



Self-Discovery, Peace, and Self-Healing in Joyce Carol Oates' *I Lock My Door Upon Myself*

Komi BEGEDOU

komi.begedou@gmail.com

Université de Lomé, Togo

Abstract - From a critical point of view, peace is not always synonymous with the absence of war. Many people seem to enjoy peace when considered externally but they suffer internally. Moreover, some get healing from the disastrous experiences they undergo while others do not. Through the lenses of psychoanalytical criticism, this paper analyzes the strategies invented by Calla to achieve self-discovery and healing. It highlights the challenges she has taken up to reach the satisfaction with her inner desires. The paper contributes to the promotion of personal and common peace, necessary for social development. The study concluded that self-discovery can contribute to self-healing, which as a whole, is necessary for self-assertion.

Keywords: Self-discovery, healing, peace, social development.

Résumé - D'un point de vue critique, la paix n'est pas toujours synonyme d'absence de guerre. Plusieurs personnes semblent jouir de la paix extérieurement mais souffrent intérieurement. De plus, certaines personnes guérissent des expériences désastreuses qu'elles ont vécues alors que d'autres ne s'en remettent pas. À travers le prisme de la critique psychanalytique, cet article analyse les stratégies inventées par Calla pour parvenir à la découverte de soi et à sa guérison. Il met en lumière les défis qu'elle a relevés pour parvenir à satisfaire ses désirs intérieurs. L'article contribue à la promotion de la paix personnelle et commune, nécessaire au développement social. L'étude conclut que la découverte de soi peut contribuer à l'auto-guérison qui, dans son ensemble, est nécessaire pour l'affirmation de soi.

Mots-clés : Découverte de soi, guérison, paix, développement social.

INTRODUCTION

The prolific writer Joyce Carol Oates is known as a great poet, dramatist, novelist and essayist. Her writing encompasses various themes ranging from individual fulfillment to community welfare. In her 1990's novel, *I Lock My Door Upon Myself*, she creates her main character, a female and endowed her with the capacity to resist the conventional norms of her community in order to express herself freely for her total healing. Evidently, it is very difficult to live in a community where one feels others do not understand a person's actions and reactions. It becomes more complicated when one gives in to low-self-esteem, and therefore lets himself/herself defined by the environment in which one lives. The narrator tells the story of her grandmother. Calla, the protagonist in *I Lock My Door Upon Myself* lives in a setting where and when she is at loggerheads with the ideologies of her community. She accepts to be in a relationship with Tyrell Thompson, a black man, even though she is married. In so doing, she expresses



her freedom but at the same time goes against the miscegenation laws of the 1920s. Right from her childhood, she is considered as a “difficult child.”¹The creative writer has endowed her with the courage to resist the imposed and implied regulations of her society to express the need for self-discovery and personal peace.

The psychoanalytical criticism is used in this paper to delve into the psychology of Calla and some other characters in the novel as well as the psychology of the writer in order to scrutinize the correlation between self-discovery and personal healing. Psychoanalytic criticism is a form of literary criticism which uses some of the techniques of psychoanalysis in the interpretation of literature. It is a theory propounded by the Austrian Sigmund Freud (Hossain, 2017: 42). Psychoanalytic critics consider the unconscious motives and experiences of authors and characters depicted in creative works. Hossain posits that “the authors and writers are influenced by the psychoanalytic concepts which are reflected in the characters of their works and also in their mind” (43). Calla’s mind is searched through the angle of some psychoanalytic concepts such as unconscious desires and past experiences. Moreover, in line with Charles E. Bressler’s view about psychoanalytic criticism, the feelings and unspoken desires of Calla are deciphered to bring out the essence of some of her actions. He posits: “sometimes they [dreams] cause us to question our feelings, to contemplate our unspoken desires, and even to doubt the nature of reality” (123). Actually, Calla’s dream of freedom and inner peace will also be analyzed.

The paper examines the strategies used by Calla to achieve self-discovery and healing. It highlights the challenges she takes up to reach the realm of equilibrium with her inner desires. In the process, the paper contributes to the maintaining of personal and common peace, required for social development. The research is structured around two main parts. The first analyses how the protagonist struggles to be true to herself by sometimes transgressing even the norms of the society in which she lives. Here, the paper discusses Calla’s ‘ununderstood’ behavior by her counterparts. The second part elaborates on the compromise she makes with the norms of her society in order to get personal healing. The paper highlights the author’s promotion of a compromise from all parties for sustainable peace.

