

RESEARCH ARTICLE



INTERNATIONAL  
STANDARD  
SERIAL  
NUMBER  
INDIA

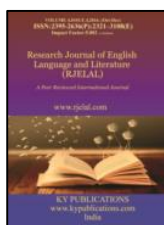
2395-2636 (Print); 2321-3108 (online)

## A METAPHYSICAL WEDDING BETWEEN TWO ARTISTIC SOULS IN JOYCE CAROL OATES *UNHOLY LOVES*

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### ABSTRACT

*Unholy Loves* one of the major novels of Joyce Carol Oates deals with the emotional or platonic love of Brigit Scott a young university English teacher for a septuagenarian British Poet Albert St.Dennis. Brigit Stott born in a rural area in Norfolk educates herself and obtains a University Degree against many obstacles. She falls in love with Stanley and they marry only to be separated after eight years of disturbed married life. Later she joins in the Woodslee University as a faculty member in the department of English. She conducts herself with dignity, working hard professionally as a teacher. Brigit eagerly anticipates the arrival of Albert St. Dennis, who is invited to the University as a Poet in Residence. Brigit who is already familiar with his mystic poetry Broadcast on Radio and who falls in love with his masculine voice, naturally becomes close to him on the campus. She loves St. Dennis in spite of their difference of age, because she is able to reach his poetic, philosophical and spiritual wavelength. Both of them are seriously interested in human mortality. This kind of love for an old poet of seventy-three years before his death may be seen normally odd in Brigit, but Oates narrative skills makes it look normal. On the poet's encouragement Brigit falls in love with Alexis Kessler, a music teacher in the University and their love also does not last long. Brigit lives alone in a flat entertaining pet animals and birds.

In this paper an attempt has been made to trace the different phases in the development of Brigit Stott's character and to show how she attains her ultimate liberation in a mystic and metaphysical fashion under the influence of St. Dennis poetry on human immortality and cycle of births and deaths. The sudden death of Albert St. Dennis reminds Brigit of her grandfather. She attains the status of a mature person unaffected by all emotional attachments like a saint and starts writing a novel about her parents, grandparents and her family.

*Unholy Loves* revolves around the lives of several faculty members of the Woodslee University in upstate New York. *Unholy Loves* (1979) is a book that records Brigit's breakthrough into autonomy, maturity and artistic commitments. Brigit Stott, the protagonists of the novel *Unholy Loves*, is a gifted creative artist born in a rural area in Norfolk,

belongs to a middle-class farmer family. Brigit was very active at school and was much interested in studies. She wanted to continue her education even later, but was highly disappointed by the decision of her parents and grandparents who advised her to not to leave Norfolk their native place. But Brigit is quite independent in her thoughts and behaviour,

she insists upon going North for further studies and educates herself against the wishes of her parents and grandparents, pursuing higher and university education.

As a school student, Brigit had experiences of love and friendship. Her first love was a boy of about fifteen, Ronnie Brooker, studying in high-school when she was twelve years old studying in seventh-grade. Ronnie Brooker's father was involved in city and county politics, as Brigit's father had been. Ronnie was always in a group of his friends and was not aware of Brigit who used to follow him out of love. She had dreams or fantasies about her love with Ronnie. "Ronnie Brooker. (That name had the power, still, to make her pulse jump—for a moment.)" (127) It was a one-way love in her girlhood of adolescence. Brigit had neither forgotten him nor had taken his love seriously but continued her education. Whenever she had been home, she enquired about him and looked for his name in the telephone directory and checked his address. She came to know that he married a girl in his senior class and they had several children.

Another important friend of Brigit was a girl named Louellen her school friend. Brigit loved Louellen more than Ronnie. They had known each other from first-grade to tenth-grade. Louellen was skinny and big eyed and surprisingly funny. The girls were closer than sisters, they had loved each other very much and sometimes they even exchanged gifts like purses, scarves, games, cheap bracelets etc., which they obtained from shoplifting. They were known to be inseparable. Though Brigit's parents had not known of the shoplifting expedition the girls had gone on – mainly to Woolworth's and Grant's, they sensed something dangerous in Louellen, and never encouraged Brigit to invite Louellen home. But much against her own family's disapproval, she continued her friendship with Louellen.

