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**LONELINESS, VIOLENCE, AND MANIPULATION  
OF THE NARRATIVE: THE NARRATORS OF "HIGH  
LONESOME" AND "THE FISH FACTORY" BY  
JOYCE CAROL OATES**

**Solidão, violência e manipulação da narrativa: os  
narradores de "High lonesome" e "The fish factory" de  
Joyce Carol Oates**

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**ABSTRACT:** Joyce Carol Oates is an American writer whose fiction is considered to be realistic and suspenseful (GARDNER, 1987), grinding, brutal, and harsh (BEDIENT, 1987). In Oates' collection of short stories *High Lonesome – New and Selected Stories* (2006), there are two narratives in which a first-person narrator tells a tragic event regarding the death of a close relative.

"High Lonesome" and "The Fish Factory" problematize violence and loneliness by emphasizing the fragility of the human condition through the story told by disturbed first-person narrators. The manipulation of storytelling by each narrator produces a narrative in which the events per se are left in the background and the omission of information stands out, so that the boundaries between truthfulness and falseness become blurred. The analysis of each short story allows us to perceive how the narrators' particular form of manipulation of the narrative reveals their lonely identity as a result of violence and family disruption.

**KEYWORDS:** Contemporary American Fiction; Joyce Carol Oates; Narrator; Violence; Loneliness.

**RESUMO:** Joyce Carol Oates é uma escritora americana cuja ficção é considerada realista e cheia de suspense (GARDNER, 1987), rude, brutal e cruel (BEDIENT, 1987). Na coleção de contos de Oates, *High Lonesome - New and Selected Stories* (2006), há duas narrativas em que um narrador em primeira pessoa conta um evento trágico sobre a morte de um parente próximo. "High Lonesome" e "The Fish Factory" problematizam a violência e a solidão, enfatizando a fragilidade da condição humana através da história contada por narradores em primeira pessoa perturbados. A manipulação da narrativa por cada narrador produz uma narrativa na qual os eventos em si são deixados em segundo plano e a omissão de informação se destaca, de modo que os limites entre a veracidade e a falsidade tornam-se indistintos. A análise de cada conto nos permite perceber como a maneira específica do narrador manipular a narrativa revela sua identidade solitária como resultado da violência e da ruptura familiar.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Ficção Americana Contemporânea; Joyce Carol Oates; Narrador; Violência; Solidão.

## INTRODUCTION

Joyce Carol Oates is an American writer who published her first work in 1963 and since then has been publishing poetry, drama, novels, short stories, and journalistic articles. Some of her more widely known works are *Where are you going, where have you been?* (1966), *Them*

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(1969), and *Black Water* (1992). Oates has been teaching at Princeton University since 1978, and, nowadays, she leads a Program in Creative Writing in the Humanities area in the same institution. Although Oates has been awarded several prizes for her literary writing, there are few critical studies about her work available.

As Gary Waller (1987, p. 36) points out, frequent topics in Oates' fiction include the fragility of the human personality in contemporary America and the examination of the threatening undercurrent of violence ever present just beneath the serene surface of suburban living. Critics say that her stories are realistic and suspenseful (GARDNER, 1987) and also grinding, brutal, and harsh (BEDIENT, 1987). These characteristics can be found in Oates' collection *High Lonesome – New and Selected Stories* (2006), which gathers some of her short stories written between 1966 and 2006. The author herself organized the book in five main sections, each of them featuring short stories written in a respective decade. In this book, Oates decided to give more room to her more recent narratives, totalizing eleven of them.

It is noteworthy that Oates' recent short stories share the same theme, namely, the collapse of the traditional family. Sisters who do not get along (“Soft-Core”), conflictual relationships between ex-wife and ex-husband (“In Hot May”), failed relationships among cousins, step-grandfathers, and step-grandsons (“High Lonesome”) are some examples of themes recently privileged by Oates.

As we read these narratives, we can observe that they do not present any solution to those family problems, which reinforces the idea of rejection of the traditional order and of the sense of completeness. Consequently, Oates' fiction can be said to express the post-modern condition, since this period

[...] reflects and confirms the surface orientation of the contemporary general culture by rejecting the essentialism of self and form, as well as the “strong” metaconcepts of rational order, continuity, causality, teleology, and wholeness, and the general depth orientation of romantic and modern art, and instead keeping to the surface of character and plot and the situational context. (HOFFMANN, 2005, p. 43-44).

