”-but these moments were not often in later years. In early years, I would not know. I had not been born into my parent's early, happier years” (Oates 12). This lack of affection and emotional distance between her parents created a tense and strained atmosphere at home, which ultimately affected the dynamics within the family. As a result, the protagonist grew up without experiencing the love and warmth that typically exists in a nurturing family environment. This absence of love and emotional connection likely had a significant impact on her ability to express her true

thoughts and feelings. Referring to the nature of her father's love, Violet says, "It was a protective love, a wish to cherish but also a wish to control, even coerce. It was not a wish to know-to know who we were or might be" (Oates 17). It suggests how the father did not care about the individual needs of the children and this attitude of negligence and inability to acknowledge and respect the individuality of the child is also a form of basic evil. Referring to the difference in the individual experiences of herself and her siblings, Violet says, "To their children, parents are not identical. The mother I knew as the youngest of seven children was certainly not the mother my older siblings knew, who'd been a young wife. Especially the father I knew was not the father my brothers knew" (Oates 16). It suggests how the experience of the two children in the same household may be a stark contrast. The basic evil Violet experienced was different from her other siblings and thus their stories took a different course. To this study, the experiences of Violet-- the protagonist--are important, thus further discussion will revolve around Violet's experiences with her siblings and parents.

When understanding the dynamics of Violet's relationship with her mother, it becomes apparent that it is equally troubled as it is with her father. Reminiscing of the earlier times with her mother, Violet says, "A long time ago when Mommy loved me as much as Daddy did. When I knew (without needing to be told) that Mommy would take care of me and keep me from harm even if the harm was Daddy" (Oates 24). The child doesn't feel loved anymore by the mother and her belief is correct as the mother confirms in her statement, "It's easy to love them when they're little...later, not so easy" (24). It is because of that she has withdrawn her love from Violet as she is not a baby anymore. Her own life struggle and childhood could be blamed for her resentful attitude towards Violet and her other children. The following excerpt is a description of the rigorous childhood of Violet's mother:

> Rich people's houses. She'd quit school at sixteen, her family had needed the income. At first she'd cleaned houses with a cousin, who did the negotiating, then it turned out the cousin was cheating her, so she'd worked on her own. Five years.

> She'd worked six days a week for five years until she met my father and got married and started having babies and taking care of a house of her own, seven days a week...There was a particular sort of bitterness here directed at me. For I was one of the babies. (Oates 89-90)

It suggests the bad childhood of the mother is responsible for her negligent attitude towards her children and holding them accountable for her misery. The child experiences a lack of affection and warmth from both the parents who are expected to be the primary caregivers.

Though there are not any direct instances of physical violence endured by Violet from either one of her parents, she suffers violence perpetrated upon her by her brother Lionel, who feared she might tell the secret about the murder weapon. There is a graphic description of the violence she was subjected to by her brother in the following excerpt:

> The force of the blow against your head has knocked you unconscious. Two, three seconds obliterated-concussed. Waking stunned to find yourself on the icy ground. A pounding at your left temple where something, the sharp ice edge of a step, has cut the skin thin as a paper, releasing a stream of blood ...So much of blood so quickly, you are astonished. Too surprised to worry you might bleed to death. (Oates 104)

Thus, the experiences she had in her early childhood weren't limited to some emotional abuse but involved physical violence/ physical abuse too which gave way to severe basic anxiety resulting in neurosis. The suddenness and brutality of the attack leave the reader shocked and disturbed, as it highlights the disturbing nature of familial violence. The author's use of vivid imagery, such as the "icy ground" and "a stream of blood", adds to the intensity of the scene, creating a sense of urgency and danger. The more shocking thing here is the mother's reaction to her daughter getting hurt. "Mom has seemed more upset by the blood, staining my clothes, my sister's jacket, dripping onto the linoleum floor when Miriam led me staggering into the kitchen, than by the wound itself" (Oates

106). It is shocking how the mother isn't concerned by her daughter's wound, but, interestingly, she gets the attention at the school where the nurses acknowledge her condition and say "Voilet, you're a sick girl. Your temperature is a hundred and one degrees, that's a fever. Your mother oughtn't to have let you out of the house this morning. "The nurse's kindly words, like a curse, made me cry. My pride, melted away, I had no strength to protect myself"' (Oates 109). The nurse's concern and understanding of Violet's condition contrasted sharply with the hostility she faced at home. This unexpected empathy from strangers caused Violet to let her guard down and reveal her family secret, as her pride crumbled under the weight of her vulnerability.

Her spilling out her heart upon receiving empathy from the strangers, also leads to spilling out the big secret which leads to her life-long exile exposing her to hostile environments and situations outside of the family which further deteriorate her. The pain of witnessing her brothers makes her living difficult. Her tumultuous plight manifests in the following extract:

> The girl who never cried, never complained. Not a little baby to be scorned by my father and brothers or petted and fussed over my mother and sisters. But now I cried easily. I cried often. I cried so that my eyes leaked tears before I actually began to cry, like a leaky faucet. My skin was sensitive as sunburned skin registering pain when something brushed lightly against it. My eyelids were reddened, inflamed and swollen and itchy as if bitten by mosquitoes. (Oates 96)

The hostile home environment she was living in after her brothers committed the heinous crime of killing a young black boy made her miserable. Not only she had to live with the burden of the secret of having witnessed her brothers washing off the murder weapon, but she was in a constant state of fear that if her brothers found out she knew, they might harass her or possibly attack her which came true. "You'd noticed him frowning in your direction but not at you. Peering behind you and not at your face. Over your shoulder" (Oates 103).

The similar “basic evil” exists in the novel *Zombie*. Though there is not a lot of discussion around the protagonist Q. P’s childhood by Oates, the first-person narration by the protagonist refers to some instances from childhood. Upon deep introspection and analysis, the basic evil in his childhood is deciphered which plays a role in his abnormal development that further shapes his destiny as a serial killer. Q.P, while making mention of how his father views him differently as opposed to earlier, says, “Dad looks at me differently I think, I am not 100 % sure because I am shy to raise my eyes to his but I think it's like he is fearful of me as in the past he was impatient and always finding fault” (Oates, *Zombie* 74). In the preceding lines the phrase, “always fault finding” suggests the disparaging attitude of the father towards Q. P. The father would always find fault with him before his attitude changed to that of being fearful of him suggests a belittling tendency of his father towards Q.P. Oates while describing another instance says, “Dad called and left a message and I thought he'd be bitching as usual but instead thanked me for BEING SO KIND TO YOUR GRANDMA, QUENTIN!” (*Zombie* 110). The phrase “bitching as usual” suggests the father's usual attitude towards Q.P., which is always a complaining attitude, further establishing him as disparaging towards him. Horney describes a disparaging attitude towards the child as a form of “basic evil”.

There is a repeated mention of the word “professor” for his father by him suggesting the level of intimacy or closeness between them was challenged as he would deem him a professor, not his father in these instances. The phrases “his professor eyes watery inside his glasses” (74) and “R_P_’s professor-goatee went from glossy brown to gray filings (32) suggest the tendency of Q.P to refer to his father as a professor rather than his father. The words “professor eyes” and “professor goatee” are of significance here as they suggest that those were not regular eyes or goatee but professor eyes and goatee. The following quote further emphasizes his profession with Q.P. saying, “Distinguished Professor, Mt. Vernon State University. Dual appointments in Physics and Philosophy. Senior fellow of the Michigan State Institute for Advance Research. DAD's EYES behind his shiny glasses” (33). Here it can be observed that Q.P makes the

mention of his designation and all his achievements before referring to him as Dad and his eyes as "Dad's eyes" as if his identity was defined more by his work than by his role as a parent further suggesting how his career was more important to him than his role as a father. This understanding establishes the fact that the child undergoes negligence and doesn't receive the warmth and affection he deserves.

A similar kind of lack of intimacy can be seen in his relationship with his mother too; "Mom hugs me and stands on tiptoe to kiss my cheek. . . . I stand very straight and still not breathing to inhale her smell. What that smell is I do not know and do not name" (Oates, *Zombie* 74). His not wanting to inhale the mom's fragrance while hugging, suggests his need to maintain a distance from her. He dismisses any possibility of remembrance of that smell further establishing his need to maintain a distance suggesting the lack of warmth in the most primary relationship in a child's life i.e. a mother-child relationship. Similarly, his saying that the mom's display of concern towards him is like a punched button of a tape further adds to the coldness with which he perceives their relationship referring to his mother's speech as a punched button of the tape says, "You know we love you Quentin Mom says like a tape when a button is punched. This time things will turn out well" (Oates 74 -75).

There are other instances that highlight his relationship with his family. Oates while describing one of these says, "Driving home, my old home I was welcome in at any time but had outgrown yes but Q.P welcome there at any time and maybe parental guidance is a good thing" (89). Q.P. says that he has outgrown his home and by home, he means his family suggesting the distance between him and his parents. And the phrase "maybe parental guidance is a good thing" suggests that he misses that guidance in his life and maybe never received that guidance. Lack of guidance, as Horney suggests, is another form of "basic evil" towards the child. Besides the lack of real guidance, there is an attitude of indifference towards the child as well which leads to abnormal development and plays a role in shaping him as a serial killer. Oates, while suggesting

how Dad witnessed Q. P's erratic behavior as a child and still did not take any serious measures to stop him, says:

> DAD'S EYES behind his shiny glasses. Looking at me like when I was two years old and squatting on the bathroom floor shitting & when I was five years old playing with my baby dick & when was seven years old & my T-shirt splotched with another kid's nosebleed & when I was eleven home from the pool where my friend Barry drowned & most fierce DAD'S EYES when I was twelve years old that time Dad charged upstairs with the Body Builder magazines shaking in his hand. (Oates 33-34)

The above excerpt establishes the fact that Dad witnessed everything but did not take any strict measures. Had he taken notice of his child's leanings towards unhealthy development and patterns, he could have mitigated his unhealthy mental development and the atrocities his innocent victims suffered resulting in their deaths.

Conclusion

To understand the dysfunction prevalent in childhood it is instrumental to have a look at the home environment and the presence or absence of primary caregivers and other people in the family if present including siblings to understand the entire family dynamic. This plays a role in establishing which developmental route the child will take as, "which development will occur depends largely on the kind of relationship established between the child and his parents or others around him, including other children in the family "(Horney, *Self Analysis* 41). This chapter decodes the relationship dynamic of parents and children, and the resultant developmental patterns are analyzed in the next chapter. So, this scrutinizes the relationship between these caregivers with the protagonist in the early years of his/her childhood. Besides, it identifies the nature of the basic evil present in each one of the households or the nature of the basic evil sustained by the protagonist.

This chapter explores the concept of basic anxiety and dysfunctional childhood centering on Karen Horney's concepts of "basic anxiety and "basic evil" as its primary theoretical framework. The historical context incorporates foundational thinkers such as Freud, Lacan, Jung, Adler, and Klein—each offering distinct interpretations of childhood development and its psychological ramifications. Freud posited that anxiety stems from repressed desires, exemplified by the Oedipus complex, while Lacan introduced the concept of "lack" as a psychological rupture between subjective and objective realms. Jung emphasized the internal conflict between consciousness and unconsciousness, which hinders self-actualization, and Adler attributed childhood dysfunction to familial neglect and feelings of inferiority. Klein, in contrast, viewed early anxiety as an innate response to annihilation fears during infancy, suggesting it also serves a defensive function rooted in unconscious fantasies. These varied perspectives collectively underscore the centrality of childhood as a formative stage that profoundly shapes psychological development.

Building on these theories, Horney's framework diverges from Freudian determinism by emphasizing the socio-cultural and familial dimensions of basic anxiety. For Horney, dysfunctional childhood arises when a child is deprived of affection, security, and validation within a hostile or indifferent environment. She identified the child's compensatory behavioral patterns particularly "moving toward others" as a response to deep-seated feelings of rejection and worthlessness. In this context, basic anxiety becomes both the cause and symptom of psychological dysfunction, fueled by patriarchal dominance, emotional neglect, and a lack of supportive relationships. This theoretical lens is employed to analyze characters such as Abby, Anellia, and Violet in the selected works of Joyce Carol Oates, demonstrating how early familial experiences profoundly inform adult identity and social engagement. Thus, a nuanced understanding of childhood dysfunction is essential for examining the broader thematic implications of psychological development within literature.

Abby's childhood in *Pursuit* embodies the constellation of adverse conditions that Karen Horney identifies as "basic evil," where the absence of genuine warmth, consistency, and respect for the child's individuality produces lasting insecurity. From an early age, Abby was exposed to a hostile domestic environment shaped by parental neglect, coercion, and instability. Her father's erratic behavior, marked by interrogations and physical impositions, and her mother's emotional volatility and indifference deprived her of the stable affection and guidance needed for healthy psychological development. Instead of fostering autonomy, her parents subjected her to experiences of confusion and fear, forcing her to navigate conflicts beyond her capacity.

A particularly damaging aspect of Abby's upbringing lies in her being compelled to take sides in parental disputes. Her father drew her into his suspicions and conflicts with her mother, while her mother, in turn, used her as leverage in their disagreements. Such dynamics illustrate the very conditions Horney warns against, where the child's individuality and sense of worth are undermined by being reduced to an instrument in adult struggles. These pressures created feelings of guilt and responsibility for situations Abby could not control, reinforcing her sense of helplessness. At the same time, the absence of reliable admiration and affection left her yearning for validation, even interpreting dismissive or aggressive behavior as signs of love, highlighting how distorted her perception of security became.

Compounding these dynamics were the parents' unresolved psychological struggles her father's post-traumatic stress and her mother's bipolar tendencies which intensified the instability of the household. Both parents, consumed by their own emotional turmoil, neglected Abby's developmental needs and perpetuated an atmosphere of fear and neglect. The interplay of neglect, coercion, inconsistency, and lack of warmth established the very conditions of basic anxiety that Horney argues can endure across the lifespan. Abby's later struggles with guilt, nightmares, and self-

destructive tendencies bear witness to how early exposure to basic evil can leave indelible imprints on personality and mental health, shaping the course of one's adult life.

Corky Corcoran's childhood in *What I Lived For* is marked by the sudden trauma of his father's murder and the subsequent neglect and coercion he endured from the adults around him, which together exemplify what Karen Horney defines as basic evil. The violent death of his father created a hostile environment that immediately deprived him of stability and security, thrusting him into a position of vulnerability. Rather than being shielded from further distress, Corky was repeatedly interrogated by detectives and family members, his trauma exacerbated by their insistence that he recall or reveal details he could not comprehend. This relentless pressure, coupled with the absence of maternal comfort due to his mother's hospitalization, left Corky isolated and helpless, reinforcing the very sense of basic anxiety that Horney describes as foundational to neurosis.

Equally damaging was the premature imposition of adult responsibilities and expectations upon Corky. From an early age, he had been exposed to adult environments, whether through his father introducing him to alcohol or involving him in business dealings beyond his capacity to understand. Following his father's death, this pattern only intensified, as male relatives expected him to emulate his father's mannerisms and assume the weight of his legacy. The child's efforts to meet these impossible standards, such as drinking to win their approval, highlight the dynamics of indifference and undue responsibility that Horney identifies as corrosive to healthy development. Instead of being recognized as an individual with his own needs and rights, Corky was instrumentalized as a substitute for his father, leading to a deep sense of inadequacy when he inevitably fell short of their expectations.

The combination of neglect, coercion, and misplaced expectations created conditions of basic evil that shaped Corky's sense of self in profoundly damaging ways. His yearning for approval from adults who simultaneously pressured and belittled him cultivated feelings of guilt, failure, and resentment that persisted into adulthood. Just as

Horney warns, the hostile environment of Corky's childhood denied him the genuine warmth and respect necessary for psychological security, replacing it instead with basic anxiety that left him depleted and insecure. His inability to reconcile the demands placed upon him with his own developmental limitations illustrates how adverse childhood experiences, rooted in parental and familial dysfunction, can leave enduring scars that determine the trajectory of one's life.

Anellia's childhood in *I'll Take You There* embodies the full force of what Horney calls basic evil: a dynamic process of hostility, neglect, and rejection that makes life "hellish" for the child. From her earliest years, she is deprived of warmth and security, instead treated as the scapegoat for her mother's death by nearly every figure in her household. The constant humiliation from her grandmother, the hostility of her brothers, and the indifference of her father combined to deny her the "good enough" environment necessary for emotional stability. Rather than being nurtured, Anellia was burdened with guilt and shame, which not only distorted her sense of self but also reinforced her basic anxiety in ways that shaped her entire emotional landscape.