One Christmas, Brigit has spent five dollars on a pair of fur-lined gloves for Louellen. In turn Louellen gave Brigit a topaz ring that had belonged to her grandmother. Topaz! The setting was rather cheap but the stone was genuine. When the parents discovered it, they had wanted Brigit to return it to Louellen, but Louellen wouldn't take it back, and

Bright had not known what to do. There were many telephone calls. There was a great deal of weeping. The Stott's were upset and vaguely insulted, and Louellen's parents were angry. Finally, Brigit was allowed to keep the ring, but as Brigit felt the ring precious, she preserved that beautiful ring as a valuable memento in her mother's bureau drawer. "Sometimes it seems to me" Brigit said, that I've never had another friend who meant that much to me. (129) Later, Brigit and Louellen parted because something happened to Louellen's mother when they were in tenth-grade and she was sent to Baltimore to live with her married sister. And they never saw each other after that though they wrote letters for some time. Brigit often dreams about her and wakes up crying.

The past experience of Brigit's love as an adolescent show clearly her strength of independence, self-control and her high targets to reach in life and her priorities. For her, her education is the major goal and not adolescent love. But at the same time, she is capable of loving others, whether male or female. As a daughter Brigit Stott was quite independent, loving and was capable of taking a decision to continue her studies in spite of her parental opposition. She loves them as she loved her school mates like Ronnie a boy and Louellen.

At the age of twenty-two Brigit falls in love with Stanely Fifield a New Yorker, who was twenty-eight. Stanely Fifield . . . wrote two or three peculiar books-what kind of books would you call them? – fiction-or was it poetry? . . . (35) What Brigit knows about him is only his outward physical appearance; he is very active and wears costly clothes like a rich man but was ignorant in identifying a person. Within a few months of their acquaintance they get married. Of all the associates of Stanley, Brigit alone was the one least able to know him.

Her love for Stanley was not only very deep and intense before marriage but even after marriage. Their married life went on well for some time but gradually there were differences of opinion which lead to frequent quarrels. "The public self, the private self, the husband and the lover and the man and the human being with his own raw, indescribable need were all different, always at war. She had been a minor casualty of that war." (173)

Brigit understood the true nature of Stanley, that he is very possessive, brutal, and selfish. Stanley instead of supporting Brigit to become a writer always wanted her to be obedient and submissive to his command. He fell in love with and married a certain young woman, an image of his imagination, and he did not want this image violated. He fought for it passionately and viciously and he also feels that she is only a physical stimulus for him—a means of stirring his manly desire. Whenever Stanley finds that Brigit is incapable of fulfilling his desires, he becomes cruel, but is “bewildered at his own cruelty, unable to comprehend his sudden outbursts of rage, derision, mockery, despair.” (130) His patriarchal authority is very reluctant to recognize her desires and emotions. Her desire to become a novelist is not only oppressed by her own parents and relatives but also by her husband Stanley. Stanley insults her saying, “I can read the thoughts rising like bubbles in your brain, he said, plagiarizing Pope . . .” (36) He is a perennial source of disturbance to her. “It was not simply that her husband had come to resent her writing, since the meagre success of the first novel and spoke of it in a certain bantering tone she came to find intolerable. . .”(260) His negative attitude and his jealousy are regular impediments that hinder her writing. Brigit seems to be a sexual commodity to him and his mind is pervaded by the necessity of his sexual gratification. He is unwilling to understand that there are more things in marriage than sexual accomplishment. “Throughout the marriage she was cursed by a sense of his not knowing her and not wishing to know her; not *her* . . .” (172) Stanley’s accusations affect Brigit’s life very seriously. In the course of arguments, he slaps and beats her. She is crushed by shame and embarrassment. Though she is able to endure his slaps and blows, she can’t bear his jeering. In a moment of heated argument, he passionately tells her, “you really think your work is more important than our marriage . . .” (261) All these sordid incidents are really disruptive. They hinder her writing and threaten her dream of becoming a famous novelist. However, as an intellectual modern American woman, she boldly resents and resists his authority and terminates her traditional role as a passive and obedient wife to her