¹Joyce Carol Oates, *I Lock My Door Upon Myself* (New York: Plum Book, 1990), 6. All subsequent quotations from this edition are parenthetically referenced in the text with page number preceded by ILMD.



1. Being Oneself and Transgressing the Norms of the Society

In life, it is important to make connections, share times together with other people and have a family in which one develops his/her potentials. If all these factors are present, an individual is soothed during challenging times and is healed from all odds of the society. Still, people need to have time for themselves in order to discover their personal needs that should be met to make them happy. They also need to create their personal identity to prove their uniqueness. After all, life is best lived when one is accomplished and has reached the fullest possible. While some could not make it without clinging on role models, others do make it their own way. To the latter, they have to be left free and act in accordance with their principles which may appear to violate some social norms. Calla Honeystone, the protagonist in *I Lock My Door Upon Myself* belongs to this latter group. She is the type of woman who is very self-reliant and self-confident.

Since childhood, Calla begins paving her own way to her uniqueness. She clearly states: "myself is all to me. I don't need of you" (6). Here, Calla considers herself as unique, as a whole who never needs any other person's advice. She observes ethical values that distinguish humans from animals. Besides, the narrator gives the following account: "This girl so mature in their eyes she might as easily have passed for twenty years ... compelled to live out a special destiny none of the fools and idiots and commonplace sinners around her could guess" (11-12). Calla's way of living makes her more special, unique and different from other people around her, and she is also considered to be older than her own age, what is uncommon. She equally respects her community's values, religions and cultures. Evidently, there are various norms and rules in every society that are deemed to be followed. When not respected, people are found guilty and threatened to pay the consequences for their refusal to abide by the societal norms. Nevertheless, there are situations when one goes against some set norms, especially when and where these norms are questionable. The rationalization of these norms leads to the selection of the good when it aligns with the values that favor development and mutual respect.

Respect is valued in every society and is required for a harmonious community. Yet, if respecting people will turn an individual into a robot where they no longer possess their own identities, it is obvious that the person might choose to stop following the norms defined by society as "respectful". Disobedience, in the rightful manner cannot be considered as evil, for instance, civil disobedience. At the onset of the novel, the reader sees that Calla is referred to as "a difficult child" (6). The meaning of "difficult" as used in this context is understood by the reader later in the novel as 'the refusal to abide by some norms of the society'. However, speculations by her parents and community members qualify Calla as a stubborn and disrespectful girl who would not listen to anyone.



Arguably, some social conventions should be disregarded as they deepen misogynist perceptions. For example, over the past decades, in many societies in the U.S. or in Africa, women have not been welcomed among men. They were treated merely like objects and could be easily commodified and or used as sexual pleasures for men. Women should not decide whom to marry and what job to choose. In this mayhem and chaos, any woman who goes against the tide is weirdly seen by the community. In fact, "twentieth century writers have presented woman through the distorting lens of sexist imaginations- sometimes with courtly subtlety, sometimes with a ferocious indignation that erupts in violence" (Oates, 1983: 7). This representation of women leads some of them to react oddly. Oates thinks that women should not be kept in slavery through some sexist norms of the society. She has depicted her position by endowing her character Calla with the capacity to challenge some patriarchal norms of her society. Many female writers such as Zora Neale Hurston, Toni Morrison, Alice Walker etc. have created strong characters in their novels to challenges domineering laws against females. The setting of the novel goes back to early twentieth century and falls in the frame of the third wave of the feminist movement².

Apart from the negative representation of women in the American context, children undergo similar treatment in American literature. Like Calla, many are these children who are wrongly accused for evils they are innocent of. They suffer greatly without getting needed support. They are sometimes punished and beaten badly. As for Calla, "there were blows with open hands and blows with closed fists and also pummeling, hair pulling, even shouts of fury and frustration, screams" (6). It is evidenced from this quotation that Calla is victim of child physical abuse Although, parents generally think in so doing they are disciplining their children, they tend to forget that not all the children are alike. Some can abide by and easily respect what they are told. Others, the like of Calla, would not. They would accept to be rather canned to death than to follow orders that they consider not appropriate.

Interestingly, these spankings that Calla has experienced have forged her character and made her a bold woman. She has understood that she needs to fight for herself, create her own world and live as she sees fit. For her, a person cannot please everyone in a community. There will surely be people who might not accept other people's decisions and behavior. Because Calla is craving for her

² The third wave of feminism is made of activists who wanted to expand social equality for women. This wave followed the first whose emphasis was on female freedom and equality in the eighteenth and nineteenth century and the second which included political activism and spanned from 1960s through 1980s. The third wave covers the period of 1990s and 2000s and addressed civil rights and social equality of women.



freedom, she does not think it is needful to succumb to the values dictated by the society, especially when the values do not sustain life.

