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SHORT STORIES FROM CANADIAN LITERATURE: ARTISTIC JOURNEY OF ALICE MUNRO

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Alice Munro is a writer who is widely well-regarded. For decades now, Alice Munro has been believed of as one of Canada's foremost short-story writers and undeniably one of the best in the English-speaking world. She has her own variety of short story. Munro is often referred to as "modern day Chekhov" and "the Canadian Chekhov" as Chekhov's influence on her, she writes, "All short story writers say Chekhov, but really, he was terribly important to me." (qtd. Feeney)

Her best short stories are *Dance of the Happy Shades* (1968), *Lives of Girls and Women* (1971), *Something I've been Meaning to Tell You* (1974), *Who do You Think You Are?* (1978) *The Moons of Jupiter* (1982), *The Progress of Love* (1986), *Friend of My Youth* (1990) *Open Secrets* (1994), *The Love of a Good Woman* (1998), *Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage* (2001) *Runaway* (2004)

Her first collection, "*Dance of the Happy Shades*," was published when she was thirty seven. This book received the Governor General's Award, the highest literary prize given in Canada. "Walker Brothers Cowboy" the first story of the collection drives the reader into action, it starts randomly no clues and explanations at all, and her characters reveal themselves which is her main intentions. The story is laden with stirring and vague metaphors. Munro's writing has clarity, purity and eloquence. This technique was used by the new writers in the early twentieth writers especially Katherine Mansfield and

Munro accomplished it well. Her character setting and plot are strongly synchronised.

Thematically, "Dance of the Happy Shades" concerns combined social consciousness. In the first collection the short stories are well proficient it shows writers understanding of the traditional form that leads to her later transcended of those conventions to make her own mark on the history of the short story. Alice Munro writes in

So why do I like to write short stories? Well, I certainly didn't intend to. I was going to write a novel. And still! I still come up with ideas for novels. And I even start novels. But something happens to them. They break up. I look at what I really want to do with the material, and it never turns out to be a novel. But when I was younger, it was simply a matter of expediency. I had small children, I didn't have any help. Some of this was before the days of automatic washing machines, if you can actually believe it. There was no way I could get that kind of time. I couldn't look ahead and say, this is going to take me a year, because I thought every moment something might happen that would take all time away from me. So I wrote in bits and pieces with a limited time expectation. Perhaps I got used to thinking of my material in terms of things that worked that way. And then when I got a little more time, I started writing these odder stories, which

branch out a lot. But I still didn't write a novel, in spite of good intentions (qtd. in Feeney n.p).

In "Who do You Think You Are?" Munro takes steps that advance her storytelling technique and in developing her intelligence in psychological measuring of characters. "Royal Beatings", "Privilege", "Half a Grapefruit" and "Wild Swans" are interwoven internally through characters like Rose and Flo. "Munro's character, ever conscious of the world divided into halves, into various polar-opposite, black-and-white hemispheres, from gender to economic standing to "smarts," play to form when it comes to Rose..." (Hooper 55). This collection displays Munro's increased ability to comprehend character. She continues to go deeper into her characterisations without overlabouring. From this collection Munro's Style here has strengthened deeper, metaphors remained clear, carrying quality even further than before.

"The Moons of Jupiter" (1982) is Munro's fifth book and fourth collection of short stories. In its first story, "Chaddeleys and Flemings: Connection" Munro's control of technique, characterisation, setting and style is manifested. Munro has depicted unmarried women of 1950s living together in widowhood. Munro is fond of exploring: unmarried women, particularly who are sisters and adults living under the same roof. As in this story where the narrator's father has six sisters. "Mrs. Cross and Mrs. Kidd" is a simple story, with no profound psychology or complications of plot. Like "The Turkey Season," it takes place on a very multi-coloured stage. Munro generates the setting with great credibility. It is considered that "The Moon of Jupiter" is most significant turning point in the Munro's fiction writing career.

"The Progress of Love" (1986) is another solid collection of short stories of Munro, this collection again focused on

Munro's widely used theme, adolescence; growing up girls in socioeconomic conditions take example of Beryl.

"Friend of My Youth" (1990) is having ten stories. The first story cover loyalty, and most of other stories are about characters, principally women. This story echoes and reworks an earlier account of a dream in "The Peace of My Youth", and it reflects the recurrent dreams.

Like so many of Munro's stories, these pieces promote and undo reality at one and the same time; they tease us with expectations of accuracy, objectivity, truth, and linguistic transparency, only to show us that events which pose as accurate, objective, true, and transparent are fictions of self-knowledge, narratives constructed by a narrating figure whose authorial subjectivity can no longer go unquestioned (Heble 57)

"Open Secrets", Munro's eighth book and seventh collection of short stories, published in 1994 gave her growing reputation. As the title signifies open some of the secrets and spins from them dark hued, often hallucinatory tales of individuals trying to make sense out of their memories. The remembered past, however, turns out to be as ambiguous, unstable, and unsettling as the once-lived present was, only made more profound by the passage of time.