A central source of Anellia's trauma is her father's erratic and unjust behavior, ranging from his failure to recognize her as an individual to his blatant favoritism toward her brothers. His neglect, emotional absence, and repeated disappearances intensified her feelings of rejection, while his occasional bursts of recognition often tied only to her academic success, instilled in her a desperate longing for conditional approval. This environment of indifference and discrimination is precisely what Horney identifies as the seedbed of basic evil, as it fosters insecurity, fosters guilt, and compels the child to overcompensate through rigid, extreme strategies of achievement. Anellia's striving for excellence in school becomes less an expression of healthy ambition and more a survival mechanism to secure scraps of recognition from an otherwise neglectful parent.

The absence of maternal love compounded by paternal hostility left Anellia seeking emotional refuge in the imagined presence of her dead mother and in the fantasy

of siblings she never had. This yearning underscores the destructive force of basic evil: when genuine affection and warmth are withheld, the child turns to substitutes that cannot satisfy her developmental needs, deepening her sense of inferiority and isolation. Ultimately, Anellia's childhood reveals how hostility, injustice, and lack of affection coalesce into a hostile environment that corrodes a child's capacity for trust, belonging, and security. In Horney's terms, her story epitomizes how basic evil, when persistent and pervasive, engrains basic anxiety into the very core of the self, shaping not only how one relates to others but also how one perceives one's own worth.

Violet Rue Kerrigan's early years in *My Life as a Rat* reflect perhaps the most overt and brutal form of what Horney describes as basic evil. Unlike neglect or subtle indifference, the home environment Violet inhabited was openly hostile, marked by violence, discrimination, and humiliation at the hands of both parents and siblings. Her father's erratic temper, physical punishments, and clear favoritism established a dynamic in which affection was conditional, and discipline was fused with cruelty. Her mother's withdrawal of love and her tendency to blame Violet for her own hardships deepened this atmosphere of rejection. Rather than a source of safety, the home became the primary site of fear, guilt, and insecurity, laying the foundation for Violet's basic anxiety.

The father's discriminatory treatment, dividing sons from daughters, and his habit of withholding affection created lasting wounds in Violet's sense of worth. Added to this was the cruelty of her siblings, culminating in physical assault from her brother Lionel, which demonstrated how hostility within the family extended beyond words into life-threatening violence. The indifference of her mother, who reacted more to the mess of blood than to the injury itself, reinforced Violet's conviction that her suffering was of little consequence to those meant to protect her. These experiences capture the conditions of basic evil as Horney outlines them: domination, humiliation, injustice, and neglect, all working to erode the child's trust in others and her belief in her own value.

What distinguishes Violet's experience is the way basic evil extended beyond her household, as the family's violent ethos spilled into the larger social world. Her father's authoritarianism and her brothers' racism revealed how familial and societal forms of hostility reinforced one another, leaving Violet trapped in environments that punished honesty, independence, and vulnerability. In such a setting, even her coping strategies: silence, toughness, and later overcompliance became rigid defenses that impoverished her personality rather than relieving her anxiety. Violet's childhood thus exemplifies Horney's most dire insight: when basic evil is unrelenting, both within the family and without, it generates a profound and enduring basic anxiety that shapes not only the trajectory of a child's life but also her very sense of what it means to exist in a hostile world.

Quentin's childhood, when examined through Karen Horney's framework of "basic evil," reveals deep fractures in his formative relationships that shape his later descent into abnormality. The disparaging attitude of his father, marked by fault-finding and constant criticism, cultivates a sense of inadequacy and alienation in him. When this attitude transforms into fear, it does not indicate acceptance or affection but rather underscores the father's inability to connect with his son in a nurturing way. Such a dynamic embodies the essence of Horney's "basic evil," in which rejection and disparagement deprive a child of the validation necessary for healthy psychological growth, setting the stage for the distorted self-image Quentin later exhibits.

The lack of intimacy in Quentin's relationship with both parents further compounds this emotional deprivation. His father's identity as "professor" outweighs his role as caregiver, suggesting negligence of his parental duties in favor of professional recognition. Similarly, Quentin's distancing from his mother; the rejection of her fragrance, the reduction of her words to mechanical utterances reveals the absence of warmth and authentic emotional connection. In Horney's terms, such emotional coldness represents neglect and indifference, key elements of "basic evil" that prevent a child from

internalizing love and security. Instead, Quentin internalizes distance, coldness, and formality, which fosters a relational void that later manifests in pathological ways.

Moreover, the father's passive observation of Quentin's disturbing behaviors without intervention demonstrates a profound failure of guidance. Horney emphasizes that lack of genuine guidance is yet another form of "basic evil," as it denies the child the structure necessary for moral and emotional development. Quentin's father sees his son's erratic behaviors—sexual misconduct, violence, and fascination with death yet responds with neither discipline nor care, reinforcing the indifference that permeates the household. This cumulative neglect, criticism, and emotional distance coalesce into an environment devoid of warmth or moral anchoring, thereby nurturing Quentin's aberrant psychology. His trajectory into becoming a serial killer, then, is not solely an individual failure but a tragic extension of the "basic evil" that pervaded his childhood.

Some of the characters experienced basic evil in evident forms which were easy to decipher while others had subtle forms of basic evil which took a deeper understanding of the dynamic with parents or caregivers. There were similarities and differences in the nature of basic evil which later decides the severity of basic anxiety and conflicts or neurosis. Another observation that came to light was not only the parent-child relationship, but the relationship between parents also heavily impacts childhood. A rough relationship implies a tense home environment giving way to a hostile environment which is detrimental to the growth of a healthy adult. Another important observation is that the mental health and stability of parents are also a source of dysfunction, giving way to basic evils of various forms that impact the child severely giving way to basic anxiety and thus basic conflict. In addition, it is crucial to recognize that unresolved conflicts and mental health issues within the parental unit can also contribute to a cycle of dysfunction and perpetuate negative patterns of behavior. These factors can significantly impact a child's emotional well-being and ability to form healthy relationships in adulthood.

Therefore, addressing these underlying issues is essential for creating a positive and nurturing environment for the child's overall development.

In sum, this chapter has established that understanding the dysfunctions of childhood as rooted in family dynamics, caregiving quality, and emotional neglect is essential for grasping the psychological trajectories of Oates's protagonists. Her novels expose the breakdown of familial and social values and the profound psychological consequences that follow. While foundational contributions by Freud, Jung, Adler, Klein, and Lacan have shaped our understanding of childhood trauma and personality development, it is Karen Horney's framework that offers the most precise articulation of how basic anxiety arises and how it is later managed through neurotic solutions. Unlike her predecessors, Horney rejects biological determinism and focuses instead on social and relational failures as the true origins of psychological distress. Her focus on the child's perception of being unloved, unsafe, or undervalued provides a powerful explanatory model for the emotional landscapes inhabited by Oates's characters. Through Horney's lens, we see not only the pathology but also the developmental logic behind each character's neurotic response, making the theoretical inquiry not just relevant, but necessary, for any serious literary or psychological analysis of Oates's work.

Chapter 6

Horney's Solutions and Developmental Pathways

This chapter aims at studying the intrapsychic processes, as distinguished from the interpersonal ones examined in the preceding chapters where personality types were based on trends of moving in different directions with respect to other people. It focuses on the developmental paths each neurotic type takes to resolve their conflicts and achieve inner unity. It also brings an understanding of the childhood conditions that lead to a certain developmental path or solution to resolve the conflict. The inner conflicts generate an inner world which is replete with unbearable tensions and potential terrors that makes the life of a neurotic close to dysfunctional. The automatic attempts like that in the process of self-idealization which is the most radical attempt at the solution are made by the neurotic to resolve problems and allay the tensions. The neurotic's attempts at resolution frequently manifest as defensive strategies, including self-idealization—an effort to construct an ideal self-image that mitigates inner distress (Horney 22; Anna Freud 76). These solutions delineate the direction of development for the neurotic. Consequently, this chapter aims at studying these directions of development embraced by these neurotics which are individual to each type to portray the complexities of mental development. The inner conflicts of neurotics often generate an emotional world fraught with unbearable tensions and fears, creating a state of psychological dysfunction. As a means of alleviating these internal pressures, neurotics engage in automatic, defensive strategies, akin to self-idealization; a radical attempt at resolving conflicts and creating a more manageable self-image. These strategies, though an attempt to idealize the self, are paradoxically also the very mechanisms that contribute to the neurotic's continued dysfunction. As, these defenses, while temporarily alleviating psychic pain, paradoxically perpetuate neurotic suffering by obscuring authentic self-awareness (Sullivan 130). Studying these solutions which vary according to each neurotic type helps to gain a deeper understanding of the direction of their psychological development. These paths

are shaped by unique strategies that neurotics adopt in an effort to mitigate the turmoil within. This chapter aims to elucidate these distinct developmental trajectories, offering insights into the complexities of mental development in neurotic individuals. In addition to their conscious attempts at resolving conflicts, there are often underlying measures at play that operate constantly, influencing the neurotic's psychological trajectory.

Besides these neurotic's attempts at the solution, there are other measures that operate all the time. These measures include alienation from self, externalization of inner experiences, compartmentalization or psychic fragmentation, automatic control and the neurotic's belief in the supremacy of the mind. Understanding the nature of inner conflict is indispensable here. There are two types of conflicts operating in the neurotic, one is the conflict between the pride system and the real-self and other is the conflict within the pride system itself. Though self-glorification and self-contempt seem to be a conflict too as they are two contradictory forces, they don't constitute a conflict. In the respect of the uncertainty about the feeling of identity experienced by the neurotic, Karen Horney says, "Who am I? Am I the proud superhuman-being-or am I the subdued, guilty and rather despicable creature?" (*Neurosis and Human Growth* 188). The neurotic who is a poet or philosopher can experience the question of identity in this manner. For the other neurotics, it appears in the dream symbolism.

The neurotic identifies both as his superior proud-self (glorified self) and despised- self giving way to the conflict. There are opposing views not only about evaluation of the self but also opposite attitudes towards others and opposing sets of values. If these two selves exist at the same time, then a conflict of a bigger impact is generated which has the potential to tear him apart, giving way to anxiety. To relieve this anxiety of high intensity, solutions set in automatically and there are three different kinds of approaches at solving this conflict of experiencing oneself both as his glorified self and his despised self at the same time. One of these approaches is compartmentalization as described in the story of Doctor Jekyll and Mr. Hyde where Dr. Jekyll experiences

himself as two distinct identities one being the sinner and other saint. He invents a medicine which can dissociate between his two selves. In a similar way neurotics who devise this approach exist both as expansive and grandiose separately with each type having no connection to the other. This attempt of compartmentalization as pointed out by Horney is a partial attempt and thus not very successful.

Another attempt, which is a more radical attempt, is devised by neurotics which can be named streamlining. This attempt permanently suppresses one of the selves and that the neurotic exists exclusively as their other self. Third way of doing away with the conflicts as suggested by Horney is resigning from intrapsychic conflict. Two major intrapsychic conflicts generated by pride system, central inner conflict and the one between proud self and despised self out of which central inner conflict is prominent. Thus, the types of neuroses or neurotic types are delineated based on the type of solution or major solution used to get rid of the intrapsychic conflicts. This typology is more advanced as compared to the earlier one in determining personality types. Since there are more limitations and complexities, William James calls it directions of developments than types.

There are three major solutions as proposed by Horney which determine the direction of development viz. "the expansive solution", "the self- effacing solution", and "the resignation" (*Neurosis and Human Growth* 157). In the "expansive solution" the individual identifies as his glorified self or grandiose self. They believe in the mastery of any obstacle inside or outside of them and thus the appeal of life lies in its mastery. The expansive solution involves a strong belief in one's ability to overcome any challenges through intelligence and willpower. This type of individual is focused on self-glorification, ambitious pursuits, and vindictive triumph to actualize their idealized self. Though with a difference in terminology, Freud and Adler have also identified such people with their need for narcissistic self-aggrandizement. Though they may appear to be

driven by expansive tendencies, they have self-effacing trends also functioning at their core which they have rigidly suppressed which come into light only during analysis.

Karen Horney classifies the expansive neurotic into three subtypes: narcissistic, perfectionistic, and arrogant-vindictive. The narcissistic type enacts an idealized self with a strong need for admiration, often boasting of greatness but prone to loneliness and work failures due to overestimating capacities (Horney, *Neurosis and Human Growth* 194-195). The perfectionistic subtype demands respect based on high moral standards and fairness, bound by rigid "neurotic shoulds," and collapses under misfortune, as their belief in life's justice is fragile (Horney 197; Varvatsoulias 27). The arrogant-vindictive type struggles with self-alienation and self-scorn, leading to deep conflicts and fragmentation of the personality (Horney 296). These distinctions illustrate varied neurotic defenses shaping self-image and interpersonal dynamics. This chapter covers vindictiveness in detail as the protagonists under study align with this subtype prominently. The subsequent analysis follows the detailed understanding of their psyche and subconscious drives to uncover their arrogant-vindictive tendencies. Vindictiveness presents itself variously in human relationships. One way of its manifestation is competitiveness, which originates from the need to triumph. Horney while describing the competitive impulses in the vindictive type person states:

> He cannot tolerate anybody who knows or achieves more than he does, wields more power, or in any way questions his superiority. Compulsively he has to drag his rival down or defeat him. Even if he subordinates himself for the sake of his career, he is scheming for ultimate triumph. (198)

In this context, Corky Corcoran in *What I Lived For* feels envious of other men in his circle who happen to have achieved more than him or have amassed more wealth, possession or power than him. Oates while expressing his envy towards McElroy who happens to be one of his peers says, "It burns his ass, though to see McElroy, over there, with his party. McElroy too much like Corky himself except he got a law degree, had

better breaks. No smarter than Corky Corcoran, though" (Oates, *What I Lived For* 22). Corky feels a sense of competitive streak with McElroy comparing self with him saying he is like him, but he has got a law degree which triggers a sense of envy in Corky and to counterweigh that he reiterates that he isn't any smarter than Corky Corcoran. This emphasizes the need of an arrogant vindictive type to bring their subjugate and conquer over their rival if they happen to be superior to them in any regards.

Similarly, when Corky visits his ex-wife Charlotte who lives with her new husband Gavin, he gets stung by jealousy upon seeing their home as it is very big and luxurious. He loathes the idea of Charlotte's new man being richer than him. Corky's sense of awe at the sight of their home reflects in the following excerpt:

> Christ, this place is impressive, Corky feels it as a wire-thin pain in his head, need a drink? a drink? Oh God cathedral ceiling in the living room, fieldstone fireplace and hearth like something in a ski lodge, a wall of plate glass overlooking one of those prissy little Zen gardens, raked pebbles and miniature shrubbery and a single piece of statuary and what looks like driftwood, artsy stuff, the architect who did the house is Korean. (435)

Corky has pledged to quit drinking, and any stressful situation revives his urge to drink with a sense of urgency. Corky upon seeing that the loftiness of Charlotte home with her new husband puts Corky in miserable state where he experiences sharp pain in his head accompanied by an urge to drink. As an arrogant, vindictive type seeing Charlotte's new husband having achieved more than him triggers this response. Further, he sees that the oriental carpet, a European antique which earlier adorned his bedroom with Charlotte, is now only suitable for the guest suite in Charlotte's home with Gavin. It leaves him in fumes. Upon noticing Charlotte's fingers, he sees the rings are gone which are replaced by a bigger ring. Making mention of the new rings, Corky says, "And the new ring. Rings. A shock to Corky to see, to realize his rings are gone. In their place an emerald-studded wedding band and a diamond big as a grape rimmed with smaller emeralds. To

spite me. All of it, to spite me" (437). It is observed that Corky experiences a sense of shock not merely from their wedding ring to be replaced but at the size of the diamond of Charlotte's new ring which he describes to be as "big as a grape". He pays a keen notice to the detail to see the emerald studding on the wedding band and the diamond ring alike. He utters in disbelief and anger saying that all of this is to "spite" him. His belief that Charlotte's flashy new rings are to spite him is birthed and fueled by his vindictive tendencies.

Horney says that the subservient behavior that the vindictive type shows in his career is to later make bigger vindictive claims and experience a bigger vindictive triumph. On analyzing Corky's conduct with his boss Ross Drummond, who eventually turns into his father-in-law, it can be observed that he sub-ordinates himself as he believes that it can lead to bigger gains in his career and life in general. "Mr. Drummond had an eye for potential, Mr. Drummond creates potential, that's his business, and he's no amateur" (423). He has immense faith in his boss's abilities to sculpt and nurture his potential. "Knowing by the age of twenty-seven what for years he'd only sensed: a man learns the way of the world from older men who love him. It doesn't matter if they tell you bullshit as long as they tell you something" (428). The preceding statement reflects how Corky views his boss as someone capable of shaping his destiny by imparting him with necessary skills and knowledge.