Among the most recent short stories published in *High Lonesome*, there are two in which a first-person narrator tells the story and makes many comments about the events presented. In these stories, the narrators go back in time to tell a tragic event regarding the death of a relative of theirs. As they narrate, they also comment about the circumstances related to the event itself, qualifying actions or expressing how they felt when some secondary events happened.

In one story, “The Fish Factory”, the mother, who is the narrator, remembers how her loved daughter Tanya was supposedly killed and taken from her family on a regular school day. The narrator highlights how her daughter had been a sweet kid and how they used to have a good relationship. However, as the mother characterizes Tanya, important details are revealed, and the girl’s innocence and purity are put at stake.

In the other story, “High Lonesome”, the narrator presents himself as an old sick man who had been through difficult times in life and had lost dear relatives. In a first moment, the narrator’s loneliness and sadness resulting from the deaths of his step-grandfather and cousin are emphasized, but brutal details of these deaths are revealed as the story evolves, which adds a dark tone to the narrative. By the end of the story, the narrator exposes his own violent nature that was left unmentioned in the beginning. It is indeed interesting to notice that Oates decided to name her collection after this narrative that expresses the idea of isolation. The author seems to appreciate this realistic view of society, as she herself claims:

In the novels I have written, I have tried to give shape to certain obsessions of mid-century Americans – a confusion of love and money, of the categories of public and private experience, of demonic urge I sense all around me, an urge to violence as the answer to all problems, an urge to self-annihilation, suicide, the ultimate experience and the ultimate surrender (OATES apud COALE, 1987, p. 119).

Both “High Lonesome” and “The Fish Factory” are stories where Oates intensely problematizes violence and loneliness, and emphasizes the fragility of human personality through the narrative of disturbed first-person narrators. Both short stories present the manipulation of storytelling by the narrator as a key point in the narrative process. In fact, the events per se are left in the background and the omission of information stands out, so that the boundaries between truthfulness and falseness become blurred. Given the subtlety with which the narrators manipulate the narration in order to hide or emphasize details, my objective is to analyze how the narrators either omit or emphasize information when it is convenient for them. I will also discuss to what extent the narrator’s omission and emphasis interfere in the revelation of their own identities. We will be able to notice how the violent and realistic characteristics of Oates’ literary production, discussed by the critics in the 1970s and 1980s, are still in force in her most recent narratives.

## MANIPULATIVE NARRATORS: “HIGH LONESOME”: A SLY AND CRUEL NARRATOR

As previously mentioned, “High Lonesome” has a first-person narrator who goes back in time to tell a tragic story of his life about relatives who died. Brutal details concerning some events are revealed as he narrates the story, which adds a dark tone to the narrative. Daryl narrates the involvement of his cousin Drake in their step-grandfather’s suicide – an old man called Pop. Daryl also narrates how he took revenge on Drake by brutally killing him.

Initially, Daryl introduces himself as a lonely person who has hurt the ones he loved the most and who cannot sleep at night. Then, he characterizes his step-grandfather by describing his ordinary rural lifestyle:

Pop Olafsson spent his days in the dairy barn. He had between fifteen and twenty Guernseys that are the larger ones, their milk is yellowish and rich and the smell of it, the smell of any milk, the smell of any dairy product, doesn’t have to be rancid, turns my stomach. Pop loved the cows, he’d sleep out in the barn when the cows were calving. Sometimes they needed help. Pop would cry when a calf was born dead. (OATES, 2006, p. 137).

As the narrator highlights some of Pop’s characteristics, he introduces his cousin Drake in the narrative and compares the clumsiness of the former to the sagacity of the latter:

[...] When my cousin Drake came to live with us, Drake cleaned the guns. Drake was five years older than me. He had a natural love for guns. Pop was so clumsy with a gun, he’d be breathing through his mouth hard and jerk the trigger so he’d never hit where the hell he was aiming. Always think the damn thing’s gonna blow up in my hands, Pop said. (OATES, 2006, p. 138).