Most of the stories in the collection are confessions, relying on such conventional techniques as letters, witness reports, and other people's accounts of events. "Carried Away" leads off the collection and reveals itself within its initial pages as a masterpiece. This story breaks new ground for her in that regard to earn the label as 'historical fiction'.

Runaway (2004) is among her best collections and displays all of Munro's mastery: the effortless shifts in time, sometimes across decades; the ability to

convey an entire life in a few pages; the exploration of complex truths in uncomplicated language. Her stories often extend decades, moving forward and backward in time and focussing on the internal drama of an individual character and that character's life-long exploration of self-deception, self-discovery, and self-assertion. Peter Englund said, "Her short stories rely very little on external drama. They are an emotional chamber play, a world of silences and lies, waiting and longing" (qtd. in Doyle n. p).

The Love of a Good Woman (1998) is more graceful, despite the provocativeness of some of the themes and locations found in some of the stories, Munro has advanced and developed into an enormously generous and welcoming fiction writer: welcoming the reader into her prose/writing to share what she understands about this particular character in this particular situation. Munro accomplished intense psychological probing in these stories. At this period Munro kept balance in characterizing the characters. It is all found in "Lies", "Jakarta", "Cortes Islands" and other stories. "My Mother's Dream" completes the collection; it is a story about, women devoting themselves to the care and well-being of a heroic male. On the same general level, it is about a mother-daughter conflict, but with a different take on it for Munro: an infant daughter and her mother. It is told in the first person, but which, in this case, demonstrates an stropny technique, for the narrator knows more than she should about things happening before she was born and when she was relatively young. Munro identifies her characters closely, yet she is at peace with the fact their lives will, and should, recollect essential mysterious eminence.

Some stories, however, cover beyond the confessional mode - they observe and scrutinise characters who are in the process of jettisoning their guilt, whether real or imagined. "The Jack

Randa Hotel" presents an entirely unconvincing character and a plot that, with too many questionable and unconvincing turns. "A Wilderness Station" is in epistolary layout and qualifies as historical fiction, set almost completely in the historical past: at least Munro's prose in this case well raises Canada's frontier environment within the relatively short confines of this story. It is essentially a story about men's delusions and prejudices about women, the weaker sex, that is, in the mid-nineteenth century.

Munro's new collection, like *The Love of a Good Woman* (1998), reflects that movement backwards and forwards across the geographical spaces of Canada and across time as well, for there is an increasing emphasis here on elderly people (retired couples, recent widows, old people in nursing homes) with an accompanying sense of individual lives scrolling out over many decades (Howells 168).

Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage placed her firmly within critical and popular appraisal as a leading practitioner of the short story in English. With this publication she took a step further ahead and higher in the international fictional arena. And at this stage she is regarded as one of the world's best fiction writers. "What is Remembered" one of the stories from this collection put forth Munro's fundamental fiction "theory" that is, how individuals recall events in their lives or in lives of others. "What is Remembered" is simple narrative but it has a depth psychological probing and explores the human behaviour. Through flash forwards and framing devices, the narrative and structure becomes complicated but not confusing. "Floating Bridges", "Family Furnishing", "Comforts" and in "Nettles" the theme of loss and the plots revolve around coincidences. "Postman and

Beam”is revolve round the themes of family and individual. “The Bear Came Over the Mountain” demonstrated the Munro’s Empathy for the elderly people who are ill.

Munro, widely beloved for her spare and psychologically astute fiction that is deeply revealing of human nature, appeared to be more of a purely literary choice. She transfigured the architecture of short stories, often beginning a story in an unexpected unforeseen place then moving backward or forward in time.

"Undoubtedly one of the finest short-story writers working in English today, Munro possesses a great talent for unveil-ing the riveting human dilemmas that lurk just beyond benign appearances and weaving them into tales that speak with immediacy to both the intellect and the emotions” (Knap 152).

She brought a decorum, elusive wit to her work that aficionados often traced to her background growing up in rural Canada. Throughout her career, she has drawn from the setting of her home of rural Ontario

In most of this fiction, Munro is the chronicler of a particular region, that of south-western Ontario, though some of her stories have a west coast

setting, and in her regionalism she reflects a vision that shares much with such southern writers (Hallvardand Dahlie58).

She frequently expanded on themes of sex, desire, work, discontent and aging. One of her collections, “The Love of a Good Woman,” won a National Book Critics Circle Award in 1998. The master of the contemporary short awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature, She also won the 2009 Man Booker International prize for her lifetime body of work. Munro has stimulated the margins and limitations, the proportions, the techniques in composing the short story beyond traditional methods and expectations.

The total evidence in Alice Munro's fiction ultimately dictates that she cannot easily be categorized, and to say that she writes essentially in the comic mode, or that she is moving consistently beyond realism, reveals only part of the complexity of her art and vision. Her accomplishments offer gratifying evidence that fiction of significant substance, of careful craftsmanship, and of sympathetic treatment of the complexities of human relationships, is very much alive in Canada (Hallvardand Dahlie70).

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