> No bullshitting from this kid, Drummond would boast, so Corky, in his own right a great bullshitter, knew to keep his mouth shut in Ross Drummond's presence. You listened, you learned. You soaked it up. You didn't interfere with the process. Drummond had no son, only a daughter, and now a granddaughter, his was a household, Corky figured, of compliance and acquiescence; an occasional emotional upset, a flirty sort of tension between father and daughter, but no serious disagreements. "You pay the bills, you got the balls, eh?" Drummond liked to boast. (Oates 427)

The excerpt above explains Corky's docile conduct with his boss Ross Drummond. Corky, who is notorious for bluffing his way through stuff, stays silent in Ross's presence. Ross's home environment, as Corky observed, is "of compliance and acquiescence" he deems it fit to keep a similar demeanor to Ross. Thus, Corky took to sub-servient ways to become a confidant of his boss which later leads to his boss not only entrusting his company's secrets but his daughter's hand as well to him. The other benefits and perks that accompanied were:

> A new office for Corky. Salary raises, opportunities for fat commissions. Promotions over the heads of older long suffering arguably more deserving employees. Stock market tips. Three martini lunches at Drummond's clubs- the U.C.A.C., the U.C Golf Club, the Lakeshore Yacht Club. Ross Drummond introducing Corky to his friends, an arm slung heavy and proprietary around Corky's shoulders- "My daughter's fiancé"- "My daughter's husband"-sometimes "my son-in-law." My, mine. (Oates 427)

The above excerpt bears testimony to the ultimate win or the vindictive triumph experienced by Corky Corcoran. Another manifestation of the vindictive impulses of the arrogant, vindictive type is their violent rages, which are often conspicuous. The vindictive fury might frighten the neurotic himself as his usual controls aren't functional when his fury is in play, and he fears doing something irreparable. Horney while describing the vindictive fury in a vindictive type says, "When seized by vindictive wrath, they may indeed jeopardize their lives, their security, their jobs, their social positions" (199). Vindictive fury manifested in Corky with an urge to kill Charlotte and her divorce lawyer and these were the days when he was drinking heavily due to the stress during the divorce phase in his life. Speaking of how he would wake up fantasizing about killing Charlotte he says, "Scaring himself too fantasizing killing Charlotte and her lawyer Donaldson, the way he'd lead them into a trap and shoot them both" (345). When the rush of vindictive fury takes over, the usual controls are lost but once the calm is restored, they learn that they went overboard. Awakening to the realization that he wouldn't want to kill

Charlotte, he ponders, “Why kill Charlotte, the poor dumb cunt, he’d wanted to be free of the marriage. His wild emotions in those days Corky’d never been able to figure out” (345). He blames the urges on his “wild emotions”, and it remains a mystery to himself as well as the reason for his violent urges. He thinks the same way about Christina as well when he says, “Wanting to hurt Christina, too. Deep in her body, that she’ll remember” (345). But soon after he realizes he loves her and won’t hurt her. It is the vindictive fury at play which mars the controls of the vindictive type to the degree that he himself fears his violent urges.

For an arrogant-vindictive type, the general attitude towards other people is often rude and offensive with a hint of civil politeness. The exploitation and humiliation he put the people through might appear in subtle ways or conspicuous ways. Horney while making a mention of the exploiting tendencies of this type says:

> He may use women for the satisfaction of his sexual needs with utter disregard for their feelings. With a seemingly naive egocentricity, he will use people as a means to an end. He frequently makes contacts exclusively on the basis of their serving his need for triumph: people he can use as stepping stones in his career, influential women he can conquer and subdue, followers who give him blind recognition and augment his power. (*Neurosis and Human Growth* 199)

The exploiting tendencies of this nature are rampant in Corky’s attitude towards women and people in general. There is a reprehensible statement by Corky about women which follows as, “Used Kleenex, Corky wonders if they see themselves that way, ever? Or Don’t dare?” (Oates, *What I Lived For* 348). The word “Kleenex” here refers to a brand of sanitary napkin/tissues accentuating his thought process towards women where he deems them no better than a sanitary napkin which is disposable in nature. His encounters with various women throughout the novel attest to his tendencies to disregard and disrespect their feelings and only deem them fit for sexual pleasures. His tendency to

exploit is not only limited to women but extends to people in general where he uses them as a means to an end as a mere instrument or a tool to fulfill his cause.

Corky uses people as steppingstones in his career. He only establishes contacts with influential people and influential women. Besides Charlotte and Christina, the other women he would get involved with are also high profile. Speaking of the other women he would get involved with, Corky says:

> In the Eighties, it was posh hotel rooms downtown and out along I-190, sometimes Corky's girl, or woman as they'd begun to want to be called, would even be on expense account, a sales director at Union Trust, the programmer for WWAZ-TV, assistant district attorneys, the assistant curator of Art Museum, the society editor at the Journal. And certain of Charlotte's women friends, loosening up as if with age, their businessman husbands raking in dough in those boom times before October 1987 and their kids grown and moved away and suddenly what's there to save it for? -their grandchildren? (446-447)

It can be observed that the women he would enter affairs with are influential women. Conquering women of high social standing would feed his vindictive impulses as an arrogant-vindictive type. There are not only influential women he seeks to conquer and subdue but also influential men he can enter friendships with whom he can use as steppingstones in his career furthering his career. It is seen that the friendship with Slattery's is no exception. Besides the men he hangs out in the clubs with are renowned in Union City. While flaunting to Greenbaum his high-profile friends, Corky states:

> . . . guy with the gray hair is Ben Pike the police chief, you must know him from his pictures in the papers, and the guy next to him, Budd Yeager, one of the top UCPD homicide detectives, Yeager's a friend of mine, and the guy next to him is with the Internal Affairs Division, and the youngest guy, back to the window, he's an old St. Thomas classmate of mine, the lawyer who's going to defend Dwayne Pickett next month. (Oates 123-124)

Besides these men, Corky has acquaintances among the most renowned and distinguished people of Union City. Having association with such people serves his need for vindictive triumph. Besides having these people, he also needs followers who can be subservient and give him blind recognition. ". . . he'll slip anybody in a service uniform a ten-dollar bill and in the maître d's case a twenty-dollar bill. No special reason, just to get prompt courteous service" (Oates 102). It is seen that he buys the waiters at the club by bribing them with money and offering tips to ensure he gets special treatment and quick service. It is seen even the workers are at his beck and call as soon as he enters the Union City Athletic Club, augmenting his power as a vindictive type.

> Exchanging greetings with the kid who parks his Caddy, the black doorman Archie, the house manager A.G. Rickett, the Elm Room's maitre d' and the wine steward and God knows who all else . . . smiling their sunny expectant smiles seeing it's him . . . generous with tips-he's feeling good already like the air, leaked out of him, is being blown back in. (99)

The followers who give him blind recognition and augment his power as a vindictive type is instrumental for him. And it is seen here that he buys that with money by tipping them generously. It is seen that it shifts his mood as soon as he enters the U.C.A.C it has been emphasized with an analogy of air being blown back to him which was initially leaked out due to mis happenings that happened earlier.

Besides having an interest in exploiting people and using them as a means to an end, he has this tendency to frustrate their wishes. He has a tendency to keep the injuries received alive to be able to solidify claims which support his demand for retribution. Horney compares him to "an elephant who never forgets" (*Neurosis and Human Growth* 201). The childhood for the expansive type like other directions of neurotic developments has some contributing factors to its development. Horney compares such kind of a development to the people in concentration camps who stifle their softer emotions like

that of compassion for self and others to ensure survival. Speaking of how he stifles the tender emotions, Horney states:

> It seems to me that a child under the conditions I have described also goes through such a hardening process in order to survive. He may make some pathetic and unsuccessful attempts to win sympathy, interest, or affection but finally chokes off all tender needs. He gradually decides that genuine affection is not only unattainable for him, but it doesn't exist at all. He ends by no longer wanting it and even scorning it. (202)

These stifling feelings later feed his vindictiveness, and he tends to have a mindset where he believes, "He will become great and put them to shame. He will show them how they have misjudged and wronged him. He will become the great hero, the persecutor, the leader, the scientist attaining immortal fame" (203). The following excerpt sheds light on this aspect of Corky's behavior as a vindictive type:

> "Well, screw you too." Corky speaks aloud, loudly. Grins at his reflection. What he'd like, it's only in the privacy and secrecy of an empty men's room at the Union City Athletic Club the thoughts strike him, is to climb high enough so he can shit on them all. All of the Union City, friends, enemies, and noncombatants and that's the truth. (Oates, *What I Lived For* 137)

Getting along with everyone is for appearances, and he would show everyone their place once he gets that kind of success. "Shit on them all" metaphorically refers to sub-ordinating everyone and he says as he climbs to the highest position, he would subjugate everyone including friends and enemies. That will be the ultimate triumph for an arrogant-vindictive type. Corky is seen getting close to that ultimate triumph as the novel closes; "Never less than sixty-four percent of the vote. That's a fact. Now they' are talking of Jerome A. Corcoran for the Mayor of Union City, now Oscar Slattery is resigning" (Oates 611). In the epilogue of the novel it comes to fore that there are talks about Corcoran being appointed the new Mayor of Union City post Oscar Slattery's

resignation. Thus, the dream of "shitting on them all" and all the union city by acquiring the highest position is coming to reality, an ultimate triumph for the Corky.

Understanding the role of intrapsychic factors is as integral as the interpersonal ones and thus understanding the subjective development of vindictiveness is equally important. He takes pride in his intellectual powers, pride in vigilance, outwitting everybody, foresight and planning. It is seen that, Quentin. P is an extremely gifted person with extraordinary intellectual abilities, and he takes immense pride in his intellect. Making a mention of his I.Q score, he says, "My I.Q when last tested: 112. A previous time tested: 107. In the high school when tested: 121" (Oates, *Zombie* 3). Quentin's high intelligence and pride in his intellectual abilities contribute to his sense of superiority and desire to outwit others. This combination of traits may play a significant role in his development of vindictiveness and manipulative behavior. Similarly, in various instances he is observed seeking pride in his other faculties and vigilance is one of them; "Like a dog seeking what dogs seek sniffing along the ground & their eyes alert" (26). Here the word "dog seeking" refers to his vigilance power. Similarly, he takes pride in him requiring lesser sleep saying, "I am an early riser not requiring sleep like weaker people" (53). Quentin's vigilant nature is highlighted through his comparison to a dog, emphasizing his keen awareness and sharp senses. His belief in his superiority extends beyond intellectual abilities to include physical attributes like needing less sleep, further reinforcing his sense of pride and superiority.

Besides, the vindictive type takes pride in not getting hurt by anything, anybody or any situation as if he is impenetrable to hurt. Pride in immunity to hurt is then accompanied by the pride in impunity that is the ability to hurt others without fearing the consequences. He maintains an even balance of expressing his vindictive impulses and holding them back. Expressing them ensures that people stay in a constant state of awe. Though he would never admit it, he is intimidated by people, and fear compels him to tone down his vindictive impulses. In the words of Karen Horney, "He is afraid that others may retaliate for the offenses he perpetrates on them. He is afraid that they may

interfere with whatever plan he has for them 'if he goes too far'" (*Neurosis and Human Growth* 206). In this context, Quentin in *Zombie* keeps himself in check while selection process of his victims. "I knew that, & have always known. I was resolute (how many times I have instructed myself!) SUCH WOULD NOT HAPPEN" (Oates, *Zombie* 93). Quentin's internal struggle between his vindictive impulses and fear of retaliation ultimately leads him to carefully select his victims in order to maintain control. This constant battle within himself showcases his determination to not let his actions spiral out of control, as he reminds himself repeatedly that he must remain resolute in his decisions.

The last kind of pride the arrogant-vindictive type indulges in is pride in his honesty. He has ways to justify his coldness and asserts that he isn't pretentious like the complaint type who claims to be more loving than they are only as pretense. Self-hate is of pernicious quality as compared to all the other types as they have already stiffened any positive feelings which can induce a sense of wellbeing and alleviate self-hate. Expressing his self-hate Q.P says, ". . . how ashamed I was to betray the loving trust of my Mom & Dad & that was the worst part of what'd happened to me . . . I believed in God but did not think he believed in me because I was not worthy" (Oates, *Zombie* 46). His arrogant-vindictive tendencies birth self-hate and fuel the feelings of guilt and worthlessness as seen in the preceding quote. To preserve oneself from the self-hate of this intensity, the arrogant-vindictive type externalizes this hate towards others by loathing all things he loathes in self. The self-hate can be towards the inner attributes or the outer appearance. A person can externalize self-hate towards one's appearance by demeaning other's appearance as in Quentin's case. He calls Bim a white guy "with a face like crumbly cheese. . .. & a perpetual runny nose". Similarly, he calls another guy, "a fat guy, . . . with a beer gut . . .. [and] chin like a bloated frog" (44). It can be observed that this hatred towards others appearance is a projection of hatred towards self as he is seen comparing his shoulders to a vulture's saying, "My shoulders hunched like a vulture's & I'm staring at my shoes which are jogging shoes stained like rust" (45). Another armor against rigorous self-hate is self-righteousness, which is usually beyond

any question. In this context Horney says, “In arguments that arise he seems to be unscorned about the truth of a statement he interprets as hostile attack, but automatically responds with counterattacks- like a porcupine when it is touched” (*Neurosis and Human Growth* 208). Lastly, he abolishes self-hate by imposing his claims on others, ensuring that they shouldn’t act in a manner which deems him guilty.

Pride and self-hate play an instrumental role in this type leading to the complex mechanisms ruled by the pride system establishing him as a harassed individual striving for survival than the villainous dictator he appears to be on superficial observation. He strives so hard to prevent his all-consuming self-hate devouring him and his very sense of unity. In analysis, the intrapsychic factors are first tackled as opposed to the hostility towards others or interpersonal ones as they are off limits to the analyst. He has very little sympathy for others which results from the notion that he lacks any sympathy for self. However, there is another contributing factor in his callous attitude towards others, which is his envy towards others. Speaking of this envy Karen Horney says, “It is a bitter envy – not for this or that particular asset, but pervasive –and stems from his feeling excluded from life in general” (*Neurosis and Human Growth* 211). This comes into clear relief during the analysis when he mentions that others are better off than he is, though he would refrain from direct mention of that as it would question his immunity and invulnerability.

An arrogant-vindictive type feels excluded from all the joys life has to offer in actual terms owing to his entanglements. This envy further fuels his vindictiveness as an urge to kill joy. Karen Horney describes this kind of attitude as the dog-in-the-manger attitude where the person prohibits others the joys which are out of reach for himself. The analyst might either get intimidated or disregard him altogether, neither of which is constructive as he is a struggling and suffering human being and should be observed and availed help in that light despite his seemingly callous and ruthless persona.

The other direction of development or solution to cope with internal conflicts is a self-effacing solution. The direction of development here is opposite to that of the expansive ones. He suppresses any expansive drives functional in him and embodies his "subdued self" as opposed to his "idealized self" which is seen in expansive type. Expansive type leans towards superiority compared to others whereas this type moves away from any behavior that puts him in a superior position. Expansive type loathes helplessness and suffering, and this type cultivates and exaggerates it moving in a diametrically opposite direction. As the expansive type tends to subordinate people, self-effacing type subordinates himself compared to others. A sense of failure gives way to self-contempt and self-hate. He also externalizes his self-hate to others where he is of the view that others despise him too and are accusing him of failure. Expansive drives such as ambition, vindictiveness, triumph, and seeking his own advantage are consciously suppressed. Besides, he puts a strict check on his pride by denying it and disowning it. Shunning pride, triumph and superiority become manifest in several ways. It is observed that this type has a characteristic fear of winning at games.

Similar attitudes are observed in other ways, like this type never utilizes their stronger position in any situation to their advantage. Such a person even shuns making legitimate requests or accepting help in this regard. If he does, does so with a guilty conscience. He fears that he is taking advantage of others when asking for legitimate help and on the contrary lets people take advantage of himself. As seen in his characteristic fear of winning at games, there is a fear of triumph in general and it may appear on the front of success, limelight, games. A key example in this regard is a singer or a musician not being able to accept promising offers for fear of success.