To express her freedom and autonomy, Calla finds it duty-bound to go against marital norms. For her and many other people, one should marry out of love. Marriage does not entail love and one should start from love before getting to marriage. Calla is unlike some women in many circumstances who yearn for money and other physical comfort and readily get married to elderly men without really knowing much about marriage. If there is no love, there is no bonding and if a person is forced into such a union, this surely results into regret and failure.

Interestingly, Calla was literally “forced” to marry George Freilicht, thirty-nine while she was seventeen. Love is said to know no boundaries but a person is supposed to freely choose whom one loves. In Oates’ protagonist case, it is not so. As the story reads: “Calla Honeystone knew little of marriage” (15). If she does not know much about marriage, why should she readily get into it? The next question that arises is why should she get married to George? For the critic Doherty Berlie, “Calla becomes a wayward teenager with the reputation of being ‘touched in the head’. In an effort to tame her, her family marries her off to a repulsive ‘gnomish little man’ more than twice her age” (1992, 215). It is obvious from this quotation that Calla’s family forced her into marriage to fulfill their personal hidden agenda. They wanted to get rid of her in order to live a peaceful life without her. This is a proof of the prevailing abuse of women and children in the then American society.

Since Calla does not know much about marriage, the reader realizes that she equally fails to perform the duties a married woman should have performed. Evidently, one may think that she would be sore disappointed in her marriage. Oddly enough, she is not. The narrator writes: “was she disappointed in her marriage? –not at all. Too much pride for that. Nor was she resentful, or embittered. Nor disgusted. No emotion at all” (19). This quotation highlights clearly the fact that Calla finds a way to enjoy her freedom in a marriage that is not based on love. This is a proof that she has willingly decided to transgress the norms of her community. From a psychoanalytic perspective, Calla can be termed “strong” mentally.

In a real sense, one expresses regret after one has committed an evil. This is not always the case with Calla. She does not feel sorry because she does not consider her actions evil. She cannot be held accountable for something she has not caused. She has perfectly understood that situation and has therefore, not given any attention to any of those. Instead, she troubles her in-laws with her bohemian attitudes; a way for her to express her freedom. Finally, the “Freilichts did not



know what to make of her, their George's young wife" (21). George's family is rather disappointed in Calla's inability to be a "good" wife. For them, a "good" wife is the one who calls her in-law "mother" and obey her instructions. How would this young wife be known since the whole process was a forced marriage? How will the Freilichts compel Calla to call her mother-in-law 'mother'?

When a man and a woman get married, there are things expected from each as proof of their union. Both have to stay together, communicate, have intimacy and cement their union. In Calla and George's case, this is different. It is so because, Calla does not want to abide by social norms. She believes that anything that one does not consent to do cannot work. This is observed after their marriage, the first weeks were unbearable for George. This situation leads him not to touch her as his wife. In fact, George "dared not touch her" (23). Consensual sexual intercourse, which is part of duties of married people is not the case in George's marriage.

Calla is a non-conformist *par excellence*. In search for her voice, identity and femininity, she refuses to be the "normal" mother almost every mother is supposed to be. She forcibly or unwillingly manages to have three babies in less than five years. The narrator informs the reader that what follows is that she would not take care of her children. Instead, she "allowed the care of her babies to fall into others' hands." Further, "soon after Calla became pregnant with the third baby, physical relations ceased forever between her and her husband" (29). Calla's choice of not conforming to the task of a mother as dictated by her community is a way for her to express herself and transgress the norms of her society.

A "conventional" wife strives to please or live harmoniously with her family and her husband. As for Calla, this is different. In forging her identity, she decides to act strangely and in so doing, no one will welcome her. For instance, Calla does not mind divorcing with George nor does she worry about her children: "Quietly she said, 'you could divorce me. It's done. Send me away. You don't need me, the children don't need me. Let me go away. Don't let anyone bring me back.'" Further, even though her husband insists that she is his and is not "going anywhere", which shows male chauvinism and phallogentric behavior, Calla gives no heed to him. By willingly desiring divorce, the reader understands that she is not happy with her marriage She decides to seek her freedom. All that matters to Calla is herself. She does not even care about her own children, what is against the norms of the society (34). She wants to express herself and live her own freedom.

