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**DEVELOPMENT IN THE MODERN SHORT STORY THROUGH THE INTERFACE  
OF GENDER, NATIONALITY AND GENRE WITH REFERENCE TO  
ALICE MUNRO'S WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?**

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**ABSTRACT**

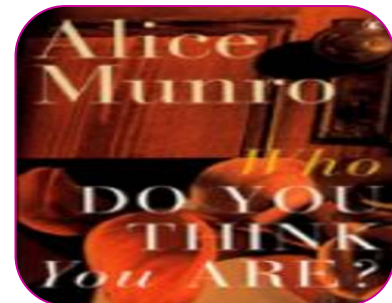
*The historical backdrop of the short story is loaded with logical inconsistency, a trademark which can be believed to have a two-fold impact on the genre, without a moment's delay imbuing the short story form with a sort of abstract vitality, while in the meantime destabilizing its status in the literary group. For instance, one hundred years ago, the short story climbed drastically in business achievement just to experience basic protection from standard acknowledgment. The achievement got from the way that Poe's speculating prompted an acknowledgment of the short story as a positive artistic type while his identifications of its parts were turned into a recipe utilised by mainstream authors like O. Henry. This circumstance, in turn, drove to the basic appraisal of the short story as a lesser kind in contrast with poem, drama, or the novel, similarly as no sooner did the short story secure abstract status when the critics started to weep over the "decline, the decay, and the senility" of the short story genre. Today, a century after the regrets of critics and the genre's proceeded presence in the shadow of the novel, play and poem, the short story is said to encounter a renaissance. Maybe the short story's genuine fascination in our period lies in its constant refusal of generic definition.*

**KEYWORDS:** Gender, Political, febleness, individuality, craftsmanship etc.,

**INTRODUCTION :**

In the 1970s, while the Canadian writers were learning from Atwood's speculating in survival about the requirement for defeating the conventional part of victim-hood by getting to be "imaginative non-casualties," and keeping in mind that North American women activists were enrolling or appropriating Atwood to propel their motivation, Alice Munro, a Vancouver housewife, had just been working autonomously as an inventive non-casualty by chronicling the ordinary encounters of Canadian women. Contrasting Atwood, Munro was not dynamic in the Women's Movement of the late sixties and mid-seventies, yet her work did not go unnoticed: her first story accumulation, *Dance of the Happy Shades* (1968), won the Governor General's Award, and *Lives of Girls and Women* (1971) was acclaimed by Canadian commentators for its genuine depiction of the craftsman as a young lady and furthermore made business progress in the United States.

Munro, from rustic southern Ontario, with just two years of college instruction at the University of Western Ontario and twenty years of a customary marriage and three youngsters, started her scholarly vocation in relative confinement. Catherine Sheldrick Ross clarifies: "With small encouragement from the world, Alice just kept writing whenever she could. She sent stories off to the few available markets, and coped with rejections by focusing on what she was writing



next. . . she worked alone, not knowing other writers or feeling part of any community" (5).

Managing the contention between complying with gender-role expectations, after one's desire to be a craftsman has been a progressing procedure for Munro. She looks at writing to "a trip you take all alone . . . something we are accustomed to thinking of the male artist as doing,"(Rasporich 21 - 22). This is the predicament of the female craftsman, which, as indicated by Munro, is made more troublesome by the observation that "you are betraying to men that this still center that they had thought was there, this kind of unquestioning cushion, is not there at all," and on the grounds that at the same time "you know that you are not a freak. You are just the artist woman as the man is the artist man" (Rasporich 22).

This battle for way of life as a "artist woman" was exacerbated for Munro by her nationality. The title of her 1978 story, *Who Do You Think You Are?*, demonstrates the Canadian distraction with character that can be followed to Canada's political and financial colonisation by Britain and the United States. Considerably all the more noteworthy, maybe, is that when Munro was orchestrating to discharge the accumulation in the U. S., her distributor felt that the unique title was excessively provisional and transformed it, making it impossible to thereafter the title of another story in the gathering. In a meeting, Munro clarified how the title change uncovers varying ideas of national characters: "They said to me nobody in America ever said to anybody, 'Who do you think you are?' Because Americans were too self-assured" (Hancock 203).

Such a feeling of confidence keeps on being outsider to Munro. In spite of the fact that she encountered and also added to the Canadian social renaissance of the mid 1970s a feeling of self-belittling has a tendency to remain. Hence, when getting some information about the act of diary keeping, Munro admits, ""No.No. I don't do any of that. . . I'm always attracted by the idea of writing a journal. But I'm too self-conscious when I start to do it. I don't think it's natural for me to write a journal And I wonder if this has something to do with being a Canadian" (Hancock 220). The unavoidable feeling of the inconceivability of being a Canadian and a craftsman is likewise one that Munro has expressly tended to: "People Say, how did you think you could be a Canadian and a writer (who do you think you are?), but since I thought that I could be a girl from Wingham and a writer (laughter) that was the finest step" (Harwood 127).