When Anellia at the Alumini party is being introduced to dignified ladies who were ex-kappas and they even receive her well, she tells on herself and tells them she doesn't belong in Kappa house, and she is an imposter because she suspects she has "Jewish" roots. This type shuns from anything that may appear presumptuous and, on

this score, most legitimate self-assertion may appear presumptuous, "such as speaking up when unjustly reprimanded, ordering a meal, asking for a raise, seeing to his rights when making a contract, or making advances towards a desirable person of the other sex" (Horney, *Neurosis and Human Growth* 217). It is seen that Anellia hesitates to correct Mrs. Thayer when she addresses her with the wrong name. Anellia says:

> I could not bring myself to contradict her, to point out that my name was neither "Elise" nor "Alicia" nor was it a name that resembled these names. I could only repeat quietly, "But I am telling the truth, Mrs. Thayer- what would be my motive in lying?" The question was an appeal; yet not an appeal Mrs. Thayer could have answered. It was a question put to the Void. (Oates, *I'll Take You There* 70-71)

The above excerpt represents how Anellia as a self-effacing type would hesitate to make an assertion as simple as telling Mrs. Thayer her correct name.

This type never recognizes any of their own achievements or assets by themselves and does so indirectly by the agency of others like asserting that his friends say that he is a good storyteller, his patients say that he is a good doctor so on and so forth. Anellia calls herself witty through the agency of people saying, "these older Kappa sisters laughed thrilled as if I'd said something witty, it might have been my face, people wished to believe that I was being witty and not something else" (Oates 85). Here it can be observed that Anellia hesitates to directly call herself witty and rather says that it was "people" who wished to believe so, and it is her face that made them think that. Thus, not taking direct credit for being witty and assorting it to people's belief and her face. Similarly, she hesitates to call herself intellectual. Besides the hesitation to take credit for one's good traits; the self-effacing type even shuns from any expansive moves. In this regard Horney states, "any wish, any striving, any reaching out for more feels to him like a dangerous or reckless challenging of fate" (*Neurosis and Human Growth* 218). He shouldn't work towards making any improvements in physical appearance or even mental health by considering analysis. Such endeavors appear to him as a selfish waste of time.

The way he scorns being “presumptuous”, in the same manner he scorns “selfishness”. He deems it selfish to be able to enjoy anything alone. “Whether it is food, music, or nature, it loses flavor and meaning if not shared with somebody else. He often spends lavishly on others whereas the idea of spending on self brings him to a state of panic. The same holds true for time and energy. He would extend his time, energy, and effort to get a task done if it is for someone else. In this regard, Horney says, “He may neglect his appearance unless he has a date, a professional or social engagement-i.e., again unless it is for others” (219). Anellia in *I’ll Take You There* is seen to make an effort towards looking good and improving her appearance so that her sorority sisters approve of her. “I had not been feeling very well, though I’d smeared bright crimson grease on my mouth, Deedee's lipstick, at Deedee's suggestion; I'd even allowed Deedee to smear silver green eye shadow on my eyelids” (Oates 69). In the preceding quote, Anellia’s use of the phrase “crimson grease” towards the lipstick suggests her dislike and disgust for it, but she still wears it to look presentable to her Kappa sisters. Similarly, she tries to dress up elegantly for the reception of alumini’s at the Kappa house. Anellia, while justifying her urge to look pleasant for her Kappa sisters, says:

> Of course I’d had to remove my coat: my Kappa sisters were heartily tired of that ugly coat: my Kappa sisters were heartily tired of that ugly coat: I was wearing a good wool dress someone had lent me, and around my neck to disguise my thinness and the absence of my Kappa pin the woolen muffler which in the bustle of reception and the flickering candlelight might have been mistaken for an elegant woollen scarf. (Oates 77)

Anellia deems the coat ugly because that is how her Kappa sisters see it, and she replaces the coat with a woolen dress. Apart from that she adds a scarf to hide her bosom with the missing Kappa pin which can upset the sisters. Thus, she puts effort and energy into dressing well only for others as the self-effacing type would deem wasting resources, time and energy on self as selfish.

Besides the taboos imposed on being presumptuous and selfishness, being aggressive is a taboo as well. “He cannot stand up for his dislike of a person, an idea, a cause –and fight them if necessary. He cannot keep a sustained hostility, nor can he carry a grudge, consciously” (*Neurosis and Human Growth* 219). Trespassing against the aforementioned taboos generates in him feelings of self-condemnation and self-contempt. Noticing Abby’s tolerant behavior towards the other woman, Wilem says, “Did Abby not notice? Why was Abby tolerant of this crude, coarse, unfeminine behaviour?” (Oates, *Pursuit* 48). It reflects her unwillingness to initiate a disagreement or hostility with her. At another instance, Wilem says, “He wouldn’t lie to Abby if she questioned him. But it wasn’t like her to be suspicious of others motives” (48). Her lack of suspicion suggests her reluctance to confront others and a repulsion towards any expansive tendencies in her. Similarly in *My Life As A Rat,* Voilet compares her situation with the employer to that of an animal saying, “as an animal-to avoid punishment, to assure nourishment and approval-can learn to behave contrary to its nature, and convincingly, I smiled at Orlando Metti. And I smiled” (269). She smiles at her employer to restrict herself from any expansive move or hostility towards her employer. Besides all these overwhelming feelings, there is a fear of ridicule at play in the self-effacing type which is usually unconscious and if conscious it is externalized. Externalized as others will ridicule him for his expansive moves. When Abby in *Pursuit* comes up with a pseudo name for herself, she fears that it will incite a hostile response in her husband. In Oates’s words, “She’d expected him to be disgusted with her for making up a pretty name for herself” (30). Abby believes that her expansive move of making up a name for her will incite a sense of disgust and ridicule for her. This fear of ridicule is exclusive to the self-effacing type as there is no such fear operational in the expansive type. He disavows any expansive qualities in himself and admires the same in others. Anellia while speaking of how she admired her Kappa sisters, says, “My Kappa sisters were fascinating to me as giant brightly feathered predator birds would be fascinating to a small songbird hiding in the brush. Or trying to hide in the brush” (Oates, *I'll Take You There* 52-53). The comparison here is very apt where she compares herself to “a small songbird” and her

Kappa sisters to be “giant brightly feathered predator birds” who have contrasting qualities than herself and as they lean more towards the expansive traits.

The early environment in this type when compared to the expansive type is quite different. There is a stark contrast in the childhood circumstances of the self-effacing type from the expansive type. The expansive type usually receives admiration early on or is raised in strict standards or faced humiliation or abuse in childhood. Whereas the self-effacing type grows under the shadow of somebody which can be a preferred sibling or a mother who is too beautiful or a father who is despotic. In *I'll Take You There* it is seen that the father is despotic while the mother is absent. There is a preferred older sibling as well, “Just as Dietrich the eldest son was always his favorite son no matter what” (Oates 24). They are initiated into self- subordinating devotion early on due to such circumstances. There is usually a mother or father figure whose admiration and generosity is conditional and can only be secured by blind obedience or there is a sibling who is dominating and only provides protection and love when pleased and appeased generously. Abby in *Pursuit* feels the same way towards her father where she blindly obeys his commands as a baby and answers with a yes to a question which further gives her life-long guilt. The child has this wish to rebel, which conflicts with his need for affection, but this hostility is suppressed eventually giving way to complete compliance. During adolescence the rebellion again upsurges along with ambition but gives way to compliance again with the first falling in love.

Self-idealization is the way in which the compliant type resolves the conflicts which originated in his early childhood, but there is only one way available to them unlike other types.

> His idealized image of himself primarily is a composite of unselfishness, goodness, generosity, humility, saintliness, nobility, sympathy. Helplessness, suffering, and martyrdom are also secondarily glorified. In contrast to the arrogant- vindictive type, a premium is also placed on feelings-feelings of joy or

> suffering, feelings not only for individual people but for humanity, art, nature, values of all sorts. (*Neurosis and Human Growth* 222)

Abby upholds similar values as a self-effacing type. Describing his wife Abby, Wilem says, “She was kind, patient, sympathetic with an irascible individual whom another might shun. He saw that she was good” (Oates, *Pursuits* 28). Similar tendencies can be observed in Voilet from *My Life As A Rat* where she yearns to be agreeable. To maintain the qualities of saintliness and lovableness, he is supposed to keep his pride in check. Thus, a shrinking process takes place which turns him into a helpless being. Inclusion of feeling and exclusion of pride are his means of resolving his conflicts. This solution has a weakness which lies in the shrinking process and the other is retraction of any expansive drives rendering him helpless subject to his own self-hate. Her inner dialogue of self-condemnation, where she says, “You are evil, sick. Insane. No decent man would marry you” brings the picture of self-hate to clear relief (21). He accepts accusations from others without any prior thought, and it never occurs to him that the accusations might be without a foundation. Infact, his reaction to confessing guilt or a fault when reprimanded is so immediate and instinctive that reason has no chance to intervene. “I had to think it was because of me, and also because of my father, who was my aunt’s brother” (202). Abby declares herself responsible for her Aunt’s Tracy’s misery and it is an unsubstantiated claim as it was not her fault that a man betrayed her aunt Tracy. Similarly, Voilet assumes that her uncle’s misconduct towards her was her fault; “Thinking it has to be your fault. It is you not Oscar Allyn. Your fault, your aunt’s husband has so altered...Not wanting to think-But I am the one. I caused this” (232, 235). She believes she is responsible for her aunt’s ill plight after her husband’s altered behavior. Speaking to herself, she says, “It is your fault, you are thinking. Dirty girl. And your aunt had tried so hard to love you. You!” (236).

> His dreams are replete with self-contempt and self-condemnation. Typical for the latter are execution-dreams: he is condemned to death; he doesn’t know why, but

> accepts it; nobody shows him mercy or even concern. Or he has dreams or fantasies in which he is tortured. The fear of torture may appear in hypochondriac fears: a headache becomes a brain tumor; a sore throat, tuberculosis; a stomach upset, cancer. (Horney, *Neurosis and Human Growth* 224)

These dreams and fears reflect a deep-seated sense of worthlessness and fear of punishment within the individual's psyche. Abby narrating her repetitive dream says, "can't comprehend who it is, what it is, that forces her to run along the overgrown path. Forces her to stagger through the tall grasses that tear at her hands, her face" (Oates, *Pursuit* 4). These dreams may stem from unresolved trauma or feelings of powerlessness in the individual's life, manifesting as physical ailments or fears of punishment. Abby reiterates the intensity of her dream, saying, "In her sleep she'd sensed that it was imminent, the skeleton dream. First, there is the premonition, a feeling of paralysis in her limbs and numbness in her being, an anticipation of something very terrible" (7). Here it can be seen that fear or torture takes the form of premonition where she experiences paralysis and numbness. She anticipates this as she believes she is guilty and deserves torture. This dream could be interpreted as a manifestation of the individual's subconscious guilt and self-punishment. The same can be seen in Voilet from *My Life As A Rat* where she says, "Then I was asleep. That delicious voluptuous sleep like floating in dark water. No dreams, for the water is too shallow. Yet the water is deep enough to cover your mouth, nose, eyes"(Oates 291). Here the visualizes herself drowning in water as she sleeps and calls the water "dark water" referring to its maliciousness and evil which is capable of drowning her, a manifestation of guilt and self-punishment.

The self-hate and self-contempt for this type appear to be of massive proportions as compared to other types, but they can't ward off their self-hate like other types as the methods and means are unavailable to this type. He cannot externalize his self-hate towards others and subject them to hate like the expansive type. Passive externalization is the means he resorts to do away with his self-hate though not as effective as active

externalization. Passive externalization manifests as, "his feeling accused by others, suspected or neglected, kept down, treated with contempt, abused, exploited, or treated with outright cruelty" (Horney *Neurosis and Human Growth* 225). The self-hate and self-minimization fuel the feelings of insecurity thus making him reach out to others for reassurance. Horney while stressing on his dependence on others says, "His salvation lies in others" (226). The appeal 'love' has for this type has a frantic character to it. When Horney refers to word 'love' in context of the self-effacing type, she refers to "all kinds of positive feelings, whether they be sympathy, tenderness, affection, gratitude, sexual love, or feeling of needed and appreciated" (226). Thus, she is referring to love in human relations and not romantic love. In the novel *Pursuit,* when Abby/ Miriam's aunt asks her if her breath smelled, she gives a no as an answer to secure her love; "Ask Miriam if her breath smelled, and Miriam shook her head no. From an early age, eager to utter those words adults crave to hear. How you come to be loved. Avoid being abandoned" (Oates, *Pursuit* 203). The preceding extract Oates establishes the need for self-effacing type to secure the love/re-assurance of others. The need for people in expansive type is not as great as this type as they have their pride and other resources at their disposal, but this type exclusively depends on people for surviving the inner conflicts, self-hate and self-contempt. Thus, their expectations of others are shaped accordingly which are largely good, they expect good from others unlike the expansive type who expect evil and the detached type who don't expect either. Thus, Voilet is seen expressing surprise on Grandpa Kerrigan's attitude towards others saying, "Unlike other, older persons in the family Grandpa Kerrigan made no effort to be "nice"-he didn't give a damn if you liked him or not" (211). Her astonishment at this attitude is understandable as she expects everyone to come off nice whereas Grandpa Kerrigan comes as an exception and he is a contrast not just to her expectations from others but also her own need to be liked a self-effacing person.

Speaking of this type's inability to decipher genuine affection from the unreal, Horney states, "He cannot as a rule distinguish between genuine friendliness and its many

counterfeits. He is too easily bribed by any show of warmth or interest. In addition, his inner dictates tell him that he should like everybody, and he should not be suspicious" (*Neurosis and Human Growth* 226). This is seen in Anellia's attitude towards her sorority sisters where she always overlooks their ulterior motives towards being kind towards her. When Dawn, one of the Kappas approaches her, she couldn't see any treachery in her behavior and rather believes that she is childlike and innocent. "She playfully chided me for studying too hard- 'You'll have a nervous breakdown! Really. It can happen.' At the same time she was childlike in her appeal for help in writing papers" (Oates, *I'll Take You There* 42). To Anellia, Dawn's mocking tone appears to be "playful chiding" and also her appeal to help with her papers as "childlike" and thus innocent. Similarly, in *My Life As A Rat,* Voilet refers to her employer Metti's behavior as "polite" on many instances. Self-effacing type only sees likable qualities in others and overlooks the manifestation of any negative traits. Voilet, while referring to her employer's behavior says, "But Dr. Metti didn't seem grievously annoyed by these minor mistakes only pointed them out with a griamce somewhere between a smile and a sneer as if saying Gotcha, girls!" (Oates, *My Life As A Rat* 266). She overlooks his grimace and dismisses it as sparse with a smile as a tendency to overlook negative traits by the self-effacing type. The same can be seen in her reception of the attitude of other Kappa sisters towards Anellia when she says, "And looked up to see several of my Kappa sisters in the doorway smiling at me, having forgiven me? Sweatly pleading: could I help them with their term papers?" (Oates, *I ll Take You There* 65). She fails to see that they are smiling at her not because they have forgiven her but because they want help with their papers. There is another instance where she asks the librarian about her paycheck where she frowns at her while replying to her query and Anellia defending the librarian's attitude towards herself saying, "She meant well; she meant to be kindly if a little curt" (37). There was no kindness in her gesture; instead she barely cared to entertain her query and rather frowned towards her with her disinterested reply. He believes that others are good and overlooks any manifestations of treachery, deceit or evil in them. Even when faced with firsthand bad experiences with others, he doesn't give up his expectations of them. Karen Horney

calls this a “Pollyanna attitude” which brings him more misery and general insecurity in relations with others.

The expectations this type has of others are of different kinds. First and foremost, he expects others to make him feel accepted. This acceptance may be in terms of “attention, approval, gratitude, affection, sympathy, love, sex” (Horney, *Neurosis and Human Growth* 227). Such a person places his value upon the currency of love like other people who place value upon money and measure their worth by the amount of money they are making; “He is worth as much as he is liked, needed, wanted or loved” (227). To feel accepted and loved by people her age, Abby makes up a pretty name for herself as her old name was, “Miriam Frances-a name she’d always disliked, a harsh-sounding name, a dull, old-lady name, not her” (Oates, *Pursuit* 29). She emphasizes, “I guess I want to be Abby to some people, mostly my age who I hope will like me …” (30). The self-effacing type’s other expectation from people is a need for company. He cannot withstand solitude and is incapable of enjoying anything on his own. Being alone means he is not wanted or liked and hence he takes it as a disgrace. Voilet, while referring to her work situation at Metti’s home, says, “working alone in the apartment I became apprehensive, anxious-waiting for the client’s key in the lock. Waiting for him to return” (Oates, *My Life As A Rat* 277). Having others gives him proof of being wanted and offers meaning and zest to his actions; “The self-effacing type needs someone for whom to sew, cook or garden, a teacher for whom he can play piano, patients or clients who rely on him” (Horney, *Neurosis and Human Growth* 227-228). In Voilet’s case she likes to do housemaid duties for his client/employer Metti.