selfish husband. Therefore, Brigit who is quite independent in her thoughts and behaviour considers her separation from her husband is the only means of her liberation. Later she joins in the Woodslee University as a faculty member in the department of English as a teacher of English literature. She conducts herself with dignity, working hard professionally as a teacher. Brigit Stott as an educated, employed and liberated woman is very impressive. In this respect she represents a striking example of a modern woman as suggested by Virginia Woolf long ago in 1929.

Brigit’s parents and relatives detest her separation from her husband and accuse her of her inability to keep her husband happy as they are ignorant of his nature. Brigit, disarrayed by failure of her relationship with Stanley and alienation by her parents is not completely demoralized or shattered, but succeeds in settling comfortably among her campus associates by growing out of her romantic aspirations and fancies. It is in the works of other writers, that she finally finds strength and sees how trivial her own problems are in comparison to the miseries of the larger world. She tries to view and understand the world outside through the works of the past writers and aspires to become a famous writer as other Oates’ intellectual women characters do. She is represented as an image of an intellectual woman looking over life’s vital aspects, such as nature of existence, brutality of life and death. Her secular quest takes a direction. Finally, in the library she takes down a volume of *The Explorers* by St. Dennis, and her intuition, the one such reading would change the course of her life, turns out to be true. Later in her room, she settles down to writing where she finds peace of mind. Like Oates’s herself, Brigit feels that:

The act of writing is sacramental; it must take time, it must be a little difficult, a little awkward. (259)

Brigit as a creative female writer has published two novels. Her first novel, *World’s Elsewhere* has taken four years to complete and the second novel *Melodies* has taken even longer. Particularly as a creative writer, she is the only one person at Woodslee, perhaps, to reach the intellectual and creative wavelength of St. Dennis,

the British poet. According to the Dean, Olive Byrne, St. Dennis is "the most distinguished of living English poets" and "a superb artist and craftsman second only to Yeats himself in this century." (101)

Despite these engagements Brigit feels quite lonely in her flat. However, one blessing in disguise is that the academic community of Woodslee frequently arrange parties to which she is invariably invited. Thus, she has some social life. It is at this point of time that Albert St. Dennis, the famous British poet, is invited to the University of Woodslee by the Dean Oliver Byrne, as a distinguished guest and Poet in Residence to stay there for one year. There is a new enthusiasm and hope in Brigit as in the case of other scholar colleagues like Lewis Seidel and Gladys Felter in her Department because she is already familiar with the works of St. Dennis. When she was a student of literature, she heard his papery thin and delicately modulated voice and loved that deep masculine romantic voice on the BBC reading his poetry selections from *Hecate and Lovesounds*. Almost all the members of faculty arrive at the first party arranged in the honour of the distinguished poet by Oliver Byrne and his wife Marilyn and Brigit Stott went to the party a little late but before the chief guest had arrived. Drinks and food were supplied in plenty. For his audience, he seemed to represent great English literature from Chaucer, Milton, Keats, Shakespeare, Dickens, Jane Austen etc. Brigit Stott is introduced to him by the Dean. He is impressed by her as she reminded him of his beautiful and young cousin Agnes, who was no more. In the narrator's words St Dennis liked Brigit:

Introduced to her earlier in the evening, St. Dennis had liked her well enough, squeezing her tiny hand in his, noting its damp coldness: ah, she was nervous, as nervous as he! But in fact, she does not seem nervous any longer. (16)