Daryl focuses his story on an event of July 1972 when Drake, a deputy in his city, leads an undercover team operation that aims to arrest truck drivers who pick prostitutes up in a chaotic area of the city. Sable, also a deputy, disguised as a prostitute, thumbs for a ride on the road while Drake is in a van, coordinating the action. Then, Pop stops his truck, Sable gets in it and starts talking to him, persuading the old man to ask her to have sex with him. Pop seems to be perplexed, but after much insistence from Sable, he accepts the idea of taking the woman somewhere to have sex. As a result, he is arrested. Throughout this scene, Daryl qualifies Pop’s reaction as follows: “He is mumbling, shy of looking at Sable full in the face [...]” (OATES, 2006, p. 144). In this passage, the narrator emphasizes Pop’s innocence and the intimidation he felt in Sable’s presence. Pop is depicted as an old man who is not able to speak; he only mumbles. Pop’s passive position is highlighted throughout the whole scene:

The old guy has the pickup in gear, doesn't seem to know what to do [...] too confused. Or maybe just excited and scared, aroused. [...] he isn't thinking exactly where he is, why he's here, what his purpose must have been driving here [...] the woman is smiling at him, nobody smiles at Pop Olafsson especially no female smiles at him in this way [...] (OATES, 2006, pp. 144-145).

The narrator seems to suggest that Pop gave in to Sable due to her kind behavior towards him, a respectful treatment to which he is not used. Again, Pop is victimized by Daryl. It is interesting to notice that the narrator does not explain why Pop was in a prostitution area offering a ride to an unknown woman. In fact, Daryl ignores his step-grandfather's illegal attitude and puts the blame on the police staff by placing emphasis on Pop's naivety and passivity. The narrator also highlights the shocking moment when Drake and Pop recognize each other:

[...] gonna have to cuff you Pops, [...] blinking like a blind man staring at a sight he can't take in, tall burly young scruff-jaw guy in a black T-shirt – Drake McCracken? – he'd wanted to think was some nephew of his? in that instant Pop and Drake recognize each other, Drake is stunned like the old guy, sick stunned look in his face his sergeant sees the situation, understands the two are related, tells Drake back off, shift's over he can report back to the station. (OATES, 2006, p. 147-148).

From this passage, we can say that the narrator presents much more information about Pop's sensations and thoughts than Drake's. By doing so, the narrator emphasizes Pop's personal drama and Drake's lack of attitude.

The first-person narrator continues to tell the story and emphasizes the hostility and impatience with which the cops treat Pop in the police station. In order to reinforce the idea that Pop was innocent and Drake guilty, Daryl presents his mother's reaction to the story:

[...] Mom insists her stepfather is not a man to solicit prostitutes, he must have thought the officer was hitch-hiking, Pop is the kind of man would give a hitch-hiker a ride, Mom is so agitated she repeats this until the meantime Pop has been taken from the holding cell to rest on a cot. (OATES, 2006, p. 149).

Right after this passage, Daryl once again pictures his cousin as being reckless about Pop's arrest: "All this, Mom can't take in. Mom is looking for her nephew Drake McCracken who's a Beechum County deputy but she's told Drake is off duty, nowhere on the premises" (OATES, 2006, p. 149). Then, the narrator tells how Pop committed suicide due to the bad consequences of the arrest: "A few days later Pop blows off the top of his head with the clumsy 12-gauge, came near to missing but got enough of his brain matter to kill him" (OATES, 2006,

p. 150).

As we can observe, Daryl narrates a considerable part of the story showing that Pop was unfairly arrested and suffered so much that he killed himself. After constructing the idea that Pop was innocent and Drake would be responsible for Pop's death, the narrator states that he decided that his cousin was guilty: "It comes over me, Drake killed Pop Olafsson" (OATES, 2006, p. 151).

Towards the end of the story, Daryl narrates his brutally murder of his cousin without showing any regret or pity. He goes to Drake's house claiming that they need to talk; he enters the house and, then, when Drake gives his back to him, he hits his cousin with a hammer. They start a fight hitting each other hard until Daryl kills Drake. The narration of this scene evokes the violent aspect of Oates' fiction, since gruesome details are described, such as hammer hits and skull bleeding. The narrator's aggressive nature can be noticed even in the words he uses to tell this event:

I come up behind Drake and bring the hammer down hard on his head, must be the damn thing kind of slips my hand is so sweaty, it's just the side of Drake's head the hammer catches, and he's hurt, he's hurt bad [...] and some damn way Drake is biting me, he's got my left forefinger between his teeth biting down hard as a pit bull. I'm yelling, this pain is so bad. [...] Drake is bleeding from a deep cut in his head, a stream of bright blood running into his eye [...] I've got the hammer free to swing again, I manage to hit Drake on the back of his neck [...] this time I feel bone crack. Drake's bulldog jaw opens, Drake is on the floor and I'm swinging the hammer wild as hard as I can, hitting his face, forehead that's slippery in blood, his cheekbones, eye sockets [...] (OATES, 2006, p. 151-152).

