



Socio-Cultural reality of Canadian Women in the fiction of Alice Munro

Anil Kumar Mandal¹, Dr. Arjun Kumar²

¹Research Scholar, Department of English, Patna University, Patna, Bihar, India

²Head of the Department of English, Patna University, Patna, Bihar, India

Received: 18 Nov 2022; Received in revised form: 03 Dec 2022; Accepted: 13 Dec 2022; Available online: 19 Dec 2022

©2022 The Author(s). Published by Infogain Publication. This is an open access article under the CC BY license

(<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

Abstract— Throughout this paper I have systematized and studied in critical terms, a range of Alice Munro mainly women-centric short stories, with an in-depth study of their living condition under the traditional social conventions. Being concerned about women Munro in her fiction has recreated the world of Canadian women, with its true picture of the Canadian society, with culture, custom and environment. She has continuously wrote about the invaluable document of human relationship, as well as female experience under social values and expectation. In her work, Munro explores women's role in different situation of life as a young girl, a career women, a lover, wife or mother. In each of these roles Canadian women found a reflection of their selves mirrored in Munro's chronical of women's social history down the decades. She writes about past experiences of her childhood, cultural traits and social structure that she minutely observed in her different age group. Her subjects are rural landscape, lives of girls and women, their coming of age, love, hate, marriage, suffering and stuff of rural life with reference to small town locality. Lake Huron, Ottawa Valley and Wawanash County. Munro's strength, as a short story writer, is the range of her portraits of a variety of female characters from childhood to old age. In this way, most of the girls and women of Munro, as the main protagonists, confront, challenges at personal, familial and social level. However, they all are not alike; some are submissive and introvert and feeble while others bold, rebellious and self-indulgent who are real girls and women of Munrovan model, search their original self, and who put aside all their pretensions, show the Canadian society, alternatively, to the world what they, in reality are. Muro is a realistic writer, her character a represent cultural reality of rural Canadianness of her age. Del and Rose are Munrovan iconic characters, with whom she reveals her own childhood, youth and maturity and they have been transfigured in her favorite books *Lives of Girls and Women* and *Beggar Maid* intentionally. Protagonists of *Dance and Progress* are modelled on herself.

Keywords— Alice Munro, Canadian culture, Passion, feminism, subjectivity, Marringships.

I. INTRODUCTION

Alice Munro is regarded as one of the best short story writer in the world and has been crucial in making short-story writing respectable in Canada. She has been included in the 2010 times magazine's 100 most influential people. She won the Nobel prize in the year 2013 for her contribution to the short story. She is regarded as "Canadian Chekhov" and acquires position because of her distinctive style, uplifting incidents and situation from common lives

through the commonly accepted language by men and women in rural background. Her art was aimed to present the realities of Canadian life through fiction, to expose the hidden truths of the lives of women which she has focused on her native Land Huron country where she had spent the early years of her life. Rasporich highlights Munro's love for the locale and creation of a fictional space, when she says that "...Munro is able to authenticate a fictional female world by expanding her characters inner lives into place,

and by manipulating place as feminist inquiry" (Rasporich 122).

As a writer, she writes about women, their position in the society, their family problems, educational social conjugal problems and patriarchy. She produced a variety of characters; her characters are the epitome of suppressed male dominated women in the system. She depicts desperation and confusion of rural girls and women with the reflection of inner feelings and sensitivity and challenges ultraconservative life with scientific approach. In "Red Dress 1946" of *Dance of the Happy Shades* the adolescent narrator narrates the dress making activity too interestingly. Anticipating in depicting dress design of the narrator, she uncovers her own childhood experience with mother – "My mother was making me a dress. All through the month of November I would come from school and find her in the kitchen, surrounded by cut-up red velvet and scraps of tissue paper pattern" (147).