Besides emotional support, his other expectation of others is to help. To him, the help he seeks lies within very reasonable limits as his desire to seek help is mostly unconscious. But in reality, he needs help with almost everything. Karen Horney while describing the massive proportions this need takes says, “his need for help amounts to the expectation that everything will be done for him. Others should supply the initiative, do

his work, take the responsibility, give meaning to his life, or take over his life so that he can live through them" (*Neurosis and Human Growth* 228). Similar tendencies are seen in Abby towards her expectations from people and her husband in particular. "A childish hope comes to her that Willem will siphon the horror from her, absorbs it into his soul. For his strength is so much greater than hers" (Oates, *Pursuit* 215). Abby holds the conviction that her husband is both physically and mentally stronger than her and thus he is capable of even taking away her pain and horror from her. Here "siphon the horror" stands for carrying the weight of her being and her life on his shoulders, a tendency of self-effacing type. It is observed that it is the needs that take the shape of claims in neurosis, and a similar thing is observed in the self-effacing type. But this type can't assert the claim consciously as there is a taboo on assertiveness and aggression as opposed to the expansive type that directly asserts the claims. Though not conscious, the claims exist. He believes in his good qualities like those of compliance, generosity, and helpfulness which make the basis for his claims. He has a tendency to overrate these traits and omit his unpleasant traits from consideration. Besides, he is unaware of other's actual needs and believes that his attention and generosity do sufficient whereas the others might not need them in actual terms.

Another basis for the neurotic claims is suffering. In this context, Horney says, "Suffering is unconsciously put into the service of asserting claims, which not only checks the incentive to overcome it but also leads to inadvertent exaggeration of suffering" (*Neurosis and Human Growth* 229). The suffering he seems to be putting on display is not only for demonstrative purposes but is real suffering and deeply affects him. He has a tendency to exaggerate it to become eligible for fulfillment of his claims and increases its intensity to realize this purpose. Similar to the suffering, another basis for his claims is a tendency to feel abused. This tendency takes the shape of such massive proportions that Horney essentially defines this type to be, "a person who craves affection and feels abused most of the time" (230). The feeling of being abused entitles him to favors and help from others to make up for the abuse, thus fulfilling his claims. Some of

this abuse may be from external sources but it is self-perpetrated by inner processes with self-minimizing being one of them. It is seen that external abuse is also self-induced at most times due to the value it holds for him; “He may provoke others to treat him badly, and thus transfer the inner scene to outside” (231). When Abby’s husband tries to help her recall her childhood trauma, she retracts from him; “Trying to explain to him that it is a mistake for him to love her. For she is not worthy of love. This is how she is being punished and her punishment is deserved” (Oates, *Pursuit* 68-69). She accepts her fate as a punishment and accentuates her misery by declaring herself unworthy of his love. The feeling of unworthiness and a deserved punishment is a form of self-perpetrated abuse which results from her minimization of self. Thus, feeling abused has a more important significance here than mere passive externalization of self-hate. Feeling abused helps him to live his suppressed expansive drives in a conceited manner. It perpetrates upon him a feeling of superiority by being the martyred one who sustained the abuse, thus establishing the purpose of living his expansive drives. The premium that is placed upon these feelings of being abused never allows it to remain static but perpetually increases, leading to an increased resentment towards other people. But this hostility towards others is deeply suppressed and majorly unconscious as it contradicts his values of goodness and other characteristic traits that constitute his personality. Expressing resentment not only means turning against other people but himself, so it is expressed in a mitigated form through reproaches. The vindictive resentment is expressed through suffering itself. Suffering helps in absorbing rage and holding others accountable for his condition. Thus, holding others guilty for his suffering serves to express his resentment towards them. Voilet, speaking of this resentment for his employer Metti says, “A terrible sick rage stirred in me, for the individual who lived in this lavish apartment. Who owned such elegant clothing, and who took advantage of his employee’s wish to please him. His employee’s need to survive” (Oates, *My Life As A Rat* 278). It becomes clear that she feels enraged and resentful but never expresses it to Metti and rather asserts to herself that she enjoys it to keep this rage in check as a self-effacing type. She says, “It was gratifying to feel that Metti had come to depend upon me in such ways; yet it made me

anxious that I had already spent so much of that afternoon cleaning the apartment, and dealing with the little dog" (284). Thus, describing the ambivalence of attitude of self-effacing type towards people, Karen Horney says, "a surface prevalence of naive optimistic trust and an undercurrent of just as indiscriminate suspiciousness and resentment" (*Neurosis and Human Growth* 233).

The third direction of development or solution that neurotic takes is the "resignation or appeal to freedom". The name stems from the need for "resignation" from active living. It is considered to be the most radical solution for neurotic conflicts. One of the basic characteristics of this solution is developing an onlooker attitude towards himself and life. In the novel *Zombie,* when Q.P looks at himself, he sees a different person. He says, "So I washed up. And saw in the bathroom mirror Q_P_ looking at me dazed & sunburnt-seeming. & a vein of blood in the left eye. & the hairline receding" (Oates, *Zombie* 147). In the preceding quote, it appears as if the "Q_P_" and "me" are different entities, but they are the same person. It is the manifestation of the onlooker attitude towards self; a withdrawing type develops. Similar attitude is seen in Abby towards herself; "Abby waves to him; she hears the sound of frightened laughter issuing from her own mouth . . . Observing the slow, calm progress of her thoughts- like high scudding cumulus clouds, filmy white, not sick-bloated thunderheads darkening the sky" (Oates, *Pursuit* 211-212). She is aware of her reflexes as she can observe them objectively. Her onlooker attitude towards herself helps her decipher the nature of her thoughts which she compares to white clouds. Another important characteristic for a neurotic pursuing the solution of resignation is "the absence of any serious striving for achievement and the aversion to effort" (*Neurosis and Human Growth* 261). Unlike some other neurotic types who have strivings to achieve something but have inhibitions stopping them, resigned type neither wants the effort nor the achievement. Such a person tends to create beautiful works of art like painting a picture, composing music or writing a book but only in his imagination. He might have brilliant ideas on some subject but shuns from rearranging and organizing those ideas on a piece of paper as it requires

arduous work. He always finds reasons for not doing this. One of the reasons being that if he focuses on one aspect or area of interest it narrows his horizons and curtails his interest from the other fields. This aversion to effort takes over other areas of life as well as he tends to procrastinate on simpler tasks like reading, writing a letter or shopping. He may feel tired at the very prospect of larger more arduous tasks and activities.

Such a person lacks a direction or plan for his life and discards such a question at his mere mention. This lack of direction may ascertain to major or minor issues or life in general. The question of what he really wants to do with his life never occurs to him and is discarded easily without any concern. Quentin would evade this question at the mere mention of this question. When his father asks, "'-not just your future, but right now. What is your life right now, Quentin? How would you describe it?" (Oates, *Zombie* 36), he acts as if he didn't understand the question and evades it. Any mention of a similar question pertaining to his life's plans or future annoys him. He hears his grandma discuss it with her friend; " Grandma & other woman were talking about Q_P_, I know. & it crossed my mind I might kill them both now, & the other one out in the van, & dispose of the three corpses at once & that would save time, & I wouldn't have to think about it anymore" (147-148). His aversion to effort even extends to analysis which he compares to visiting a dentist who pulls a tooth or a doctor who gives him an injection. He believes that it should be the analyst doing all the work miraculously curing his problem and providing a solution.

Another important characteristic of resignation is restriction of wishes which forms the core of the solution of resignation. It usually stems from a pessimistic attitude towards life where the person deems life to be futile and nothing to be desirable. Describing this sense of "wishlessness" in the resigned type, Karen Horney says:

> If a wish or interest has enough zest to penetrate through the "don't care" attitude, it fades out soon after and the smooth surface of "nothing matters" or "nothing should matter" is restablished. Such "wishlessness" may concern both

> professional and personal life the wish for a different job or an advancement as well as for a marriage, a house, a car, or other possessions. (*Neurosis and Human Growth* 263)

This state of "wishlessness" fuels his wish of not being bothered because fulfilling these wishes would sabotage that one wish;"She wears only ring, the Celtic wedding band on her left hand. That is enough for her Abby thinks" (Oates, *Pursuit* 212). Abby is happy with the small sanctuary she has with Willem and would prefer to stay unbothered till the end of the days basking in her private happiness. It is seen that the retraction of wishes serves to feed the three basic characteristic traits of resignation viz the onlooker attitude towards life, no purpose or goal, and aversion to effort. Horney says, "He can be an onlooker at his life only if he has no strong wishes of any kind. He can hardly have aspirations or purposeful goals if he does not have the motive power of wishes. And, finally, no wish is strong enough to warrant effort" (*Neurosis and Human Growth* 264).

While understanding their human relationships, it is observed that they have a detached attitude when operating in close relationships. It is easier for this type to maintain a distance as they don't expect good or bad from others unlike other types. His relationships are either distant or transitory as being emotionally involved is something he cannot afford. Describing her perplexion upon seeing Willem for the first time, Abby says, "Hadn't wanted to like him. Just a glance at him-tall, blond, "boyish" handsome, kinky blue eyes-something inside her panicked. Shrank, curled up like a worm to protect itself" (Oates, *Pursuit* 17). Though he is extremely appealing which has been emphasized by him fitting the stereotypical beauty standards for a white male, she has a need to keep herself from liking him. But there is an emotional distance and an element of detachment operating all the way. The intensity of her withdrawal can be seen from the use of imagery to describe her as a worm curling up in an attempt to protect her. In another depiction, Oates says, "She is astonished by his love for her and by his desire for her, which she observes as one might observe a raging fire from just a few feet away, dangerously close" (*Pursuit* 212-213). Her relationship with Willem is permanent and not

transitory, and it culminates in marriage. But there is an emotional distance and an element of detachment operating all the way. In some other cases, sex is the only means to human intimacy as he doesn't want to risk an emotional connection. It is seen that his sexual involvement is also peculiar in nature. "He may have plenty of transient sexual relations, backing out of them sooner or later. They should not, as it were degenerate into love" (Horney, *Neurosis and Human Growth* 266). The same can be seen in Q.P. where his sexual involvement with others is extremely peculiar. His engages with many men and ends up killing each one of them. Thus, he has multiple transient relationships. It saves him emotional investment in these relationships. In some cases, the withdrawing type aborts any sexual interest and excludes this area of life entirely. A distant friendly interest is all he expects in his relationships with others in this case. He hasn't stifled all positive feelings like the arrogant-vindictive type. He nurtures his intimate feelings in the inner sanctum. He just guards them from others displaying their detached attitude. Expressing how he would be affectionate with his Zombie/sex-slave, he says:

> He would rest his head on my shoulder like a baby. Or I would rest my head on his shoulder like a baby. We would lie beneath the covers in my bed in the CARETAKER's room listening to the November wind & the bells of the Music college tower chiming & WE WOULD COUNT THE CHIMES UNTIL WE FELL ASLEEP AT EXACTLY THE SAME MOMENT. (Oates, Z*ombie* 170)

The above excerpt is testimony to the tender feelings that Quentin safeguards within himself as a withdrawing type. He would let this out only to his slave whom he has made brain-dead by performing a lobotomy. In such a case, he doesn't have any fear as the slave can't think or feel but can only take commands and is merely an automaton; "For a true Zombie could not say a thing that was not, only a thing that was" (169). Quentin believes that he won't make demands off of his time and have expectations of him retaining his independence as a detached type.

Another characteristic of a resigned person is "his hypersensitivity to influence, pressure, coercion or ties of any kind" (Horney, *Neurosis and Human Growth* 266). Entering any relationship or group activity may trigger this fear, and he plans to extricate himself from the start itself. This sensitivity to coercion even makes it difficult for the analyst as the patient fears that the analyst wants to coerce him to become something he is not. Karen Horney enlists the things he may fear coercion from as:

> It may be any contract, such as signing a lease or any long-term engagement. It may be any physical pressure, even collars, girdles, shoes. It may be an obstructed view. He may resent anything that others expect from him, or might possibly expect, from him-like Christmas presents, letters or paying his bills at certain times. It may extend to institutions, traffic regulations, conventions, government interference. (*Neurosis and Human Growth* 266)

Abby fears coercion from the institution of marriage. When Willem mentions the future of marriage and children, Abby hesitates. The following excerpt draws her fear, "Explaining to her his "policy" on names . . . That's how they will name their children, Willem said. They will each participate, making a list of names from the Bible. Abby giggled, shocked. Blushing. Was she agreeing to something she will regret? (Oates, *Pursuit* 37). The mention of "policy" refers to the stringent set of rules laid by Willem's family on naming children, thus Abby fears coercion not only from the institution of marriage but also the familial rules upon entering Willem's family. She responds with a sense of shock and resorts to champagne to ease her fear. Similarly, when Wilem addresses Abby with a new term of endearment, she is startled. "Darling is a somewhat new word between them. Abby thinks Darling means coercion" (65). Here Abby as a resigned type experiences coercion even from the word "Darling", a word of endearment; "Not practiced in being married, for it is not yet a full day that she has been Mrs. Willem Zengler, but she is practiced in avoiding the eyes of strangers in public place" (Oates 12). These sentences have been carefully placed together to hint at Abby's detached persona. She needs to practice acting like a married person signifies she sees it as a coercion and

not something she is a natural at and on the contrary, she seems to have a good practice in shunning the eyes of strangers and the friendly seeming women who hope to strike up a conversation. Her act of avoiding their eyes is an act of frustrating their wishes as she senses they expect a friendly exchange. When faced with coercion, a resigned type doesn't fight people but rebels inwardly and shows it in passive ways by frustrating others by not responding or forgetting anything they expect of him. This response may be conscious or subconscious. It is seen in Quentin P.

Lastly, the characteristic this type displays is the aversion to change. Speaking of his dread of change, Horney says, "He would rather put up with the status quo-whether it is a job, his living quarters, an employee, or a marriage partner-than change" (*Neurosis and Human Growth* 267). He gives a deaf ear to any suggestions to change as he never ponders over changing his situation by incorporating a change which can be as simple as re-arranging the furniture or being more helpful to his wife through the difficulties. His aversion to change varies in intensity and form, and it depends on the degree of inertia. The aversion to change in the immediate environment, viz. external changes, may or may not be conscious. But aversion to inner changes is prominent in every resigned person.

Speaking of the importance of the basic characteristics of the resigned type, Karen Horney says, "they are not a series of unrelated peculiarities but a closely interknit structure. It is, at least in its basic composition, a picture of great consistency and unity, looking as if it had been painted in one hue" (*Neurosis and Human Growth* 269). She says that these characteristics are of great help in analysis as they are intertwined and when one of the traits is found, the others are sure to be found upon further analysis, giving the analyst a holistic picture. The inner processes that are functional in the resigned type take three different forms. The first one is the persistent resignation where the resignation is consistent, the second one is the rebellious group where the passive resistance takes a more active form and turns into active rebellion, and the last one is shallow living which develops from further deterioration.

The first group may have expansive trends or self-effacing trends as dominant which leads to individual variations or there may be differences in extent of inner resistance leading to variations in this group. This type, despite its tendency to restrict its contact with people, willingly helps others but unlike the self-effacing or expansive type, they don't expect anything in return and rather would despise any favors in return as it develops dependence. Despite the inner resistance and a state of inertia, these people are capable of doing their daily activities. Inertia might come into play if tasks get accumulated or require daunting efforts. The motivation behind their daily activities is sometimes economic pressure and at others willingness to be of help to others while staying resigned. Abby's willingness to help makes her work at the Center for Blind despite her resignation. Similarly, Q. P's daily activities as a caretaker are fueled by economic pressure. However, a major driving force is to do away with feelings of futility of existence. As they can't enjoy leisure time with others and can't be productive due to inner resistance, they rearrange their tasks to leave no room for free time by themselves to avoid any lurking fears of futility.