Another important aspect to be considered about "High Lonesome" is the occurrence of several flashbacks. Indeed, the first-person narrator does not follow the chronological order when he tells the story; that is to say, the events are presented as if they have no cause-consequence relation. This lack of concern to present the facts in the chronological order gives the impression that the narrator tells the story in the way it is organized in his own mind, allowing him to present the events that he considers more convenient to tell.

In order to illustrate how the narrator uses flashbacks to his own advantage, we can take into consideration the comment he makes on his finger in the very beginning of the narrative: "Run my fingers over my stub-forefinger – lost most of it in a chain saw accident a long time ago" (OATES, 2006, p. 136). As the reader will understand later on in the narrative, such comment is a lie. Therefore, we can say that the narrator not only uses flashbacks to manipulate

information, but also lies when he considers necessary. Besides that, considering that such comment is placed in the opening paragraph of the narrative, it might help to create empathy between Daryl and his audience as he presents himself as a melancholic old sick man who lost his finger in an accident in the past. By doing so, he can wait for the end of the story to reveal that actually he lost his finger in the fight against Drake.

Daryl also takes advantage of his flashbacks when he, in the middle of the narrative, just mentions Drake's death and does not give more information about it:

Sure I miss him. My wife says I am a hard man but there's an ache in me, that's never been eased since Drake passed away. We did not part on good terms. Nobody knew this. There was always rumors in Beechum County and in Herkimer, who killed Drake McCracken. It was believed he'd been ambushed by someone seeking revenge. Friends or relatives of someone he'd arrested and helped send to prison. There were plenty of these. (OATES, 2006, p. 140).

Therefore, the use of flashbacks along the narrative contributes to build a story that fulfills the narrator's needs, since Daryl emphasizes and omits information by manipulating when and how to tell an event. In short, "High Lonesome" is a narrative that presents a sly first-person narrator who builds a story based on emphasis, omission and flashbacks in order to justify his murder. Along the narrative, the victimized narrator exposes his own violent nature, which was left unmentioned in the beginning, revealing his disturbed mind.

#### "THE FISH FACTORY": A SORROWFUL AND OVERPROTECTIVE NARRATOR

"The Fish Factory" presents the grief and anguish of a mother whose daughter (Tanya) supposedly died near a fish factory. The mother goes back in time to narrate that some boys saw, from a certain distance, her daughter's body laid on a tarp, soaked in a red liquid resembling blood. The boys ran back home and their parents called the police, but when the police officers arrived in the crime scene, the body had disappeared. No one knows, however, whether the girl was killed and later removed from that place or the body was not hers, and she had, in fact, disappeared. In the sequence, the mother mixes many events and memories as she tells the story: what she was doing at the moment of her daughter's disappearance, how the authorities treated the case, how Tanya's childhood had been, how Tanya's relationship with her father was like, and how their relationship as a family was. In the end of the narrative, the mother reveals negative information about Tanya that can jeopardize her daughter's innocence.

The story is narrated from the perspective of this mother who characterizes her daughter Tanya along the narrative and presents the events related to her death. It seems that the mother somehow tries to find a reason for her daughter's disappearance by remembering Tanya's childhood and interpreting all the little happenings concerning her supposed death. As part of the process of retelling a traumatic event, the mother uses many flashbacks in order to highlight some points and illustrate situations. It is interesting to highlight that in the first half of the narrative the mother only presents information that constructs Tanya as a lovely and innocent girl.

[...] Nearly every day in good weather I took Tanya to the park as a baby in her stroller and later we walked hand in hand and still later Tanya would run ahead of me flailing her pudgy little arms in excitement or she would pedal frantically on her tricycle. Mommy c'mon! Oh Mommy c'mon! (OATES, 2006, p. 28).