Calla has designed some redemptive strategies in her search for freedom and self-affirmation. Her first strategy is to be resilient and defiant to people. As the story



reads, “she learned to hold herself taut, rigid, her jaws locked against pleading or weeping, her eyes half shut so that milky crescents showed, inside which, stubborn too, vision itself seemed to withdraw...My self is all to me. I don’t have any need of you” (6). According to Oates’ protagonist, a person is not given freedom, but he/she fights to earn it. Life does not always smile to those who refuse to deprecate agitation, who lament and could do nothing to change their fate. The more you plead, the weaker you become. For Calla, a person has to cater for himself or herself before thinking of others.

The social condition in which Calla lives leads her on to seeking selfhood and acting in a bizarre way. Indeed, the society should have understood her and accept her the way she behaves. To be sure, that is not what Calla experiences. In a couple, spouses have to respect their vows and remain faithful. Neither the man nor the woman should be found in someone else’s arm. Anyone who betrays this violates the very creed of marriage and societal norms. Calla, however, proudly tramples on this. Worse, she challenges social boundaries during those days. In fact, in the early twentieth century, miscegenation was unaccepted by the American society. The critic Michelle Brattain states: “In the twentieth century, the law and racial etiquette absolutely prohibited amorous relationships across the color line” (623). She equally probes: “though miscegenation law frequently failed to prevent sex across the race line, it served another equally significant function in the twentieth century: a tool to monitor racial boundaries (625). Calla, though white and married, decides to flirt with a black man. She is therefore openly challenging doubly the societal norms: committing adultery with a Blackman. By going out with a black man while under a white man’s roof, Calla and Tyrell Thompson, the black man, are now observed: “Calla and the Negro water dowser Tyrell Thompson were to be observed, and indeed were observed scrupulously” (44). The word “scrupulously” used in this context shows that she has conscientiously decided to challenge the societal norms. As if this is not enough, the reader is told that Calla would go that far “telling Tyrell Thompson things she hadn’t ever told anyone and wouldn’t ever have thought of telling” (45). This substantiates the fact that interracial marriage is not allowed in that era in the American context.

As said above, during the 1920s in the U.S., there were laws against miscegenation. Peggy Pascoe, a critic states, “by the early twentieth century, miscegenation laws were so widespread that they formed a virtual road map to American legal conceptions of race. Laws that had originally prohibited marriages between whites and African Americans were extended” (49). However, Calla transgresses these laws. For her, love surpasses borders; it is colorless and raceless. To show this, she goes ahead to sleep with Tyrell Thompson and has become pregnant of him: “That night when Calla became



pregnant with Tyrell Thompson's child the western sky above the river was banked in clouds like gigantic boulders, or human brains" (66). Through her pregnancy, Calla challenges all the institutionalized laws against marriage between mixed races.

Although stories went around her behavior, that she has soiled the Caucasian race with a nigger and if ever she has a baby, a "coal-black creature, black and sinister as the Devil...she's gone crazy and give it—the baby—to a Negro orphanage in Buffalo or deliver it to the black man himself living in some slum or tenement ..." (62). The words "sinister" and "the devil" used in the quotation are negative words denoting the level of discrimination against black people in the setting of the novel. Calla does not give a damn to all these. Whether "it's unnatural and disgusting, the races mixed like that just to look at it you feel sick," Calla believes that her love with Thompson is genuine and does not mind consequences. This careless attitude of Oates' protagonist speaks volume. Arguably, it reveals her autonomy and refusal to accept societal confinements. More, she seems to suggest that each individual has the potential to create their own world. Despite Calla's refusal to comply with established norms of the society, there is a need to seek compromise in a community in order to ensure its development. Calla's compromise with the norms of her society will be the main concern of the following part.

2. Compromise with the Norms of the Society and Personal Healing

In life, some compromises need to be made in order to live peacefully. A person does not always get all that he/she wants in life. No matter who one is and how rigid one may be, it is important to water personal principles down to give way to harmonious living in the community. This applies to Calla too. Although she has been bold and mindless of social mores, she accepts to go with some compromises to live in harmony with others. In *I Lock My Door upon Myself*, a few compromises have been made. The first one is the arranged marriage between Calla and George Freilicht. Marriage, in a real sense, is the union between two people who come essentially from different family background. If someone accepts to marry another one and live with them, there are things that should be let go. Calla's acceptance to marry George constitutes a compromise that is exemplified through the fact that she agrees to live under his roof and have children.