Munro is too much interested in depicting dress fashion and food decoration, as it is cultural activity. Family, culture, folkways, women's inner world and landscapes are her concerning subjects. Her stories are feast for those who are found of aspire to study women reality and cultural traits because her stories are written in very realistic and natural way. Munro's narrator remember certain places and past experiences which they have had in childhood and teenager, these experiences are the picture gallery and snapshots of the past time. The phenomenon of excessive anger against the rigidities of male control culture must have made mad down Rose and attacks aggressively her father in very obscene note: "I would not mind killing your ugly wife and your stupid kids while I'm at it. You ought to be thrown down the toilet hole head first. You ought to have things cut off with a razor blade. You are a liar, too. All those fights you said you won are lie. I could stick a knife in you and catch your blood in a bowl and a blood pudding. I would feed it to the page (progress, 220).

In one of her stories anonymous letters, she notes King Bolly is as good as dead. Munro authorship and her way of writing suggest her as the artist as mad women struggles "to escape male house and make text" as to quote Susan Gubar and Sandra Gilbert.

Munro's most of women character are seen to lead a confined life performing their domestic chores and fulfilling their duties as daughters, wife and mothers. The work of the women folk of the day is also highlighted here which consisted of: "...morning marthons of floor scrubbing cucumber hoeing, potato digging, bean and tomato picking, canning, waxing, baking. They were not idle setting there; their laps full of work-cherries to be stored, peas to be shelled, apples to be cored. (Lives: 36)

Munro in her art also looks at life from another angle of vision that of ageing, sensitivity and death. Munros draw women who are in the country home where "Bodies were fed and wiped taken up and tied in chairs, untied and put to bed. Taking in Oxygen giving out carbon dioxide, they continue to participate in the life of the world" (Who: 226). What Munro wants us to understand is that life has its own challenges and one has to accept of as a part of life.

Munro takes up another aspect of women's sensibility in her fiction when she takes up the issue of deserted women left alone to fend their way in life, "Circle of prayer" (Progress). She shows no interest when he returns as she has become used to the ways of her husband. Trudy's will power and fortitude enables her to resist servile male subjugation. The protagonist of "Boys and girls" at the climax of the story gets anguished and bewildered. She might have felt the harsh tradition of the society and accepted it was not possible her to charge it. The narrator of "Boys and girl" from *Dance* is eleven years unnamed girl who to have free will and expectation from parents and society. Sometimes father becomes more than mother, she can easily be fooled; she is kind and loving at the same time, she is her enemy. "She loved me and she sat up late night making a dress of the difficult style I wanted for me to wear when school started but she was also my enemy. She was always not to get me to stay in the house more although she knew I hated it... and keep me from working for my father" (118).

Munro's women characters are showing Canadian culture and its reality. Her fiction visualizes the lives of women in its entirety.

This paper has been undertaken with the purpose of studying Munro's female protagonist socio-cultural reality in her fiction. It also attempts to seek out the message that Munro wants to put forward to her readers. The present paper unfurls the miseries and suffering in the lives of women and their social victimization. It seems to open up new way of looking at women's problems in Canadian society.

REFERENCES

- [1] Reaporich, Beverly J. *Dance of the Sexes Art and Gender in the Fiction of Alice Munro's Discourse of Absence*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, Buffalo, London, 1994.
- [2] Gilbert, Sandra M. and Gubar, Susan. *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Ninetenth Century Literature Imagination*, Cited in Showalter, The female Malady, Yale University Press, 1979.
- [3] Munro, Alice. *Lives of Girls and Women*, Penguin Canada ed.; 1996.
- [4] Munro, Alice. *Dance of the Happy Shades*, Vintage, 1968.

- [5] Munro, Alice. *Progress of Love Mecklelland and Stewart*. A Douglas Gibson Book, 1986 (rpt. Vintage 1997)
- [6] Munro, Alice. *Who Do You Think You Are?* Toronto: Macmilan of Canada, 1982.
- [7] *The Progress of Love*, Vintage, 1986.
- [8] Beauvoir de Simone. *The Second Sex* translated and Ed. H.M. Parshley: U.K. Vintage, 1997.