The excerpt above shows that the mother emphasizes the sweet kid who Tanya was in her childhood. The mother-daughter relationship seems to be based on love, respect and joy. In another excerpt, the mother uses an emotional tone when she characterizes her daughter as someone who had defects, but also many qualities:

Yes she was difficult to handle, yes she was willful, stubborn, petulant, quick-tempered, though also affectionate, loving. Your heart just melted, when Tanya (who'd been naughty, maybe!) climbed into your lap and hugged you around the neck and nibble-kissed your cheek, and collapsed in giggles if she was tickled in just the right way. (OATES, 2006, p. 29).

Besides praising Tanya's personality, the mother also expresses her grief over the loss of her lovely daughter very emotionally. Somehow, she blames herself and her husband for Tanya's disappearance. It is evident that the mother misses her daughter and that she sees Tanya as a young vulnerable girl:

She was sixteen. We loved her. We ask ourselves what did we do wrong. We wait for her abductor/killer to be arrested. We wait for her living/injured/dead body to be returned to us. These pleas I have made on TV, until my husband and my family forbade it. (OATES, 2006, p. 30).

Then, after having created a positive image of the girl, the mother presents negative facts about Tanya in the last part of the narrative. The following excerpt shows Tanya's radical change during her adolescence:

[...] Tanya had taped up drawings of animals, too, and brightly colored

posters. And two years later when she was twelve and in seventh grade these posters were abruptly removed and would be replaced with psychedelic posters of rock stars viewed at crotch level, bizarrely made-up and costumed Caucasian males in their twenties, part-naked, luridly tattooed, with pierced tongues, nipples, belly buttons. To enter Tanya's room from that time onward was to risk assault by these strangers. To enter Tanya's room was now to risk Tanya's wrath at an invasion of her privacy. Our daughter had begun her journey. (OATES, 2006, p. 32-33).

It is interesting to notice that the mother attenuates the information above by commenting, right after this passage, "Yes she had always been a brash child. Restless, lively. She had a bright happy smile" (OATES, 2006, p. 33). As we can observe, the mother praises her daughter's qualities instead of discussing her questionable behavior, and ignores facts that could have led to her daughter's disappearance.

A more shocking passage shows Tanya's violent nature. Again, the mother seems to ignore the problematic girl that her daughter was becoming:

A more serious episode in sixth grade when a call came from the principal of her school informing us that our daughter had 'threatened' another sixth grader, saying she had a knife and would cut off the girl's hair, nose, ears. I had to come to school, where Tanya was being held in the principal's office. She was suspended from school for several days protesting to David and me she was only kidding, everybody knew she was only kidding, the other girl had wanted to get her in trouble, that was all (OATES, 2006, p. 33).

In another passage, the mother hesitates to tell the truth about Tanya's affairs. The use of "maybe" in the excerpt below signals the mother's attempt to attenuate her daughter's promiscuous behavior:

By fifteen Tanya had older friends who were out of high school. I don't mean graduates but dropouts. Maybe I don't mean friends exactly. Tanya had become a skinny sexy girl of the kind you see hanging out front of the 7-Eleven with her friends. At the diner by the Sunoco station flirting with the big-rig truck drivers. (OATES, 2006, p. 33).

It is evident that the mother overprotects her daughter when she mentions that she found condoms in Tanya's bureau drawer, but she hid them before the police could see them: "The condoms were our secret. I found them immediately after the police searched for Tanya's body behind the fish factory. Before they could make their request to search her room. Ugly pearl-colored things that would be Tanya's and my secret forever." (OATES, 2006, p. 35). The mother also overprotects Tanya by hiding from everybody a heated argument that they had had a few

days before her daughter disappeared:

We told the police the truth but it was not entirely the truth. There were omissions. Nor did David know of my last conversation with Tanya which had been six days before she disappeared. She had slammed out of the kitchen cursing and I followed her on the stairs and I was shocked to hear myself begging, you don't expect to hear yourself begging anyone when you are forty-one years old. And Tanya relented in embarrassment perhaps. Almost she pleaded with me fixing her smeared eyes on me Jesus, Mom, hey c'mon. I'm not that important, see? This is no big deal. [...] I am not your daughter then. Don't cry over me. Those terrible words, I never told another person. (OATES, 2006, p. 37).