Though Albert St. Dennis reminds her of her own grandfather, she immediately falls in love with him for his unashamed emotion. Brigit feels that she has fallen in love with the poet as she did earlier on listening to his poetry recital broadcast by BBC. She has some questions to ask St Dennis about his works like *The Explorers*, *Lovesounds* etc. whether he really

experienced what he describes in his works. Following her bitter experience of love with Stanley as his wife, she has decided not to love any man. Brigit never wants to marry again, yet she wants to have some sort of alliance with a man like Albert St. Dennis. She has never been a sort of woman to admire physical appearances. But she falls in an emotional and platonic love with Albert St. Dennis despite their difference of age and thinks that their love would be a holy love unlike the love between herself and Stanley which was unholy. As she thinks:

Lesser men would deny their interest in a woman if it swept upon them so violently, since they would be alarmed by it, but St. Dennis, the author of *Lovesounds*, and *Hecate*, *The Brides of Rain*, *The Explorers* was equal to her own passions. Like the heroes of his long poem, he was an explorer of his own fate, his own destiny, and did not draw back from a love affair with a woman so very much younger than he. . . (40)

She keeps aside her own writing and dedicates herself to Albert St. Dennis. Everyone is amazed as they are a devoted couple. She helps him with his manuscripts, types for him, does proofreading, reads galley, meets with agents and editors and interviewers and professors, protecting him her own work forgotten. Finally, he completes his new poem, which is immediately acclaimed as his major achievements of the twentieth century. Brigit accompanies Albert St. Dennis to every social event. People gossip of their relation "Of course his young wife accompanies him everywhere." . . . And there is no question but that the two are genuinely in love. "Behind Albert St. Dennis stands Brigit Stott," people will say. "She saved his life, you know. A remarkable woman. . . ." (41) Brushing aside the gossip, Brigit maintains her relation with Albert St. Dennis. Brigit expects an intellectual, emotional and physical companionship from St. Dennis and begins to fancy a relationship with him and wishes to make his old age as comfortable as possible. But when she learns that St. Dennis has no such interest in her, she partly realizes the limitations of their relation. And her relation with St. Dennis ends up as holy love, both sacred and profane.

Brigit gains insights into human nature and life which help her to succeed as a university teacher she takes her job seriously and delivers goods to her students to the best of her ability, because she is strict and competent as a teacher even the unruly students respect and fear her. Knowing her colleagues would believe in Robert Graves's statement that a woman cannot be a creative artist and that she can either be a muse or she is nothing, Brigit struggles through the process of self-creation in artistic transcendence against the belief of the patriarchal society. The effort reminded her of the creation itself as it is imagined by certain philosophers: "God creates it anew each moment, each instant, there is no necessary connection between one moment and another (in human terms), . . . she must imagine herself into being, she must invent herself anew at every instant, . . . could never stand mute and terrified, utterly alone, humiliated by failure." (301)

But people including those in the academic world cannot digest the success of a young, educated, divorced and independent woman, because even modern societies continue to be in the grip of patriarchal values. But Brigit Stott is not a woman to take seriously the scandalous propaganda about her in and outside the University of Woodslee. In her free time in the evenings at her flat she works hard and produces creative fiction. She also feeds pet cats, and birds in the balcony which shows her love for life, not only of human beings but also birds and animals. She has lived like this for nearly sixteen years at Woodslee after her divorce. All these facts prove her courage, intelligence and optimism.