The other power Munro has needed to manage is the feeling of an absence of a Canadian artistic custom. She, as Atwood, focuses to the British convention, particularly the women authors, as significantly affecting her creative desire: "Wuthering Heights was the big influence from the time I was two to fourteen. I still know parts of that book by heart"(Harwood 124). Despite the fact that she has expelled the impact of Canadian journalists, "You know, I wasn't aware of them (Harwood 124) she admits to the essential impact on her of L.M. Montgomery's *Emily of New Moon* since it "is about a girl who wants to be a writer" (Miller 124). Munro likewise recollects the centrality of her later revelation of Ethel Wilson's stories:

I discovered Ethel Wilson. . . when I had just moved to Vancouver, and she was actually living in Vancouver, and I read "Lilly's Story" and "Tuesday and Wednesday". . . It'd be about '52. And "Tuesday and Wednesday" is a story that I don't think is around much any more. It's like a short novel. I was enormously excited by her work. . . It was important to me that a Canadian writer was using so elegant a style. You know I don't mean style in the superficial sense, but that a point of view so complex and ironic was possible in Canadian literature. (Struthers 18)

This proclivity between the lady and the Canadian has been noted by W.J. Keith who calls attention to that quite a bit of modern Canadian fiction has been delivered by "accomplished women writers" (157), similarly as David Stouck has noticed that the considerable measure of consideration "focused on Canada's women writers" is because of "a conjunction of feminist literary interest and the intriguing fact that a disproportionately large number of Canada's best writers have from the outset been women" (257). This

circumstance, as indicated by Mickey Pearlman, leads to investigations of "the issue of identity. . .the linchpin of Canadian writing by Women" (4), and is absolutely at the focal point of Munro's writing. Besides, Pearlman recommends that "identity. . .evolves from place and site, from birth and perception. . .in reaction to someone else's perception of you" (50) which of course, incorporates sex, race and national character.

Coral Ann Howells recommends that Canadian women scholars scan for characters and uncovers that of the self being strong and brought together. It turns into an all the more moving idea without settled limits and that "this feminine awareness finds interesting parallels in the problematic concept of Canadian national identity which has notoriously escaped definition" (25).

Discussing her own involvement in educating Munro's stories, Loma Irvine watches that the changing reactions to Munro's fiction by her understudies reveal the unconventionally vague quality of Munro's fiction. Her understudies remarked in transit that Munro's moving abstract ideal models underscore quirky points of vision, and they recorded the complex qualities of Canadian written work that are tended to by Munro: "women's contemporary Canadian writing is fundamentally ambivalent; contemporary women's writing tends towards indeterminacy; Munro uses fiction to demonstrate and investigate the topic of ambivalence" (252).

An intricate and unexpected perspective is in reality a kind of complex mark in Munro's stories. She, herself, best portrays her own particular written work style in "Simon's Luck," a story in her collection, *Who Do You Think You Are?*, whose primary character gives a peculiar perspective of life's unfurling as, "those shifts of emphasis that throw the story line open to question, the disarrangements which demand new judgments and solutions, and throw the windows open on inappropriate unforgettable scenery" (173). As indicated by Lawrence Mathews, Munro's "art of disarrangement" additionally works as an approach to "remind us that any significant truth that literature delivers is a partial and provisional one" (192). Furthermore, Mathews trusts that this system is one that Munro will proceed to utilise and that will keep on constituting a noteworthy interest of her work:

The value of the art of disarrangement . . . lies in its continual commentary on its own tentativeness, in the face of life's complexity and mystery. It is not that the artist should abandon her attempt to render experience fully and accurately. . .rather, one should proceed warily, in humility, even, in a sense, quixotically. Munro's engagement in this endeavor in full awareness of its difficulties, points to what will prove to be of enduring interest in her work. (193)

Munro stays focused on composing fiction in spite of her familiarity with craftsmanship's followed by her need to energise her peruses to stay focused on a feeling of the decency of life despite their attention to life's unpredictability and secret. So also, she might be urging her peruses to convey the technique of disarrangement as an approach to request new judgments and solutions to their particular life circumstances. As indicated by E. D. Blodgett, for sure, Munro's particular anecdotal disarrangements are what constitute her fascination to women some of whom discover women's activist concerns in her work. While he likewise takes note of a developing interest to those pulled in by her inconspicuously mindful way of portrayal. It is this interest that has made her one of the more significant contemporary authors of the short story in Canada.