Finally, the mother comments on her current life, showing that she is living alone, in her solitude: "Now David is living elsewhere I am freed from preparing meals and freed from the strain of having to select food my husband would wish to eat. I love the quiet of our house, and I love the quiet at the river" (OATES, 2006, p. 37)

The narrative ends with enigmatic notes that seem to have been written by Tanya. She tells how she and her boyfriend faked the murder scene in the fish factory. She says that she had to leave her mother "Because I couldn't love you the way you want. And I didn't want you to love me. All that crap, I just didn't want. There's lots of us feel this way. No big deal." (OATES, 2006, p. 38) This last passage is written in italics and leaves several questions unanswered: is it a letter that the mother received? Is it the mother's thoughts? Is it a dream?

All in all, by considering the information provided by the mother in her flashbacks, it is possible to hypothesize that, in the beginning of the narrative, she decides to present her daughter as a lovely girl because she knows that Tanya's disappearance could have happened due to her parents' excessive protection and negligence. Therefore, the mother manipulates time in the narrative in order to build a false atmosphere of love in the beginning of the story. Only towards the end does she gradually reveal the true problematic girl that Tanya was. By manipulating the events, the mother does not feel guilty about her daughter's disappearance.

## FINAL COMMENTS

As this discussion shows, the narrator of both "High Lonesome" and of "The Fish Factory" is a lonely person that mourns the loss of a close relative. In the process of narrating the events related to Pop's and Drake's death (in the first narrative) or Tanya's disappearance (in the second one), the narrator manipulates the presentation of the events by emphasizing or

omitting information. It is relevant, therefore, to discuss to what extent this manipulation contributes to reveal the narrator's identity.

Initially, what seems to be crucial in "High Lonesome" is Daryl's attempt to build the reader's empathy towards him in order to create an atmosphere of loneliness and suffering. He mentions his fragile health condition as coming from an illness and highlights his longing for important people in his life. Up to this moment, Daryl seems to be an old man whose life has been very difficult. As the narrative unfolds, we can perceive that Daryl's objective is to picture his cousin Drake as a villain as he (Daryl) provides biased arguments in favor of Pop's innocence. In this process, the narrator's slyness can be perceived once he offers the reader his own view only, and reinforces it several times along the narrative. Finally, towards the end of the narrative, Daryl reveals his aggressive nature as he narrates in detail how he cruelly murdered his cousin. Therefore, we can say that Daryl constructs a biased narrative in order to justify the crime he committed against his cousin and to free himself from other people's judgments or accusations. Indeed, it seems that Daryl believes in his own innocence, since he narrates his crime as a natural consequence of Drake's mistake. Another point to be highlighted is Daryl's manipulative trait: in the beginning of the narrative, he mentions that he lost most of his finger in a chain-saw accident, but the story later reveals that he actually lost it in the fight against Drake, as the reader is informed in the murder scene.

In "The Fish Factory", there is also a narrator that manipulates information in order to justify a possible mistake. Tanya's mother builds a narrative in which she recollects her good memories of her daughter in order to emphasize how good Tanya was as a young child. In the beginning of the narrative, Tanya seems to be a very sweet adolescent whose life has been violently taken away during a regular school day. After picturing Tanya as an innocent, pure and naïve girl, the narrator brings up some facts that would clarify Tanya's supposed disappearance: she had been extremely overprotected by her mother even when she was behaving recklessly and aggressively.

Considering the enigmatic text presented in the very end of the narrative, we can say that the excess of freedom given to Tanya might have influenced her to rebel and run away with her boyfriend. Thus, the mother manipulates the delivery of information about Tanya, so that she can exonerate herself from any guilt regarding her daughter's disappearance. Unlike the narrator of "High Lonesome", the narrator of "The Fish Factory" does not seem to be violent and sly, but lonely and mournful instead. Indeed, Daryl knows he committed a crime and tries to convince the reader that he did the right thing, whereas Tanya's mother tries to manipulate

the story to herself, to free herself from guilt. Both narrators are manipulative, but in different ways, with different purposes.

To sum up, in “High Lonesome” and “The Fish Factory”, Joyce Carol Oates explores violence, loneliness, and the collapse of the traditional family. In fact, in both stories loneliness is the central issue, that is, the narrators struggle to deal with their lonely condition, which is the result of their own violent act (in one case), or overprotectiveness (in the other case) that leads to the collapse of their own family. All in all, we can conclude that Oates’ production of harsh and violent literature is still her remarkable characteristic, which allows her to bring up the discussion of the fragile human condition through suspenseful narratives.

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