

“A Feminist Inclination of Alice Munro’s Fiction”

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Often the first question that is asked, if one talks about studying women’s literature is why women’s literature? **Isn’t all literature fundamentally the same?** Does it make sense to talk about women’s writing as being different from men’s writing? do women tend to write about particular subjects, or treat them in any different way?

This research paper is going to reveal the enclosed status of Alice Munro’s fiction through feminist propensity with post-colonial reading surveying on Amnesty International, global movement.

Alice Munro was born in Wingham in south-western Ontario, in 1931. She grew up near the small town of Wingham in Huron Country, Ontario in a red-brick farmhouse with her parents, a brother and sister. She was precocious child. As a child, Munro was constantly telling herself stories. One of the first was “The Little Mermaid”, by Hans Christian Anderson, whose ending she could not bear. The mermaid has to make a choice between killing the prince and going back to join her mermaid sisters, a decision that Munro thought was horribly unfair. Therefore, she made up a new, happy ending. She attended the Lower Town School and then the Wingham district High School, where she was one of the toppers student. As a child, Munro dreamed of becoming an actress, and at one time planned a Gothic novel to be called “Charlotte Muir”. She published her first story “The Dimensions of Shadow” in the university’s student literary magazine Folio in 1950. She had so much confidence in herself, at the age of seventeen, that she thought she would like a marry Laurence Olivier, and believed that she would have no trouble “snagging him” if the two were somehow to meet. “She grew up in such a place where women were not expected to read books except on Sunday”.

Nearly all of Alice Munro’s fiction is set in southwestern Ontario, but her reputation as a brilliant short-story writer goes far beyond the borders of her native Canada. Munro’s short-stories have clearly developed from her own experiences. She has explained in various interviews that her stories are not autobiographical, and she does not claim an “emotional reality” for her characters who are is drawn from her own life. She was a

literary person in a non-literary town, concealing her ambition like a forbidden passion. She started writing in her early teens. Munro's experiences of growing up in a relatively poor provincial southwestern Ontario town during the depression, negotiation the rebelliousness and idealism of adolescence, discovering sex, leaving home, testing herself at university, falling in love, getting married, having children, getting divorced, making a living and getting alone in variety of complicated relationships all inform the fiction she creates.

Lives of Girls and Women takes up Munro's Huron-country adolescence most thoroughly. Thacker notes Munro's use of the autobiographical forms of memoir, confession, and mediation. While many readers may be ignorant of Munro's own history in its specifics, they know many of its details simply by having read her work: her growing up on the edge of Wingham (Jubilee, Hanratty, Dalgeish), father a sometime fox-farmer from Huron Country stock, mother from the Ottawa Valley; her mother's death from Parkinson's disease after a long decline her father's more recent death of heart problems. "The Peace of Utrecht", where the mother is shown as suffering from Parkinson's disease, can be cited as an example.

Short-stories of *Runaway* and Munro's single novel *Lives of Girls and women* which critics have described as a Bildungsroman, are an interdisciplinary study of feminism and literature. In this context, we need to understand the concept of feminism and literature. "Feminism is a revolutionary ideology. It is a "doctrine or movement that advocates equal rights for women" (Collins Dictionary). Whereas, literature mirrors life as it is. In other words, feminist literature is a protean medium for the promotion of women's rights in the 20th century." Munro, the forthright feminist fiction writer, uses the short-story form as a medium to portray the sad conditions of women living in the landscape of small town, Ontario, Canada where she has been brought up. Munro speaks for a collective female experience and dramatizes the private lives of individuals through her characters.

Lives of Girls and Women, as the title suggests, exposes the obscure lives of many women. These stories are about "women's secret opposition to the maxims of male-dominated culture; often these stories are of emotional wreckage and frustrated ambition, stories of refusal, but all of them reveal women's stance as alien and critical." In the novel, Del Jordan writes her own life story of growing up in Jubilee. Her mother's resistance and optimistic prediction both are obvious in her utterance; "There is a change coming I think in the lives of girls and women. Yes. But it is up to us to make it come. All women have been dependent on men. No more lives of our own, really than domestic animals." Del, who not

only identifies but also resists the very tradition of patriarchy, where “books were a time waster and reading a bad habit” confirms this.

In addition, the short-Shorty collection *Runaway* consists eight particular stories which accelerate the propensity basically as a woman, are entitled-

Runaway, Chance, Soon, Silence, Passion, Trespasses, Tricks, Powers.

To begin the obvious, it should be said that all the stories in RUNAWAY centre on women’s thoughts and feelings about themselves and their situations.

The Western patriarchal notion was laid by Judeo-Christian thought explained in the Old and New Testaments. It was the Judaic myth of creation that made the woman ‘the second sex’, Even earlier Aristotle regarded woman as “an unfinished man, left standing on the lower step in the scale of development. Aristotle was accepted by the Catholic Church. St. Thomas Aquinas, the thirteenth century scholastic philosopher makes an almost reiterative statement that a woman is “a man manque, an animal occasionafurn, who is defined by what she lack”.

“One is not born a woman but rather becomes, a woman. No biological psychological, or economical fate determines the figure that the human female presents in society; it is civilization as a whole that produces this creature, intermediate between male and eunuch, which is described a feminine...the child would hardly be able to think of himself as sexually differentiate”.(Simone de Beauvoir)

In “Lives of Girls and Women” Del’s perceptions thread the segments of the novel together. The first two sections of the novel deal with her childhood, and project her as a precocious child carefully observing and understanding persons and events. Nothing escapes her observation. She watches all the peculiarities in the world around her. She is aware of the differences in attitude and outlook between her father and mother.

The principle character in “RUNAWAY”, Carla, a young woman fixed in a relationship with a moody, rather threatening lover named Clark. She is depicted once as seeing herself as “captive” to Clark and, again, in a scene of crisis, as someone with non existence separate from him. Of course Carla is quite young, so her raw emotional and shallow sense of self have not yet undergone the trying fires of experience. The narrative voice of the story alternates between Carla and Sylvia.

There are several similarities between Juliet and Carla. Each pursues love - for both romance and sex - and each makes a leap into a new life. Carla runs off with Clark and Juliet seeks out a man she met only once on a train and from whom she has subsequently

received a single letter. Also, Juliet is eventually forced to endure complications in her relationship with Eric.

Munro ends the story thus: When Sara had said, soon I'll see Juliet, Juliet had found no reply. Could it not have been managed? Why should it have been so difficult? Just to say Yes. To Sara it would have meant so much - to herself, surely, so little. But she had turned away, she had carried the tray to the kitchen, and there she washed and dried the cups and also the glass that held the grape soda. She had put everything away.

The question of sexual identity is not resolved in the course of the novel, but Del's mother, a woman with rudimentary feminist ideals, prophesies that life will someday be very different for women. Munro's drive home message:

There is change coming I think in the lives of girls and women. yes. But it is up to us to make it come. All women have had up till now has been their connection with man. All we had. No more lives of our own, really, than domestic animals. He shall hold thee, when his passion shall have spent its novel force, a little closer than his dog, a little closer than his house.

She gave message to the readers:- "I hope you will-use brains. Use your brains. Don't be distracted, over a man; your life will never be your own. You will get the burden, woman always does".

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