With the performance of Alexis Kessler on the piano, a music teacher in the University, Brigit has a new realization about love "Making love is something technical, a mere skill, at best a talent; making music is something impossible to fathom. The one is a diversion, the other is life itself". (55) Provoked by Albert St. Dennis, she nurtures a bond with Alexis Kessler. Albert St. Dennis brings Alexis's and Brigit hands together, squeezes them together on his knees and says as follows:

"My dears, you've been too kind to me," he says, his voice broken and tearful. 'I don't

deserve it. You . . . you . . . you are so young and beautiful . . . your love is so pure . . . so . . . so frightening to an old man . . . *The young in one another's arms*: ah yes! Yes! That! . . . I . . . I want you only to be happy," he says, beginning to weep. (63)

Alexis is a handsome man in late twenties a *Wunderkind*, a prodigy. That night Brigit and Alexis become lovers and make love in Brigit's apartment. Brigit begins to believe "it is only through Alexis that she can live. . . . the life in her arteries and nerves and marrow seems no longer her own, but his." (173) Brigit loved him and was satisfied with him in sexual relationship and starts looking at the world through his eyes. Alexis tells Brigit that her face and body are no longer her own private possessions. Alexis becomes the center of her life, displacing her writing and in the newly formed relationship Brigit had no time to think even. "It was all so new; it seemed to Brigit experimental and provisional; she supposed she was opening herself to a great hurt, but there was no time, she hadn't even the breath to draw back, to contemplate. . . ." (124) Brigit feels doubtful about how long her love with Alexis will last. And very soon realises that even in her love affair with Alexis, she is again expected to be submissive and obedient. She finds Alexis too self-centered and hopeless to give a meaningful turn to either of their lives. He cannot tolerate Brigit's getting into Stanley's memories. He gets furious and hysterical at the mere mention of Stanley's name, and Brigit, even with her capacity to understand Alexis's feelings cannot allow Alexis to trespass into her most personal boundaries. As an independent woman Brigit leaves him as she cannot allow Alexis to hurt her any longer. In fact, her relationship with Alexis seems to be a phase. With Alexis, she can just contemplate of a winter, or a party, but not her entire life.

Brigit though finds her physical love both with Stanley and Alexis to be highly disappointing she does not pine over her love affairs and diverts her attention to writing her third novel. Her failure in love doesn't seriously affect her balance of mind, creative energy as a writer and a generous human being. Brigit does not lose her basic human values like love and sympathy for others in distress. Her



treatment of Alexis Kessler is an example: Brigit bluntly rejects Alexis Kessler when he returns to marry her after they got separated as lovers at Woodslee, but she gives him food and shelter and treats him only as a friend and not as a lover because of his pathetic condition. Taking this as an advantage he tries to make love to her, but she tells him to get out of her house.

She has found a way to protect herself from “unholy loves,” when Kessler approaches her again in the final scene, they strike out at one another, but only Scott draws. . . (Bender,174)

This shows her self-control as a wise and mature woman. She has become that rare being- a woman capable of managing her loneliness.

It is through the rumblings of Albert St. Dennis at a party in his house, that Brigit finds the much-awaited liberation. When he starts his seemingly incoherent monologue just for her, she doesn’t understand. But St. Dennis understands her anguish and answers all her questions. The following words of St. Dennis’ are enigmatic to Brigit:

“New Year’s Eve is no time to be alone,” St. Dennis tells her confidentially. “The planet is about to plunge into darkness and our souls are frightfully sensitive at such times. I’m quite serious! .... The Explorers, don’t you know, set forth with such joy upon their voyages... it seemed endless, their passion... the universe had no limits, no possibility of being exhausted; ah, how young they were! – how empty of thought! But all along the Mothers were waiting. Observing, don’t you know, in absolute silence... always in silence. There is no language to the body!..... The Mothers, the Weavers, content to bring all exploration to an end; content to embrace their sons in the end. What they weave they then unweave. The Explorations, the Explorers themselves. Woven – and then unwoven! We come closest to sensing it in ourselves at certain times of the year and this is one of those times, dear, isn’t it, haven’t you sensed it as I have, don’t you sense it even now...? What is woven will be torn apart so

that it can be rewoven again.... but of course, it will be rewoven by someone else.” (226)