Obviously, the multifaceted nature of social connections relies upon the nature of the adjust of energy in a relationship, and Munro guarantees this is a noteworthy concern in quite a bit of her written work. Being a Canadian and a lady has sharpened her to sentiments of weakness, and she discloses that her desire to compose comes out of "isolation, feelings of power that don't gel out in a normal way" (Twigg 18). She concurs with Gibson that most fiction is about adoration and power, also, she keeps up that she frequently states "from the side of the person who loses power, but not always" (26).

As much as Munro expounds on feebleness, be that as it may, she does as such in a way that demonstrates her survivor status and makes her an innovative non-victim, though in an intricate and unexpected way. This complexity, as indicated by W. R. Martin who lies in how her bits of knowledge are “at once penetrating and sympathetic, are typically conveyed in paradoxes and parallels that are informed by the texture of her vision, which appears also in the shape of her prose as well as in the structure of her stories. Her art is . . . a complex counterpointing of opposed truths in a memorable model of life and reality” (1). As Martin sees it, Munro's nationality adds to this masterful technique. Her sensible depictions of the nation towns of south-western Ontario, "strange. . .the mysterious, or alien (205). This conjunction of the commonplace and interest can in turn enroll a feeling of an unexpected, doubleness of vision toward this locale and its kin that, Martin feels, permits the investigation of the distinctively Canadian battle with character prove in Munro's aphoristic question, "Who do you think you are?" and in addition in Northrop Frye's hypothesis about Canadian personality, "Where is here?"

However Martin points to Munro's Canadian involvement as the stimulus for her fictional paradoxes and parallels. Helen Hoy focuses on the way that Munro translates her gendered position into a fictional exemplary that is able to "include" rather than "discard," and which is able to make room for 'al1 that is contradictory and persistent and unaccommodating about life. Hoy proposes that it is Munro's experience of being a female that helps to explain her inclusion of "what is muted, unremarked, or silenced in society" (5). As Hoy sees it, it is Munro's womanly experience of heeding beyond the usual sounds and seeing beyond the usual sights that enables her to test a narrow view of reality and the leading fictional patterns related to it. According to Hoy Munro's stories prove that reality "consistently proves more various than the human constructs created to contain it" (5).

Munro's vision of Canadian women's encounters, enables her to see underneath the surface to the riddle in the lives of her characters, some of whom, in turn, are agreed this exceptional vision. Howells proposes that similarly as Munro struggled early on to mask her writerly aspirations in ordinary feminine interests, such a significant number of her anecdotal characters feel that they should disguise their determination. Creator and characters, says Howells, "are struck by the discontinuities between the surface ordinariness of their town and of their own lives and the secret worlds that lie beneath appearances of normality" (Worlds 124).

While Atwood appears to have opposed weights to cover her aesthetic aspirations, and has clarified her perspectives on nationality and sex in the type of exceptionally open and polemical articulations, Munro appears to manage her concerns about sex and nationality fundamentally on the creative and instinctive level. She is significantly more prone to approach craftsmanship as discrete from governmental issues. She is extremely mindful of this comparable hesitance in numerous women writings. In a meeting with Rasporich, she clarifies her inner conflict about plain political explanations: "women are trained to be reticent, to be nice, to be genteel. . . . I think it's very hard for women to manage the kind of exposure that they may feel has to be done in their fiction." I think all this has changed, of course. But I think that this is a problem" (21). Whenever asked, notwithstanding, how cognizant she is as a craftsman of imagining her reality in female terms, Munro surrenders her political mindfulness:

I'm not at all conscious of doing it, but it has certainly become apparent to me that this is what I do. . . it could have something to do with the kind of environment I grew up in. . . . You know, it's the women in the kitchen who talk about everything that's happening to everybody and so the community's personal life would seem to be much more strongly seen and felt by women than by men.  
(20)

Munro transforms the individual into the political in her specialty, not through unmistakable critique by her characters or narrators, however through the inconspicuous elements of many-sided quality and

incongruity which inform her fiction. The capturing portrayal that finishes up her early story gathering, the lives of girls and women, is permeated with individual and local pictures of ladies' awareness, which can, thus be shared by the whole group: "People's lives, in Jubilee as elsewhere, were dull, simple, amazing and unfathomable-deep caves paved with linoleum" (253). In her latest story gathering, Munro keeps on looking past the surface normality of individuals' lives and uncovers the open privileged insights underneath.

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