If they have no financial means, then either they resort to some occasional work opportunities or else succumb to parasitic existence. In case of moderate financial means, they tend to restrict their needs so that they use their free time as they please; "Most nights I don't go out, can't afford it. Begging for fucking crumbs from Mom and Dad. Eating take out from Burger King, Taco Bell, etc." (Oates, *Zombie* 174). Q.P is seen depending on both grandma and his parents for a parasitic existence and at the same time he restricts his needs by staying in and not going out. Usually, the things they take as work should constitute a hobby/hobbies or they have a tendency to succumb under a state of total inertia; "Emergency work repairing SEEPAGE DAMAGE in the old cistern. I am a hardworker if what I am doing has a purpose" (Oates 17). The inertia against doing may further expand and affect feelings and thoughts, leading resistance to thinking and feeling as well. He will need a need a stronger stimulus to arouse feelings in him which earlier would be easily generated. The emotional deadness can become more intense compared

to the other two types and when further addressed in therapy, he learns that it stems from pervasive inertia itself. If the living conditions are favorable, persistent resignation may prevail, and they stay in a stationary state as their inner dictates support them too. They keep strivings in check and maintain aversion to change which helps preserve the status quo.

When closely observed, a resigned person passes for a subdued rebel as the resistance he exhibits to inner and external pressure is passive in nature. But circumstances can sometimes force them, and they change into a state of active rebelliousness. The extent to which his active rebellion develops further depends on if the expansive or self-effacing tendencies are predominant and depends on the inner aliveness persona has retained. If expansive tendencies are predominant, the person easily develops discontentment towards restrictions. Active rebellion is seen in Q.P as he has expansive tendencies predominantly at play besides his resignation unlike Abby who has the tendencies of self-effacement and resorts to passive ways of rebelling. It is seen in Q.P where he goes after the boy from the neighborhood, which earlier seemed restricted to him. Speaking of this discontentment and upsurge of rebelling tendencies Horney states,

> The environmental situation-home, work-may become unsatisfactory that the person finally stops putting up with it any longer and in some form or other rebels openly. He may leave his home or his job and become militantly aggressive towards everybody with whom he associates as well as towards conventions and institutions. His attitude is one of "I don't give a damn what you expect of me or think of me. (*Neurosis and Human Growth* 284)

It is seen in Q.P when he casually ignores his courses at Dale Tech and drops off. Q.P walks away from his responsibilities towards his grandma as well. Abby leaves her aunt Miriam unannounced and moves away. A close analysis helps decipher Abby's jumping into the traffic an act of rebellion too, however it is directed towards self and more passive in nature. If this rebellion is directed outward, it might lead to release of energies

from the inner conflicts but is not considered constructive as it pushes the person further away from self. However, if such a rebellion is directed towards self and inner tyranny, it can have major liberating effects. Speaking of the nature of such rebellion, Horney states, "... it is more often a gradual development than a turbulent rebellion, more of an evolution than a revolution" (284). The incident with squirrel marks a threshold towards moving from persistent resignation to rebellion in Q.P. A resigned type resorting to rebellion undergoes a thorough examination of his ways of living and undergoes these changes which result in liberating of his energies which further manifest as creative expression depending upon his already prevalent skills. This is not a complete solution as none of these solutions are, but the person's experience eases relative to others chafing under conflicts. Sometimes during analysis, a similar result is achieved. As it is a partial solution, the whole resigned structure when brought under analysis and figured out, leads to improved relations with self and others besides freed creative expression. Thus, the analysis is the only means of complete resolution of neurotic conflicts no matter how intense and complex the solutions developed by the neurotic are.

The result of withdrawing from any pursuit of goals or active living may result in withdrawing from one's own feelings. Persistent resignation, which gives way to feelings of futility, gets further propagated into an emptiness that calls for distractions. In persistent resignation though the neurotic lives a restricted life, he still has hope. But when the neurotic loses touch with his feelings and depth giving up his autonomy and flowing with the stream, hope is lost. Only negative attributes of resignation come to the fore while positive ones fade out resulting in a condition called "shallow living". This is the third development of resigned living. Such a life is deemed peripheral living by Horney. Describing this condition Horney states:

> A person thus moving away from himself in a centrifugal way loses the depth and intensity of his feelings. In his attitude towards people he becomes indiscriminate … Detachment deteriorates into unrelatedness. Similarly [,] his enjoyments become shallow. Sexual affairs, eating, drinking, gossip about people, plays and

> politics form a large content of his life. . .He no longer forms his own judgement or convictions; instead he takes over current opinions. He generally is awed by what people think. With all that he looses faith in himself, in others, in any values. He becomes cynical. (*Neurosis and Human Growth* 286)

The above excerpt describes the generalized condition of a person who goes in the direction of "shallow living", but it can further be distinguished into three forms depending upon which aspect forms the core. In the first form, fun becomes the primary emphasis. However, it is not driven by a need to have actual enjoyment but to overcome the feelings of futility incurred by resigned living. Q. P is seen advancing in this direction of "shallow living". He indulges in his hunt for his zombie, which is his variation of fun which keeps the feelings of futility in check for him. The second form of shallow living is those who put their emphasis upon prestige or opportunistic success. Here, the generalized check on strivings for the resigned type is unmitigated. The pursuit of prestige helps to give a boost to the self-esteem which is diminished by shallow living, but it is an artificial boost as the state of deterioration is further propagated by the avoidance of conflicts and losing a sense of autonomy.

The third form of shallow living is described by Horney as "well adapted" automaton. Such a person experiences a total loss of his authentic thinking and feelings, taking over the thoughts and opinions of others as his own resulting in a flattening of his personality. She could not endure it, her solitary life; "To live in another is the only life possible for her . . . Abby will defer to Willem's wishes. Abby understands, she will defer to fate" (Oates, *Pursuit* 213-214). Abby's sense of dependence on another person, husband, in her case defers to her "automaton" status as the novel comes to a close. Her surrendering her being to her husband is not out of love but her own emotional deadness and her own inability to carry the weight of her being. Eric Fromm mentioned a similar process calling it a mere defect, but Horney describes it as an outgrowth of a neurotic phenomenon. She states that observing it as a development of a neurotic process makes it less pessimistic when considering prophylaxis and therapy. Such individuals will reach

for therapy, “because they are disturbed either by psychosomatic disorders or by repeated failures, inhibitions in work, and an increasing feeling of futility” (*Neurosis and Human Growth* 288). The frequency of shallow living is increasing; thus, it needs to be recognized as a neurotic disturbance, not mere a constitutional and cultural peculiarity. If it is observed as a cultural or constitutional peculiarity, it will not fall in the scope of problems tackled by a psychiatrist making the treatment impossible. It is less well known than other neurotic conditions because the disturbances are very inconspicuous in nature and other being psychiatrists are only familiar with the detached aspect of the phenomenon of resignation. A full understanding of every aspect and dimension will equip the analyst for successfully tackling this condition. Thus, the above study sheds a light on other aspects of resignation and understands it as an all-encompassing complex phenomenon as described by Horney. Only a full picture can give a holistic understanding of the solution of resignation as the characteristics of shallow living divert from the general traits of resignation. Understanding this form gives a full picture of its dynamics and meaning to the fore.

These are the solutions sought by Horney’s neurotics to resolve their inner conflicts and achieve self-integration. There are complex mechanisms and inter-psychic processes at play in each one of them, but they never take the neurotic towards the ultimate solution as they are flawed in their structure and never address the conflicts itself. They might give the illusion of temporary peace. The complete resolution of these conflicts can be found only in therapy either through self-analysis or a therapist’s aid.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has provided a detailed exploration of the intrapsychic conflicts that form the core of the neurotic experience, focusing on how these internal struggles shape the developmental paths of Joyce Carol Oates’s protagonists. By shifting the lens from interpersonal dynamics, as analyzed in the previous chapter, to the intrapsychic processes, this study emphasizes the profound impact of unresolved

childhood conflicts on adult neurotic behavior and the neurotic's pursuit of inner harmony. The neurotic's constant battle to reconcile their inner world with their outward persona underscores the psychological complexity at play, and through this lens, we have come to understand the profound tension and dysfunction that characterize their lives.

The chapter has highlighted the mechanisms adopted by neurotics, which serve as an attempt to resolve inner conflicts but, paradoxically, often perpetuate the dysfunction they aim to overcome. These self-idealization strategies reveal a profound psychic division, where neurotics construct an idealized self-image to cope with the overwhelming basic anxiety—the emotional strain stemming from feelings of inadequacy or insecurity, often rooted in early childhood experiences. The neurotic's striving toward a harmonious self-image thus becomes a key psychological defense, but it also reinforces their emotional instability, limiting their capacity for authentic self-realization. In exploring these neurotic solutions, this chapter has also underscored the unique developmental paths each neurotic follows, tailored to their specific personality type and their individual psychological needs. These paths are often influenced by early environmental factors, such as basic evil or the absence of warmth and affection during childhood, which play a critical role in shaping the neurotic's coping mechanisms and emotional responses. By analyzing the solutions each neurotic character employs, we gain insight into the complexity of their mental development, as well as the difficulties they face in reconciling their inner world with their external relationships.

The study has revealed that the neurotic solutions whether they manifest as self-effacement, expansiveness, or resignation are more than mere psychological defenses. They are the neurotic's attempts to construct a sense of self and navigate the emotional challenges of adult life. However, these solutions often fail to bring lasting peace, as they remain limited by internal conflicts and psychological divisions that continue to shape their lives. The childhood trauma, which shapes these paths, continues to resonate in the neurotic's adult life, influencing their relationships, behavior, and sense of self.

Finally, while the neurotic's automatic defenses may provide temporary relief, they are ultimately insufficient in achieving true psychological integration and self-realization. The chapter has thus illustrated the complexities inherent in the neurotic's psychological development, showing that the neurotic needs and their corresponding solutions form a dynamic interplay between unresolved childhood conflicts and adult coping strategies. In doing so, it highlights the profound challenges faced by the neurotic in their journey toward self-acceptance, balance, and emotional well-being. Horney in context of these solutions incorporated by neurotics says:

> Just as, because of his basic anxiety, the child had to find ways to cope with others, so the adult neurotic must in his turn find such ways. And he finds them in the major solutions we have described. Although these again bear similarities to the earlier solutions of moving toward, against, or away from people- and in part follow from them-actually the new solutions of self-effacement, expansiveness and resignation are different in their structure from the old ones. While they also determine the form of human relationships, they are the solutions for the intrapsychic conflicts. (*Neurosis and Human Growth* 297)

Understanding the interpsychic factors that lead to the complex developments in these solutions is instrumental as it is the intrapsychic factors and struggles that are first tackled in therapy as the inter-personal ones are not in the immediate access to the analyst/ therapist and rather out-of-bound. This chapter deals with the consequences of unresolved neurotic conflicts leading to solutions of the conflicts by the neurotic which take a unique developmental path.

In light of Karen Horney's framework of neurotic personality structures, Corky Corcoran emerges as a compelling literary embodiment of the arrogant-vindictive type, whose pursuit of power and affirmation is driven not by genuine self-confidence but by profound self-alienation and psychological insecurity. His interactions marked by competitiveness, calculated exploitation, and emotional detachment consistently reflect

the mechanisms Horney identifies: the compulsive need to triumph, the use of others as instruments for self-aggrandizement, and the internalization of rage as a defense against perceived humiliation. Corky's relationships, both personal and professional, are devoid of authentic emotional investment, shaped instead by a neurotic pride that masks vulnerability and fuels a relentless drive for superiority. The fantasy of dominance that pervades his thoughts culminating imagined revenge against those who have wounded his ego, reveals a psyche governed by vindictiveness rather than rational ambition. Even his political aspirations are rooted less in civic responsibility than in a desire to symbolically overcome past injuries and assert control over a world he perceives as adversarial. Ultimately, Corky's psychological trajectory illustrates the destructive potential of the arrogant-vindictive personality: despite external markers of success, he remains fundamentally isolated, emotionally impoverished, and estranged from any stable sense of self. Through Corky, Oates offers a penetrating exploration of how deeply ingrained neurotic patterns can corrode personal integrity and render triumph itself a hollow, self-defeating pursuit. Similarly, Karen Horney's arrogant-vindictive neurotic subtype offers a precise lens for understanding Quentin P.'s psychological complexity. Marked by self-alienation and a compulsive need for superiority, Quentin's intellectual pride and vindictive behaviors such as manipulating rivals and violent outbursts mask deep internal conflict and fragile self-esteem. These traits drive his exploitative and emotionally cold interactions, defending against his pervasive sense of isolation and exclusion. Beneath Quentin's arrogance lies profound envy, self-hate, and alienation. His hostility and rigid self-righteousness serve as defenses against feelings of worthlessness and rejection. Thus, his neurotic pride and vindictiveness simultaneously shield and reveal his fractured identity, highlighting the complex interplay between his destructive actions and underlying psychological pain.

Abby, Anellia, and Voilet exemplify the dynamics of Karen Horney's self-effacing type through their persistent minimization of self, suppression of expansive drives, and dependence on others for validation. Each character reveals the shrinking

process that results when ambition, pride, and hostility are disowned in favor of helplessness, guilt, and self-condemnation. Anellia demonstrates this through her reluctance to assert even the most basic truths about herself, her indirect acknowledgment of qualities such as wit or intelligence, and her tendency to measure her worth through the perceptions of her sorority sisters. Voilet mirrors this orientation in her willingness to rationalize exploitation, accept undue blame, and interpret mistreatment as a form of deserved punishment. Abby similarly internalizes guilt and responsibility for circumstances beyond her control, positioning herself as inherently unworthy and in need of external absolution. These tendencies reflect the "subdued self" as opposed to the "idealized self" of the expansive type, where the individual resolves inner conflict by retreating from any form of superiority or triumph.

The reliance on others for reassurance and acceptance further underscores their alignment with the self-effacing solution. In each case, self-worth is constructed relationally: Abby adopts a new name in the hope of gaining approval, Anellia invests in appearance only to satisfy her peers, and Voilet experiences anxiety in solitude, locating meaning solely through her role in service to others. Horney describes this as a salvation rooted in others, whereby love, attention, and approval are equated with personal value. The ambivalence inherent in this solution is also visible resentment and hostility arise but are suppressed or redirected into suffering, as in Voilet's simultaneous rage toward her employer and insistence on gratifying his needs. Thus, suffering and self-minimization become covert means of asserting claims, while direct assertion remains taboo.

Through these characters, Oates provides a literary enactment of Horney's theory. The self-effacing type idealizes qualities of goodness, humility, and martyrdom while repudiating pride, ambition, or aggression. Yet this apparent selflessness conceals an unconscious strategy of coping with inner conflicts, where exaggerated compliance and suffering serve as substitutes for more expansive expressions of the self. Abby, Anellia, and Voilet reveal the paradox of this solution: in seeking to secure love and acceptance

through self-denial, they become trapped in cycles of dependency, guilt, and self-hate, unable to transcend the very conflicts they attempt to resolve.

Both Q.P. in *Zombie* and Abby in *Pursuit* reveal deep psychological complexities characterized by emotional detachment and an observer-like stance toward their own lives, thus befitting Horney's resigned type. Both Q.P. from *Zombie* and Abby from *Pursuit* exhibit an onlooker attitude toward themselves and their lives, characterized by emotional detachment and self-observation. Q.P.'s detachment is more fragmented and radical, as he perceives a split within his own identity, whereas Abby's self-observation is calmer and more reflective. Both characters demonstrate a profound aversion to effort and ambition, with Q.P. procrastinating and avoiding responsibility, and Abby passively accepting her limited circumstances. This resignation manifests in a restricted or absent desire for growth or change; Q.P. embraces a sense of "wishlessness" marked by pessimism, while Abby finds solace in a small, protected emotional sanctuary within her marriage.

Their relationships further highlight their psychological state. Q.P.'s connections tend to be transient, emotionally detached, and sometimes violent, suggesting a fear of intimacy and a need to maintain control through distance. In contrast, Abby maintains long-term relationships, notably her marriage, but with a consistent emotional distance that protects her vulnerability. Both characters exhibit hypersensitivity to coercion and pressure, though their responses differ: Q.P. occasionally rebels actively against external demands, dropping out of school or abandoning obligations, while Abby resists passively, withdrawing socially and avoiding confrontation. Moreover, both live shallow existences as a coping mechanism to deal with feelings of futility. Q.P. distracts himself with superficial pursuits, such as his obsessive hunt for the zombie, embodying a life devoid of deeper purpose. Abby, meanwhile, becomes a "well-adapted automaton," surrendering authentic feelings and conforming to social expectations to survive emotionally. Finally, dependency plays a significant role: Q.P. relies financially and socially on his family,

reinforcing his parasitic existence, whereas Abby depends emotionally on her husband and the limited security her domestic life provides. Together, these characters reveal the nuanced ways in which resignation, detachment, and fear of coercion shape their psychology and behavior, highlighting themes of alienation and passive resistance in Oates' work.

