

Canadian Indigenous Writing: Finding Women Identity in Native Select Short Stories

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Canada with its own indigenous people excels in literature and in other fields related to the concept of literature. In the last few decades the culture and society of Canada is seeing a rapid change and it can be very much seen in the writings of all literary genres like poems, short stories, and novels. Often more than in a novel much more feeling of the author is inscribed in short stories. The paper tries to shed light on the short stories written by the native women writers who are trying to connect themselves with the literary world and it also discusses the keen idea of how far these writers identify themselves with the nation of their own. The aim of the paper is to analyze and examine how the writers deconstruct the colonial identity in the native literary works.

Key words: Canadian Short stories, Alice Munro, Native Women Writers, Indigenous Identity

To bring out a brief note on the title, it discuss on the Canadian indigenous writing where the term “indigenous” according to Cambridge dictionary 3rd edition refers as: Indigenous /ɪnˈdɪʒ.ɪ.nəs/ *adjective*, naturally existing in a place or country rather than arriving from another place. The paper tries to trace out the elements that can be noted as indigenous in the select short

stories of Canadian female writers. The second part of the title looks into the women identity in the short stories.

Over a time period the development of Canadian literature in the literary environment is enormous and to put in specific writers like Margret Atwood, Margret Laurence and so many others comes to our mind and it is because of the simple reason that is because of their eminent work that took our hearts. The authors naturally write down the social events that have taken place and that also evoke happiness, sadness, inspiration, pity and empathy as such.

Taking about Canadian literature, years back it was all one under the reign of English colonialism. Every work that is published aftermath consists of a certain magnitude of the issues spoken either with peripheral level or in the deepest level. Through genres like poetry, short stories, and novels and in much more way authors have tried their level best to bring in the very crucial elements that affected the lives of the Canadian people. The writings bring out the concealed truth and suffering of the people in the contemporary time of writers themselves. The culture, the climate, the values, the people, the behaviors and a lot is contained in a small poem or a short story or in a novel.

And in the meantime different writing came into existence which searched for its identity where the identity of the author and of the identity of others is searched through the characters that the authors portray. Among the notable female Canadian writers, who have consistently searched for their identity through the portrayal of their characters and produced an enormous work that also opened up the sky for the other dormant writers and to the common are Margret Atwood, Laurence, Alice Munro, Lisa Moore, and others.

Highways of Canadian Literature categorized the country's writing into three-“Incidental literature,” “Nativist literature”, and “native and National literature.” The third described works produced by native-born Canadians after the confederation. Even in *Appraisals of Canadian Literature* (1926) Lionel Stevenson states that “...Since the earliest anthologies and literary histories, Canadian literary canon had been overwhelmed by the singularity of a subject/ theme which underlined the question of national identity.”

Most of the short stories are the personal experience that they have witnessed in their day to day life. They have converted these experiences in a magnificent way so that these bring pleasure and also attract the wide audience/ readers. Canadian literature has its roots of literary tradition from England, France and from the United State. Ameena Karzi Ansari in the Preface to the book *English-Canadian Literary Canon* comments that “it (Canada) is a young nation as far as its written history goes.” It is obvious to note that the literature produced in a country or the other takes time to establish itself. However, Canadian literature has widely spread across the country and has attained growth. In the words of Margaret Atwood, “Literature is not only a mirror; it is also a map, a geography of the mind... We can read it as the product of who and where we have been has a special” (A jewel in Canadian Writing). Canadian literature substantiates the above quote which certainly maps the day to day life with the subject related work.

The article tries to bring out a few short stories that are twined in such a way that the stories cannot be forgotten at any cost. The few short stories such as *The Half-Husky* by Margret Laurence and *Boys and Girls* by Alice Munro, are the noteworthy short stories taken into consideration. Generally, both Alice Munro and Margret Laurence are very much famous among

the Canadian writers and even the Spanish Writer Elvira Lindo specially confesses that “she is attracted to the way Munro’s writing is full of emotions.” Her vivid presentation of character is genuine and undoubted to the readers.