Some statistics reveal today that many couples undergo divorce after a few years of marriage. According to a recent study, "the current divorce rate in the United States is 3.2 per 1,000 population according to the U.S. Census Bureau. This means that approximately 827,261 divorces were recorded in 2019, with the total number of divorces since 2000 topping 8.3 million" (<https://www.>



petrellilaw.com/divorce-statistics-for-2022). In fact, the marriages that do not last for a long-time fade because of many reasons among which: misunderstanding among the spouses, lack of communication among the spouses and unhappiness of one or the two spouses. Divorces undoubtedly have consequences on the spouses and their offspring. In Calla's case, she has not quitted George. Even though she lives with George physically, she has divorced him emotionally. The reader understands that she is not disappointed: "was Calla disappointed in her marriage? –not at all. Too much pride for that. Nor was she resentful, or embittered. Nor disgusted. No emotion at all" (19). The pride that Calla draws from her marriage is a sign that she accepts to let things go in order to be at peace with herself.

Through their union, Calla has been able to show off her full potential. It has enabled the reader and her in-laws to know who she is, her likes and dislikes. The reader discovers that she does not please people in her community, neither does she respect social norms. She has singled herself out. Calla's behavior underscores the fact that marriage does not necessarily bring love. When a person marries the wrong partner, he/she cannot find peace unless he/she accepts to live with. While torturing her man and preventing him from expressing his manhood, Calla is forging her own realm. The reader realizes that George is not a happy husband; his orders are not respected. Calla does what she likes, goes where she wants to and nags her family-in-law. In so doing, she transforms her husband into becoming a strong person who is able to survive adversities. Her attitude can be considered as a healing process.

Further, Calla's behavior as a married woman has enabled George to discover himself. Before his marriage with Calla, George was a strong and difficult person. He was highly regarded in his community and would not mind people. As the story reads: "his head was large and imposing; his eyes were small and darkly shiny and brooding... An ugly little man –but ugly with character and distinction". This substantiates the fact that George is a strong and impressive person. Further, he seemingly comes from a well-to-do family and has much inheritance. In those days, when a person possesses lands, he/she is considered rich. The following account is given about George: He "had inherited from his vigorous father a farm of over one hundred acres" (15). George was even feared in his community. People attest to this and could even say mean things about him: "George Freilicht was known as tightfisted and meanly scrupulous; it as said of him by his own relatives that the man possessed the pertinacity of a woodchuck, that most rapacious, cunning, and unkillable of wild creatures" (16). It is clear from the forthgoing that George is a fearful person.

However, once Calla enters his life, he becomes a completely different man. Put differently, Calla's healing has affected George as well. As things unravel, George



softens his behaviors toward her and shows respect to her. For instance, he pleads with her to call her mother-in-law mother: "he spoke in the same voice... she asks only that you call her 'Mother'. And that you respect her. If you could try" (22). This quotation highlights the change that can be observed in George's behavior. Arguably, Calla has practiced civil disobedience which is, according to Rex Martin the "deliberate and public violation of the command of an authorized and accepted political superior on the ground that this decree is unjust, immoral, unconstitutional, contrary to good public policy, etc." (126). In Calla's case, she has deliberately accepted to go against the restrictions of adultery and misogynous laws. When she decides not to abide by the social norms. Yet, she has realized that this can prevent her from enjoying more positive outcomes. After all, laws are made by humans and when approved, they need to be obeyed. The change in Calla is observed by her approval to be touched by George. This is a clear sign of her compromise. She has actually given in to social norms. For example, the reader learns from her own words "and then I weakened, and I died. And my children were born" (26). It is clear that she sacrificed her own feeling to allow her children to be born.

Like Madame Roland, a French revolutionary woman who denied any wrongdoing and revealed her acceptance of the social conditions of women, Calla too has finally succumbed to social norms in order to survive. Throughout her trial, Roland contested her judges' accusations, and, till the end, she denied ever interfering in political matters. Such interference, she told her accusers, would have been improper for a woman: "J'ai suivi les progrès de la Révolution avec intérêt, je m'entretenais de la chose publique avec chaleur, mais je n'ai point dépassé les bornes qui m'étaient imposées par mon sexe" (Brigitte, 99). 'I followed the progress of the Revolution with interest, I spoke of public matters with enthusiasm, but I did not overstep the limits imposed upon me by my sex' (my own translation). An important take-away in the quotation is that, the woman has not gone beyond her limit, a limitation imposed on her by society. Interestingly, by accepting to bear children even against her will, Calla inevitably compromises her very creed she so desperately reveres: forging her own identity. She therefore accepts the gender "shackles" of her time. She does comply with the social mores so as to heal her wounds.