CONCLUSION

In its early stages, psychoanalysis was primarily concerned with the treatment of medical or clinical disorders such as hysteria, phobias, depression, addiction, and psychosomatic ailments, all of which were understood as physiological manifestations of unresolved psychological conflict. However, as psychoanalytic research advanced, it became increasingly evident that psychological disturbance could exist even in the absence of overt clinical symptoms. Neurosis, therefore, came to be recognized not merely through visible signs of illness but through more subtle manifestations—such as indecision, recurring maladaptive relationships, and deep-seated inhibitions—that reflect internal discord within the personality. This evolution in psychoanalytic understanding expanded the scope of the discipline from a medical treatment for pathology to a broader inquiry into the hidden mechanisms of human behavior and emotional life.

The fiction of Joyce Carol Oates provides a rich terrain for the exploration of such psychological disturbances. Her novels portray characters whose apparent normalcy conceals profound inner conflict, anxiety, and alienation. This study has undertaken an in-depth analysis of these disturbances in Oates's protagonists through the theoretical framework of Karen Horney's psychoanalytic thought, particularly her theories of neurosis and personality. By employing Horney's conceptual tools, the research illuminates how the psychic structures of Oates's characters shaped by dysfunctional childhoods and perpetuated through maladaptive coping mechanisms manifest as neurosis and distorted interpersonal relationships in adulthood. Each protagonist has been examined with reference to a specific personality orientation, revealing the intricate relationship between childhood experiences, the emergence of basic anxiety, and the subsequent adoption of neurotic solutions that define their developmental trajectories.

Although Karen Horney's work remains less extensively studied than that of her Freudian or Jungian contemporaries, her contribution to the understanding of neurosis and personality structure is of immense significance. Moving beyond her pioneering

work in feminine psychology, Horney developed a comprehensive theory of neurosis that integrates both intrapsychic and interpersonal dimensions of human behavior. This study addresses the existing research gap by foregrounding Horney's mature theory as a powerful interpretative framework for examining Oates's fictional characters. Through this lens, the study explores the interdependence of childhood dysfunction and adult relational failure, demonstrating how deeply rooted psychic conflicts manifest as persistent emotional suffering and maladaptive social behavior. Structured into six chapters, the research systematically maps the psychological evolution of Oates's protagonists from the origins of basic anxiety in childhood to the complex intrapsychic solutions employed in adulthood, thus establishing a comprehensive model of neurosis as both a developmental and relational phenomenon.

The first chapter, "Making of the Novelist," offers a comprehensive overview of Joyce Carol Oates's personal and creative evolution, situating her life experiences within the broader context of her literary production. By tracing her journey from the formative influences of her early life to her emergence as one of the most prolific voices in American literature, the chapter establishes a vital connection between Oates's biography and her creative vision. Her encounters with violence, class disparity, and moral ambiguity in the American social landscape not only inform the thematic undercurrents of her fiction but also shape her enduring preoccupation with the psychological complexities of human existence. The discussion of her major works, alongside the rationale for selecting specific texts for the present study, provides both literary and methodological grounding. Furthermore, the review of existing scholarship and identification of the research gap highlight the originality of this inquiry, positioning the present work as a distinctive psychoanalytic engagement with Oates's fiction through the lens of Karen Horney's theory of neurosis.

The second chapter, "Theory of Neurosis: Issues and Challenges," builds the theoretical foundation of the study by examining Karen Horney's significant contribution

to the Neo-Freudian movement and the field of psychoanalysis. It elucidates on the evolution of Horney's thought as she diverged from classical Freudian determinism to formulate a socially oriented understanding of personality and neurosis. By systematically exploring the ten neurotic needs and their corresponding behavioral patterns, the chapter establishes the conceptual tools necessary for analyzing Oates's characters in subsequent sections. It also explicates the core constructs of Horney's framework such as basic anxiety, basic evil, and the tripartite movement of the self thereby equipping the research with a coherent psychoanalytic vocabulary. In doing so, this chapter not only clarifies the theoretical premises that underpin the study but also anticipates the interpretative possibilities that emerge from applying Horney's dynamic social psychology to Oates's portrayal of fractured identities and neurotic existence.

The third chapter, titled "Oates's Characters and Neurotic Needs," fulfills the first research objective that is to examine the neurosis in the characters of Joyce Carol Oates's selected fiction through the lens of Karen Horney's theory of neurosis. This chapter investigates how Oates's protagonists embody Horney's ten neurotic needs and how these compulsive tendencies differentiate them from individuals exhibiting normal adaptive behavior. By closely analyzing characters such as Corky Corcoran in *What I Lived For*, Quentin P. in *Zombie*, Abby Hayman in *Pursuit*, Anellia in *I'll Take You There*, and Violet Rue Kerrigan in *My Life as a Rat*, the chapter demonstrates the pervasiveness of neurotic conflict in Oates's fictional universe. Each character's psychic life is governed by one or more of Horney's neurotic needs ranging from the need for affection, approval, and a partner, to those for power, prestige, and personal admiration revealing the complex interplay between social conditioning, personal insecurity, and the compulsive pursuit of emotional safety.

Corky Corcoran emerges as an exemplary case of a neurotic personality driven by multiple, overlapping needs, particularly the need for social recognition, personal admiration, and power. His relentless pursuit of status and approval transforms

possessions, relationships, and public visibility into extensions of his ego. In Corky's world, as Oates reveals, success and self-worth are measured by the gaze of others, encapsulating Horney's notion of a self that seeks validation from external approval rather than inner conviction. The neurotic need for admiration in Corky's case is not merely a desire for respect but an existential necessity, a compulsive mechanism to defend against underlying feelings of insignificance. Oates's psychological realism brings out the self-destructive irony of this pattern: the very compulsions that promise fulfillment simultaneously deepen alienation and loss of authenticity.

In sharp contrast, Quentin P. (Q.P.) in *Zombie* manifests Horney's neurotic needs in their most pathological and extreme forms. His obsessive craving for control, dominance, and self-sufficiency culminates in a grotesque parody of the human need for connection, his creation of the "zombie" as a total object of ownership. His desire to lobotomize victims into submission is a chilling dramatization of the neurotic need for power and exploitation, pushed to its pathological extreme. Quentin's detachment and emotional numbness illustrate Horney's insight that neurotic solutions, when absolute, annihilate rather than resolve anxiety. Through Q.P., Oates exposes the horror that arises when defensive detachment becomes total, showing how the neurotic's flight from vulnerability leads not to mastery but to moral and psychological disintegration.

Female protagonists such as Abby Hayman, Anellia, and Violet Rue Kerrigan reveal the opposite spectrum of Horney's neurotic trends—the compliant and dependent needs. Abby's behavior, oscillating between submission and withdrawal, epitomizes the conflict between the neurotic need for affection and the equally neurotic need for independence. Her persistent need to be loved and approved by her husband Willem reveals her unconscious belief that safety and identity depend on external protection. Yet, as Horney's theory predicts, this same dependency becomes a source of anxiety, as it erodes autonomy and reinforces a sense of inadequacy. Similarly, Anellia's yearning for approval from her sorority sisters and later from Vernor Matheius demonstrates the

neurotic need to gain affection at any cost. Her identity becomes diffused in others' expectations, mirroring Horney's assertion that such compulsive compliance erases the true self. Violet Rue Kerrigan, by contrast, embodies the same need in a more tragic and socially constrained form. Her craving for familial love persists despite ostracism and abuse, underscoring the neurotic paradox in which the individual continues to seek affection even from those who have inflicted pain.

Collectively, the characters studied in the third Chapter illuminate the essence of neurosis as described by Horney an inner compulsion that distorts natural human strivings into rigid, automatic patterns of behavior. Oates's fiction vividly portrays how the unhealed wounds of childhood, the longing for security, and the cultural pressures of American life combine to produce adults trapped within neurotic cycles. These protagonists are not simply victims of circumstance, but participants in their own psychological imprisonment, unable to transcend the compensatory mechanisms that have become their identities. Horney's concepts of the "focal points" of neurosis, those dominant needs that anchor a neurotic personality resonate strongly in Oates's character construction. Each protagonist is caught in a specific constellation of needs that dictate thought and action, leaving little room for spontaneous growth or authentic self-realization. Oates thus emerges as a novelist deeply attuned to the psychological substrata of modern existence one whose work dramatizes the moral and emotional costs of unresolved inner conflict.

Moreover, the chapter establishes Oates as a psychological realist whose characters exemplify Horney's theoretical assertion that modern neurosis is not a deviation from normality but a magnified reflection of ordinary human anxieties. As Horney noted in *Culture and Neurosis*, "The presence of these feelings of inferiority is one of the most common psychic disorders of our time." Oates's fiction, in this sense, becomes a literary mirror of Horney's psychology, capturing how the social and economic tensions of contemporary America, its competitiveness, materialism, and moral

fragmentation breed emotional insecurity and neurotic dependency. Through her characters' compulsive quests for love, power, or safety, Oates renders the anatomy of modern alienation in psychological rather than merely social terms. The neurotic needs observed in her characters constitute not only individual pathologies but cultural symptoms of a society where identity is increasingly defined through validation, control, or withdrawal.

While third Chapter isolates and analyzes the various neurotic needs that govern Oates's characters, fourth Chapter, titled "Typology and Diversified Personalities," fulfills the second objective of the study: to classify the protagonists according to Karen Horney's typology of personality—compliant, aggressive, and detached. The shift from third chapter to fourth chapter thus represents a methodological and analytical progression: from the exploration of discrete neurotic needs to the holistic synthesis of personality structures formed by combinations of these needs. Whereas the third chapter demonstrates how specific compulsions operate within each character, the fourth contextualizes these patterns within Horney's broader framework of neurotic trends—the three primary modes of relating to others: moving toward people, moving against people, and moving away from people.

The analysis in fourth chapter identifies Corky Corcoran and Quentin P. as aggressive types, Anellia, Abby and Violet Rue Kerrigan as compliant types, and Abby Hayman and Quentin P. (in part) as detached types. This classification not only confirms the pervasiveness of Horney's three personality orientations in Oates's fiction but also underscores the fluidity and overlap between them. Corky's life, governed by the pursuit of status, prestige, and recognition, aligns him with Horney's aggressive personality type. His relentless ambition and exploitative behavior reveal a worldview shaped by competition and domination. Quentin P., on the other hand, demonstrates the aggressive type in its most pathological distortion: his drive for control manifests not through social competition but through physical and psychological subjugation. Yet both characters

expose the same underlying insecurity masked by aggression—the belief that only power and superiority can ensure safety.

In contrast, the compliant personalities of Anellia and Violet reflect the opposite neurotic solution. Their desire to move toward others is not motivated by genuine love but by the compulsive need to secure acceptance and protection. Both internalize guilt and suppress assertiveness, exemplifying Horney's observation that the compliant type sacrifices individuality to preserve harmony. Anellia's submission to the authority of her sorority and her devotion to Vernor Matheius demonstrates the psychic cost of seeking safety through self-effacement. Violet's compliance, rooted in childhood trauma and familial rejection, reveals the tragic persistence of this tendency even in the face of abuse. For both, affection becomes synonymous with survival, and moral virtue masks a desperate dependence on others' goodwill.

Abby Hayman's personality represents a psychological intersection between compliance and detachment. Her oscillation between the need for affection and the need for solitude reflects a dual strategy: seeking love to allay anxiety while withdrawing to prevent further vulnerability. Similarly, Quentin P. fuses aggression with detachment, using violence and emotional numbness as twin defenses against the terror of human intimacy. This dual typology reveals Oates's nuanced understanding of psychological complexity. Her characters resist reduction to a single trend, embodying instead the dynamic tension between contradictory impulses. The co-existence of detachment with either compliance or aggression illustrates Horney's insight that neurotic patterns often overlap when the individual seeks safety through multiple, conflicting routes.

An important interpretive finding of fourth chapter concerns the gender-based differentiation in Oates's character typology. The study observes that Oates's female protagonists, Anellia, Violet, and Abby gravitate toward compliance, while male protagonists—Corky and Quentin tend toward aggression. This pattern mirrors societal conditioning that aligns femininity with submission and emotional dependency, and

masculinity with dominance and control. Oates's fiction thus not only dramatizes individual neuroses but also exposes the cultural reinforcement of psychological tendencies along gender lines. By portraying female compliance as both socially valorized and psychologically damaging, and male aggression as both admired and self-destructive, Oates interrogates the moral foundations of gendered behavior in modern society.

The typological study also reveals the relative adaptiveness and limitations of each personality trend. The aggressive type, though seemingly empowered, remains enslaved by the fear of failure and loss of control. The compliant type achieves temporary safety at the cost of autonomy, while the detached type gains peace only by renouncing emotional vitality. Together, these findings reinforce Horney's holistic conception of neurosis as a spectrum of defensive strategies emerging from basic anxiety and ultimately self-defeating. Oates's protagonists, therefore, exemplify the paradox of the neurotic solution: the very mechanisms that promise protection from inner conflict perpetuate suffering and estrangement.

In summation, chapters third and fourth collectively demonstrate how Joyce Carol Oates's fiction embodies and dramatizes Karen Horney's theory of neurosis and personality. The third chapter exposes the multiplicity of neurotic needs operating within individual characters, while the fourth synthesizes these findings into coherent personality types that reveal the structural logic of their behavior. Together, they affirm that Oates's psychological vision, like Horney's, is grounded in the recognition that human beings, driven by fear and longing, construct intricate psychological defenses against the anxiety of existence. Oates's protagonists torn between the needs for love, power, and freedom reflect not only private pathology but the moral and emotional disorientation of contemporary life. In bridging the literary and the psychological, Oates and Horney converge upon a shared truth: that the pursuit of security without self-awareness leads not to fulfillment but to fragmentation. Through these neurotic and

typological analyses, the study illuminates Oates's profound insight into the human condition, a world where the struggle for selfhood unfolds as both a personal drama and a universal tragedy.

The exploration of Joyce Carol Oates's characters through Karen Horney's psychoanalytic framework culminates in the final two chapters of this study, where the focus shifts from the externalized manifestations of neurosis to its inner psychological causes and compensatory solutions. While the earlier chapters established the forms and patterns of neurotic behavior, chapters fifth and sixth together provide a comprehensive understanding of its psychological genesis and its attempted resolutions. The fifth chapter, centered on basic anxiety and dysfunctional childhood, uncovers the deep-seated emotional disturbances that take root in the formative years of Oates's protagonists, whereas the sixth chapter examines the compensatory mechanisms or neurotic solutions—self-effacement, expansiveness, and resignation through which these characters attempt to manage the unresolved anxieties of their past.

The examination of neurotic needs and personality typologies in the preceding chapters naturally culminates in the investigation of their origins and resolutions. While chapters third and fourth explored the external manifestations of neurosis through interpersonal dynamics and typological categorizations, Chapters fifth and sixth delve into the underlying foundations and potential developmental outcomes of these disorders. The fifth chapter, centered on the role of dysfunctional childhood and the emergence of basic anxiety, situates the genesis of neurosis within the intricate web of early family relationships and emotional deprivation. The sixth chapter, in turn, extends this analysis by addressing the ways in which neurotic individuals attempt to cope with these early disturbances through Horney's proposed intrapsychic solutions, thereby offering a comprehensive understanding of the neurotic journey from cause to consequence, from affliction to adaptation.

The fifth chapter establishes that dysfunctional childhood is not merely a backdrop to the protagonists' psychological struggles but a determining force that molds the entire trajectory of their emotional and behavioral development. Through an exploration of parental neglect, hostility, coercion, and indifference, the analysis underscores the formative impact of what Karen Horney terms "basic evil." Each of Oates's characters embodies a unique configuration of deprivation, rejection, or humiliation that disrupts the child's sense of safety and belonging. The emotional vacuum created by the absence of warmth or consistent affection forces the child to perceive the world as hostile, thereby generating basic anxiety, the fundamental psychological condition from which all subsequent neurotic conflicts emerge.

The findings of fifth chapter reveal that every protagonist in Oates's selected novels experiences a childhood environment marked by one or more manifestations of what Horney terms "basic evil." This concept encompassing indifference, hostility, rejection, and humiliation emerges as the central psychological determinant that destabilizes the emotional foundations of each character's life. Oates's depiction of childhood is rarely one of nurturing or protection; rather, her protagonists are consistently denied the fundamental sense of safety and affection that constitutes healthy development. The home, instead of being a haven of warmth, becomes a psychological battleground where affection is conditional, guidance inconsistent, and love tainted by coercion or neglect. These early conditions implant within each character an enduring sense of basic anxiety the pervasive fear of helplessness and rejection that becomes the emotional nucleus of their later neuroses.