Brigit is a little startled at this as she doesn’t understand his words. But an Indian reader who is familiar with the *Bhagavad-Gita* can understand St. Dennis’s maturity of mind in his early seventies! What Dennis’s reference to weaving and unweaving, of course, does not refer to the weaving of Penelope’s web, but Lord Krishna’s *Bhagavad-Gita* sloka’s implication of the cycle of births and deaths as follows:

vāsāmsi jīrnāni yathā vihāyā  
navāni grahnāti naro 'parāni  
tathā śarirani vihāya jīrnān  
anyāni samyāti navāni dehi (Sloka No.22,  
Ch.II, *Bhagavadgita*)

Radhakrishnan explains the meaning of this Sanskrit verse: (22) Just as a person casts off worn out garments and puts on others that are new, even so does the embodied soul cast off worn-out bodies and take on others that are new. (2014:122)

However, Brigit sometimes fails to understand the deep meaning of St. Dennis’s thoughts on death and immortality. In spite of her vast reading and familiarity with the works of such philosophers as Plato, Nietzsche, Schopenhauer and psychologists like Freud and biologists like Darwin, and her awareness of Hindu scriptures like the *Katha Upanishad*, St. Dennis appears to be difficult to fathom for Brigit. Thus, St. Dennis awaiting his death is fully prepared for it, like the great American poetess Emily Dickinson who considered Death her lover, and like many oriental and occidental philosophers of whom Brigit Stott is aware of. Still she fails to understand the words of the ripe, mature and ageing reputed English poet, St. Dennis who seems to have a premonition of his own death in March, the same year. He utters these words in December, the deathly winter of Woodslee.

Earlier in the same context Brigit’s words in this connection are noteworthy:

Brigit stands beside him. What does it mean to die? — to make an end? — to complete a cycle? He has spoken from time to time, always obliquely, of his wife, his long marriage, the shock of its termination;

one of his poems touched upon the idea of dying at the right time, when death is still aesthetically possible. (225)

She is moved by his kindness, his words touch her profoundly like "the Mother's touch, a sense of fate." (227) St. Dennis, tells her about the reminiscences of his childhood and his unusual love for a boy older than him, Marco, who was very violent but highly loving and who suffered an untimely death and also about an old man who lived so long that he lost all his bodily functions lying on bed like a living dead body. Therefore, St. Dennis emphasises that one should die at the right time unlike either Marco or the bodily-dead living old man. Talking about Marco, St. Dennis holds Brigit's hands as if for support. She tries to console him. St. Dennis words, here, are significant:

"Life conspires to cut us off from one another", St. Dennis says. "We conspire to do so. The Explorers begin as lusty ignorant boys, vessels of flesh, and though they threw themselves into the farthest reaches of the universe it never occurs to them to explore themselves.... It never occurs to them to love themselves." (229)

Here St. Dennis seems to imply that the real exploration of a human being is neither geographical nor spatial and it should be one's own exploration into oneself. That is a human being attains the final liberation from this material life by self-realisation of a higher order equivalent to spiritual liberation which in terms of Hindu philosophy is Mukti or Moksha. Brigit immediately realises that she has to answer to the name Brigit and that she cannot escape the fate of being Brigit. "To be a certain person . . . not even the adults of her world knew." (231) Brigit understands that she has fallen in love with the face, and a body, nothing more. As St. Dennis says, the body has no language. Now,

. . . Stott forces herself to awaken, to confront her fleshy needs and spiritual aspirations, to acknowledge the urgency of both sacred and profane longings in the dark, germinal recesses of her creative imagination . . . her woman's life has . . . (Bender,163)

Brigit has realised how men like Stanley, Alexis and others expect of their imagination and expectation of her. The exploration is over and "it is her work she craves . . . memory of desire." (265)