It is often said that experience is a good teacher. This is very true with Calla. When she let herself taken away by her black lover who eventually died, Calla does learn good lessons. Her love with a black man has enabled her to rediscover herself and the society in which she lives. She now knows that for a person to feel safe and peaceful, they have to adhere to societal conventions. That is to say, a person cannot live in harmony with others while rejecting everything that is agreed on. Calla has become very thoughtful and has grown. Early, she does not



take time to make flashbacks in her life to see what goes wrong. The unexpected departure of Thompson triggers in her critical thinking ability: “she thought obsessively of the man who was her lover, her lover now mysteriously inside her...She...allowed herself to think of Tyrell Thompson as a man among men, a black man among white men in a world as steeped in racial injustice as in the unacknowledged breathable element of air” (68). From this quotation, it is clear that Calla has discovered herself and has reached the realm of self-healing through compromise with the norms of her community. She no longer criticizes anyone like she used to, she accepts things as they come. She “behaved tractably, cooperatively, with no sign of resistance or sullenness” (69). She does no more resist or challenge the societal pre-established norms. She decides to get solace in religion.

Most people, especially religious people turn to God when they are in dire situations. When things go wrong, they rely on God for solutions. When Calla was younger, she failed to rely on God, even when they go to church. Now, amidst turmoil, she “locks her door upon herself” and requests for God’s consolation. Instances where she sings beautifully are: “a habit of humming, whistling, singing under her breath – ‘The Old Rugged Cross’ and ‘Jesus Loves Me Tis I Know’” (32). Her commitment to religious activities changes her relationship with her children.

A “good” mother is the one who takes good care of her children. Any woman who does that is a law-abiding person and deserves respect. Although Calla was a weird mother in the beginning, she has changed her behavior as times goes by: “Calla...made the effort, repeatedly, with her faint wondering smile and perplexed eyes, to be a mother to her children – a good and attentive and loving ‘mother’ to these three small children” (32-33). With time, Calla has become a good mother, with regards to the norms of her society.

Generally, people who isolate themselves and distance themselves from the mass always have a reason of doing so. Either, they are undergoing some inner change and revival or they are suffering from trauma and mental disorder. In any case, it is good to have ‘alone time, me time’ and be more productive and holistic. Besides, the more a person gets away from people, the farther he/she is from evil. Calla can be classified in one of the above scenarios. A glaring case can be read: “Calla chose to remain in seclusion in that farmhouse that was never home to her” (83). Her isolation has contributed to her self-discovery and total healing. She has found home when she decides to live in harmony with her community. In rediscovering herself, she redefines herself and becomes complete. There is no (hole) in her anymore but pure wholeness. The fact is, when “she chose to withdraw inside the Freilichts household and inside the farmhouse itself,” she equally chose “to define herself.” She is eagerly now “performing household



chores with an unfailing concentration and indifference" (84). Calla has become a "new mother" and a "new wife" based on the definition of her society. She has peace within herself through self-discovery.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study has been to analyze how Joyce Carol Oates' protagonist challenges the social norms of her time so as to express her personal freedom and forge her own identity. It has equally scrutinized ways in which Calla in *I Lock My Door Upon Myself*, has returned to the very societal values to find solace, rebirth and healing. The psychoanalytical theory has been used to dissect the inner thoughts and desires of Calla. This tool has allowed to understand that she is desperately seeking freedom in a society that has norms which were not favoring women and children. It has equally helped to study the behavior of Calla when she challenges the pre-established norms that do not favor personal freedom. The study has found that Calla is bold enough to express her freedom which has allowed her to achieve self-discovery. Calla's attitude is commendable to some extent because it gives room to creativity and innovation. Her decision to express herself freely and live her own life is a way of valuing herself and avoiding to be conformist, thus pleasing other people all the time. Joyce Carol Oates has succeeded in challenging certain norms of the society that undermine the rights of women and children at her time. The paper has lastly concluded that no single person can live without others. It is the presence of others that sustain individuals and communities. Thus, a person, whoever he/she is cannot always bypass the laws of the community even if the said laws do not align with personal inner principles. As discussed in the paper, it is of paramount importance to discover and express oneself. A person needs to know who he/she is otherwise one will forever remain conformist. There is a need to give in to compromise in order to ensure together living and peaceful living.

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