Abby's childhood in *Pursuit* embodies the archetype of a child exposed to parental instability and emotional neglect. Her father's authoritarian control and her mother's erratic emotional behavior create an environment of fear and uncertainty rather than love. The emotional coercion she suffers, being forced to mediate between her parents' conflicts instills in her a premature sense of guilt and helplessness. The basic evil

in Abby's childhood thus lies in her parents' failure to recognize her individuality and provide emotional security. Her later self-effacing tendencies and yearning for external validation are direct continuations of this early deprivation, where the child's need for love was met with manipulation and rejection.

Corky Corcoran, from *What I Lived For*, experiences basic evil through the twin forces of coercion and premature adultification. His father's sudden death and his mother's subsequent absence thrust him into emotional isolation, while the adults around him impose unrealistic expectations, compelling him to mirror his father's image. The denial of a genuine childhood, replaced by responsibility, pressure, and interrogation, produces a deep-seated sense of inadequacy and resentment. Corky's formative trauma lies in being deprived of unconditional acceptance; his self-worth becomes tied to performance, power, and recognition. The basic evil he endures, therefore, is one of instrumentalization being valued not as a child but as a substitute for a lost adult figure. This early conditioning shapes his later compulsive need for dominance, affirming the psychological continuity between childhood coercion and adult vindictiveness.

Anellia's story in *I'll Take You There* presents a different but equally destructive form of basic evil—humiliation and rejection. Blamed for her mother's death and treated with disdain by her father and grandmother, she grows up in an environment devoid of affection. The repeated denials of her worth, reinforced by favoritism toward her brothers, erode her self-esteem and instill in her a desperate longing for acknowledgment. The child's need for love, unmet and ridiculed, transforms into a lifelong compulsion to earn approval through self-sacrifice and submission. Her basic anxiety thus stems from the internalized belief that love is conditional and must be deserved through compliance, a belief that governs her behavior well into adulthood.

Violet Rue Kerrigan, the young protagonist of *My Life as a Rat*, endures the most explicit and brutal form of basic evil. Her father's physical violence, overt misogyny, and emotional manipulation, combined with her mother's neglect and her brothers' cruelty,

transforms the home into a site of psychological terror. The favoritism toward sons and the punishment of Violet's independence instill in her a deep-rooted conviction of unworthiness. Her childhood is one of humiliation, coercion, and betrayal, as even her truth-telling is punished rather than rewarded. The omnipresence of hostility in her domestic world fosters profound basic anxiety, an enduring fear of rejection that persists even when she escapes the family home. The degree and consistency of this basic evil position Violet as the quintessential victim of environmental cruelty, demonstrating Oates's sharp insight into how systemic family dysfunction creates emotional paralysis.

Quentin, the disturbed protagonist of *Zombie*, experiences a subtle yet equally destructive manifestation of basic evil emotional indifference and moral abandonment. His father's coldness and relentless criticism, coupled with his mother's distance, deprives him of warmth, empathy, and moral guidance. The absence of genuine affection and the presence of derision and surveillance leave Quentin alienated from the emotional world of others. His basic anxiety emerges from a profound lack of belonging, which later evolves into sadistic detachment. The parental failure to guide or correct his early deviant behavior compounds this alienation, suggesting that neglect and moral disengagement can be as psychologically corrosive as overt abuse.

The cumulative results of the fifth chapter thus confirm that basic evil manifests in multiple yet interconnected forms, neglect, coercion, rejection, humiliation, and indifference all of which converge to produce chronic basic anxiety in Oates's protagonists. These anxieties become the defining psychological forces of their lives, shaping their emotional responses, relationships, and worldviews. The chapter establishes that the degree and nature of basic evil directly influence the intensity and form of the resulting neurosis. Where coercion predominates, the child tends toward defiance or vindictiveness; where neglect and rejection prevail, the child turns to submission or self-effacement; and where hostility is pervasive, the child retreats into resignation and emotional detachment.

Building upon this foundation, the sixth chapter transitions from the study of etiology to the study of coping, from the identification of psychological wounds to the exploration of psychic responses. Where the fifth chapter situates the origins of basic anxiety within the emotional failures of childhood, the sixth chapter traces how the neurotic, in adulthood, seeks to manage this anxiety through specific intrapsychic strategies—self-effacement, expansiveness, and resignation. This movement from the external to the internal, from the experiential to the existential, completes the dialectical circle of Horney's theory, illustrating how the neurotic's attempt at adaptation paradoxically reinforces the very conflicts they seek to transcend.

Corky Corcoran exemplifies the expansive or arrogant-vindictive type. His life is dominated by a compulsive need to assert power, control, and superiority over others. The bravado that defines his social interactions conceals an unacknowledged sense of inferiority rooted in the emotional neglect of his childhood. Corky's aggressiveness, competitiveness, and calculated manipulation of others are defensive mechanisms designed to mask vulnerability. His triumphs, political ambitions, and material pursuits are thus revealed as compensations rather than achievements, an endless attempt to dominate the world that once humiliated him. The destructive irony of Corky's life lies in the fact that his pursuit of external power only deepens his inner helplessness, exemplifying Horney's assertion that the expansive solution perpetuates the very anxiety it seeks to overcome.

Quentin similarly embodies the expansive type, though with more pathological intensity. His arrogance, intellectual pride, and predatory impulses constitute a perverse form of mastery aimed at erasing his own feelings of inadequacy. His hostility and emotional detachment reveal an individual who has transformed self-hate into sadistic control over others. His life of manipulation and violence exposes the catastrophic consequences of unmitigated basic anxiety when paired with moral void and emotional disconnection. Quentin's neurotic solution—vindictive domination is the logical

culmination of a life defined by rejection and moral neglect, reflecting Oates's portrayal of neurosis as a descent into spiritual desolation.

In contrast, Abby, Anellia, and Violet exemplify the self-effacing or compliant type, whose strategy for coping with anxiety lies in submission, self-denial, and dependence on others for validation. Abby's internalized guilt drives her to seek redemption through conformity and service, while Anellia's relentless striving for approval manifests in her willingness to suppress individuality to be accepted by others. Violet, despite her suffering, continues to rationalize cruelty and accepts exploitation as her moral duty, interpreting endurance as love. These characters reveal the paradox of the self-effacing type: their humility and goodness, though socially virtuous, mask deep insecurity and self-rejection. Their compliance and self-sacrifice serve not as moral strength but as survival strategies born of fear. Oates's portrayal of these women transforms the compliant type into a symbol of moral and emotional entrapment, one that critiques societal expectations of female virtue and endurance.

The resigned type finds its fullest expression in Q.P. of *Zombie* and, to some extent, in Abby's later emotional withdrawal. Q.P.'s detachment from emotion and moral consciousness, his isolation from others, and his rejection of meaningful connection represent the psychological endpoint of resignation. He embodies the collapse of striving the point at which anxiety no longer fuels ambition or dependence but instead dissolves the will to engage with life. Abby, though less extreme, exhibits this pattern through her eventual withdrawal from self-assertion and emotional involvement, seeking tranquility in numbness. The resigned type thus reveals the psychic exhaustion of the neurotic self—a retreat from both love and power into passive existence.

The findings of the sixth chapter affirm that each character's coping mechanism is not arbitrary, but a logical extension of the basic evil and anxiety established in childhood. The expansive type emerges from coercive or humiliating environments, the self-effacing type from neglect and rejection, and the resigned type from sustained

hostility and emotional indifference. Together, the results of these two chapters demonstrate the full developmental trajectory of Oates's protagonists from the wounding of childhood to the defense mechanisms of adulthood.

In synthesis, the fifith and sixth chapters collectively illuminate the psychological continuum that underlies Oates's fictional universe. The fifth chapter exposes the roots of neurosis in the violated innocence of childhood, where love is denied and security destroyed, while the sixth reveals the flawed attempts of these wounded individuals to construct meaning and stability through neurotic adaptations. The progression from basic evil to basic anxiety, and from neurotic need to neurotic solution, encapsulates both the tragedy and the profundity of Oates's vision of human psychology. Her characters are neither passive victims nor villains, but complex beings shaped by emotional deprivation and driven by a desperate need to restore the inner harmony that childhood denied them.

Ultimately, the combined insights of these chapters illuminate the coherence and depth of Oates's psychological universe. Her characters, though diverse in circumstance and temperament, are united by a shared existential condition, the struggle to reconcile the need for love with the fear of vulnerability, the desire for autonomy with the terror of isolation. By tracing this condition from its origins in childhood dysfunction to its mature expressions in neurotic defenses, the study achieves a holistic understanding of the human psyche as portrayed in Oates's fiction. Horney's framework provides the scaffolding for this understanding, offering both a language for the pain of alienation and a vision for the possibility of growth. In Oates's world, the neurotic journey is neither purely pathological nor purely redemptive; it is the story of the human condition itself, oscillating endlessly between wounding and healing, despair and hope.

Thus, the final synthesis of chapters fifth and sixth reaffirms that neurosis, as depicted in Joyce Carol Oates's novels, is not a mere clinical phenomenon but a deeply moral and existential drama. The child's first experiences of neglect and hostility echo across the adult's attempts at self-definition, forming a continuum of anxiety and

adaptation that spans the entire arc of the self. The movement from basic evil to basic anxiety, and from neurotic need to neurotic solution, charts the developmental logic of the fractured self. In uniting the etiological, typological, and developmental dimensions of Oates's characters, these concluding chapters demonstrate that the path of neurosis is not only a descent into dysfunction but also an anguished quest for meaning, a journey through suffering toward the ever-elusive possibility of self-realization.

This thesis offers significant contributions across academic, social, and societal domains by applying Karen Horney's psychoanalytic theory to the analysis of dysfunctional childhood experiences in the novels of Joyce Carol Oates. Through this interdisciplinary lens, the thesis examines how early emotional neglect, trauma, and familial dysfunction what Horney termed "basic evil" profoundly shapes adult interpersonal relationships. Horney's conceptualization of neurotic needs, basic anxiety, and the development of defensive strategies provides a robust framework for understanding the psychological trajectories of Oates's characters, many of whom endure emotionally barren or abusive childhoods. By situating Oates's literary portrayals within Horney's theoretical paradigm, this research enhances public and academic awareness of how unresolved childhood trauma manifests in maladaptive adult behavior. It emphasizes the vital role of healthy parenting in shaping emotionally stable individuals and, by extension, a progressive and empathetic society. The findings of this thesis advocate for the urgent implementation of stringent child protection laws and the promotion of educational policies aimed at fostering informed, emotionally intelligent parenting. Furthermore, the study reveals that many parents inadvertently harm their children either due to ignorance of developmental needs or because of their own unresolved psychological issues; a phenomenon Horney links to the intergenerational transmission of neurotic patterns. Addressing both these sources is critical. Thus, the thesis recommends the integration of parenting courses within educational institutions and the availability of online resources for new parents. It also calls for normalized access to therapy to help parents confront and heal from their own past traumas. By bridging psychological theory

with literary analysis, this thesis not only contributes to Horneyian scholarship and Oates studies but also offers actionable insights for social policy, mental health advocacy, and educational reform. Schools and state institutions should work collaboratively to cultivate environments that mitigate the conditions of "basic evil," ensuring that children grow in safe, emotionally supportive settings.

Beyond emphasizing the necessity of a safe and nurturing environment to prevent the emergence of "basic evil" and the subsequent development of "basic anxiety," this study contributes to fostering a more empathetic understanding of individuals grappling with internal psychological conflicts, particularly those exhibiting neurotic behaviors, as defined by Horney. By contextualizing neurotic patterns as responses to early emotional deprivation and unresolved childhood trauma, the thesis challenges stigmatizing attitudes and advocates for a more compassionate societal perspective on mental health. In alignment with Karen Horney's emphasis on personal responsibility and inner growth, the study underscores the relevance of "self-analysis" as a vital therapeutic tool. Horney's notion of self-analysis encourages individuals to engage in reflective inquiry to uncover unconscious conflicts, maladaptive patterns, and repressed emotions, ultimately facilitating self-realization and individuation. This thesis argues for the broader propagation of self-analytic techniques as a means of empowering individuals to take active roles in their psychological healing. Moreover, it calls for widespread awareness campaigns aimed at dismantling the stigma surrounding mental health and encouraging those who suffer in silence to seek therapy. Importantly, therapeutic support should be democratized, readily accessible not only to the privileged elite but also to the general population thereby promoting a more emotionally resilient and socially balanced society.

Besides shedding the light on need for therapy, through the analysis of male and female protagonists, the research elucidates gender-specific responses to trauma—highlighting tendencies toward compliance in women and aggression in men—insights that are valuable to both general audiences and professionals. By integrating

psychological theories with literary analysis, the thesis bridges disciplines, rendering psychological insights more accessible and fostering broader societal discussions on emotional well-being. This interdisciplinary approach is particularly beneficial for non-governmental organizations, counselors, and educators working with individuals affected by trauma. Furthermore, the thesis aligns with contemporary societal concerns, including ongoing dialogues on childhood abuse, neglect, and emotional resilience, thereby underscoring the critical importance of early mental health interventions.

The current study foregrounds Horney's relatively underexplored theoretical model particularly her concepts of neurotic trends and developmental strategies as a critical framework for the typological analysis of literary characters. In applying Horney's model to the works of Joyce Carol Oates, the research offers a systematic classification of Oates's psychologically complex characters, positioning them within Horney's tripartite scheme of moving toward, against, or away from others. This typological lens not only enriches character analysis but also deepens our understanding of Oates's portrayal of psychological realism and the nuanced representation of familial and interpersonal trauma.

Unlike the more frequently utilized psychoanalytic paradigms of Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung, Horney's theory remains comparatively marginalized within literary studies. By rigorously applying her model to literary texts, this thesis not only revives her theoretical relevance but also demonstrates the analytical precision and interpretive depth her framework can offer. The research highlights how Horney's emphasis on cultural, social, and relational factors in personality development resonates with contemporary concerns in trauma theory and psychological realism. In undertaking this analysis, the study generates novel insights into Joyce Carol Oates's literary corpus, with particular emphasis on her intricate portrayal of psychological realism and the multifaceted dynamics of familial trauma. By situating her characters within a psychoanalytic framework grounded in Horney's theory, the research elucidates the complex interplay

between individual subjectivity and relational contexts that underpin Oates's narratives. This approach not only deepens the critical appreciation of her stylistic and thematic preoccupations but also advances scholarly understanding of the ways in which Oates articulates the enduring psychological impact of trauma within family systems. Consequently, the thesis significantly contributes to the field by expanding interpretive possibilities and fostering a more nuanced comprehension of Oates's engagement with the psychological and emotional dimensions of human experience.

While the present study has endeavored to analyze Joyce Carol Oates's novels by addressing a comprehensive range of relevant parameters and dimensions necessary for a holistic understanding of the subject matter, numerous other facets remain underexplored. Further investigation into these areas holds the potential to substantially augment and deepen the existing body of knowledge and critical insight within this field. For instance, a comparative psychoanalytic study across authors will build upon the attempted study to explore new perspectives. Future research could compare Oates's portrayal of childhood dysfunction and adult neurosis with other contemporary or modern writers from different backgrounds such as Kazuo Ishiguro, Sally Rooney, or Gillian Flinn, using the same or alternative psychoanalytic frameworks. The cross-cultural analyses of characters and narratives, particularly in exploring themes of neurosis and idealized self-images across different literary traditions can facilitates a deeper understanding of universal psychological themes and their cultural variations. Further studies could explore Oates's fiction using other Neo-Freudian psychoanalytic models, such as those of Jung (archetypes and shadow), Harry Stack Sullivan (Interpersonal Psychoanalysis), Erik Erikson (Psychosocial Development) or even Bowlby's Attachment theory to examine relational development more empirically.

The future studies can delve into the empirical psychological correlations of the literary works as a multidisciplinary study involving psychology and literature could empirically test whether the patterns identified in Oates's fiction correspond with real-life

clinical profiles, particularly in trauma or developmental psychology. Building on the gender-based observations made in this thesis, future research could investigate how male and female protagonists process trauma differently, potentially applying feminist psychoanalytic theory or trauma theory (e.g., Cathy Caruth, Judith Herman).Another direction could involve deciphering the relationship between Oates's narrative structure and psyche by analysing how Oates structures her narratives to mirror psychological fragmentation or healing processes, using narratological and psychoanalytic tools in tandem. Additionally, subsequent studies could examine how socio-economic class, race, or political context influence the portrayal of dysfunctional families and neurotic personalities in Oates's work, possibly drawing from cultural studies or sociological theory.

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