Brigit has learnt from Albert St. Dennis what she has never learned from her father and grandfather. Brigit was upset by the sudden death of Dennis in an accident. The accident brings Brigit to face some of the vital questions facing life. Death becomes sudden, such as reality. The ever-pondering reality of human mortality instead of bringing her to the brink makes Brigit think of her parents and grandparents. She weeps with the truth that she has stayed away from her dying grandfather, who loved her in the same way. Brigit realises her own links with her past and so, starting with the self and reaching the end in advance, she starts with her ancestors where she finds the roots of her own life. Instead of locking herself up in staid academic world, which offered no possibility of liberation, she moves out to serenity, for unexplored possibilities which could ensure some authenticity. In this newly gained emotional strength she begins to write about her family with fresh energy. "It was upsetting, it was draining, it demanded her entire attention, yet she rather enjoyed it. She would not remember, in fact having enjoyed anything quite so much." (307) Thoughts and memories of her parents, grandparents, and her sister Janet, fill her with a kind of nostalgia. She feels guilty of neglecting or ignoring them in the prime of her youth. So, she turns back to her life.

The characters are living people, they demand to be heard in their own voices, they are far more real than the people Brigit sees in Woodslee. . . Brigit Stott is a character she lavishes little skill on: it is a vessel, a means, a transparency. (260)

Now she is ready to take risk, she is ready to start, and actually starts the sacramental art of writing, the feat of transforming emotions into language and to bring out from the "cocoon of words and web of language" a coherent structure. She is aware of human mortality and does not hasten herself to the end of her mortality before achieving something of some acclaim. Thus, emerges Brigit, the novelist, the triumphant

spiritually and aesthetically. She starts writing her novel beginning fifty years earlier. She forgets herself, her childhood but she begins to deal with her parents, grandparents, the kind of life they would lead surrounded by poverty and trying circumstances and hostile environment etc. Brigit wants to pay her tribute to them by delineating their glory and their real and natural love for fellow human beings, the self-respect of her grandfather particularly, who did not accept any financial help from her. That is, the rural people, in spite of their poverty and lack of education, devoted their lives to certain traditions and human values which they zealously guarded against the adversities of generations together. Thus, her third novel will be a true tribute to them. Brigit accepts that she is Brigit and that she must live out the destiny. Though she knew that her place is safe at Woodslee, she plans to leave the job in order to go to Norfolk to teach in a small village, to be near her parents, which is what they have expected of her always.

Brigit Stott had always thought she could live by herself. A woman with unconventional ideas had great confidence in the power of her will. But through the recognition of her abilities and her limitations, she comes to understand the failure of her relationships, in both 'holy' and 'unholy loves'. It is not only through her mystical experience that she overcomes her earlier experiences but through a healthy interaction with the writers of the past that Brigit is rescued from the darkness that grips her lonely life. Through the experiences of Brigit, the main protagonist of the novel Oates traces out the means to overcome loneliness and estrangement, by coming to the terms with the mortality of life.

Though Brigit is mature enough intellectually and spiritually, yet, St. Dennis's concepts of life, morality and a sense of fulfilment in death are beyond her comprehension because she is too young to understand such concepts. Perhaps she will appreciate these ideas of St. Dennis's when she also crosses seventy years of age. But the point to be noted here is she has that spiritual intellectual potential and spiritual maturity to understand the words of St. Dennis.

The title *Unholy Loves* has a paradoxical significance. According to the superficial norms of

society the love between Brigit Stott, a young woman and University teacher and Albert St. Dennis a septuagenarian British poet seems to be incompatible and unholy. So is the love between Brigit and Alex. Yet, at a deeper level these loves are holy because from Brigit's sensibility they signify a bond between souls and not mere bodies.

Thus, in the character of Brigit we see the dimension of a highly liberated woman image which is rarely found in women's literature except in such writers as Emily Dickinson. When we consider the different phases in the characterization of Brigit Stott reflecting the image of a woman, we discover a unique image of a woman in the form of Brigit. In other words, the protagonist of *Unholy Loves*, Brigit Stott is one of the greatest fictional creations of woman's image, not only in the works of Joyce Carol Oates herself but also in the gamut of women's literature in English.

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