In *Alice Munro: An annotated Bibliography of works and criticism*, it is stated that “Munro presents a dimension of strangeness and mystery that throws everyday reality into question and reshapes it into another definable yet more truthful reality (Mazur & Cathy, 5).” Basically, looking into the short stories and analysis on the basis of women identity, the writers also have given considerable value in exposing the male identity. The above considered works at no were tried to delineate away from presenting the indigenous sources that Canada had. It is one way or the other giving life to the place by historicizing with prominent evidence.

The story *Boys and girls* is entirely narrated by the author herself. At no point in the story she (Narrator) tried or wanted to name hers with another. She had brought in the entire process of pelting the fox which forms the narration and the underlying theme of treatment of the female stays as the crux of the story. She ends the story with a note where she clearly states that she has accepted without any protest is cited below with her own words. She justifies with a point that women are inferior in society and she looks through the eyes of her own brother and her father, and in the way she is being treated in her home itself.

“Never mind,” my father said. He spoke with resignation, even good humor, the words which absolved and dismissed me for good. “She’s only a girl,” he said.

...didn’t protest that, even in my heart. Maybe it was true. (Boys and Girls, 12)

At the very point Munro also contributes through the narrator that “My mother, I felt, was not to be trusted. She was kinder than my father and more easily fooled, but you could not depend on her...(Boys and Girls, 5)”

Munro has dealt the short story with applying the reality of women which cannot be denied. The elements are narrated such as crying, performing household activities, and one by one to evoke the emotional bond at the end of the story. The heart of the women is expressed openly in both the characters of *The Half-Husky* by Margret Laurence and in *Boys and Girls* by Alice Munro. In *The Half-Husky*, the character Vanessa, throughout the story tries to save her pet dog, Nanuk from the paperboy Harvey. She tells that she has also “yelled” at him. She yells “what do you think you’re doing?” I yelled. “You leave my dog alone, you hear?”(*The Half-Husky*, 64). When Vanessa tries to narrate Harvey, she says

“Harvey Shinwell, was a heavily built boy about sixteen, with colorless eyebrows and a pallid mottled face. After school he would go and pick papers from the station and deliver them on his old bicycle. He was somebody who had always been around and whom I had never actually seen.” (*The Half-Husky* 63)

Both the ending of *The Half-Husky* and *Boys and Girls* the short stories ends with a sad iconic note. Where the ending of *Boys and Girls* is dealt earlier in my paper above and the ending of *The Half-Husky* is that, Vanessa questions her mother about the survival of her pet dog which she assumes that it is alive somewhere. Vanessa’s mother, in reply, states that the doctor had actually taken it away and chloroformed it to death. It was Vanessa, the central character from the beginning, who promises her mother and assures her that the work related to the pet dog is hers.

Despite her permission and her knowledge it was the general concern over the dog, as the act done states her mother to Vanessa, who is almost dumpstruck.

Vanessa exclaims “Can I, Mother?” (she begs) “I’ll look after him. You won’t have to do a thing. Cross my heart (*The Half-Husky* 62)”

Laurence, through the portrayal of Harvey, she has also brought in the other side of Canada, which is occupied with the lower class. In the narration, Vanessa’s house has a basement and on the other hand, while showing the house of Harvey, she has stated that “the House was not divided into living room and kitchen. There was one large room on the ground floor and it was used for everything...(71) ”Harvey is depicted as a motherless child and was looked after by her aunty. Harvey was not shown the real love, so that he could not render it to the other. It is always one should have something to give to somebody. In fact, Harvey was left with nothing and it is evident that we could see in the above narration of the author herself. So, he never thought that tormenting Nanuk, the pet of Vanessa, couldn't be harmed as he gets through it. Vanessa neglected her pet in the basement and it loitered around and as was Harvey left out by her aunt without love. The things repel here.

Conclusion:

Both Munro and Laurence tried to bring in the underlying sentiment of the women's character in their short stories. The narration of the stories were in such a way that it evokes the sympathetic feeling at the meek end of the stories. Further the titles of the stories, in *The Half- Husky*, indirectly the word Husky is compared with the heart of the people themselves and in *Boys and Girls*, the distinction is clearly remarked. Even the narrator finds herself with the horse, Flora

which is killed to feed the foxes. She with her last words indirectly accepts the tradition and it's expectation that society wants from the female.

“I didn't make any decision to do this, it was just what I did.” (Munro, 146)

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