CHAPTER V
CANADIAN LIBERATIONAL AESTHETICS

JULIAN PATRICK BARNES
(b. 19 January 1946)
British Postmodern and Short Fiction Writer

Alice Munro can move characters through time in a way that no other writer can. You are not aware that time is passing, only that it has passed—in this, the reader resembles the characters, who also find that time has passed and that their lives have been changed, without their quite understanding how, when, and why.

- Julian Barnes
Chapter V

Canadian Liberational Aesthetics

Short fiction has a very old literary lineage. The modern form of the short story took shape with a larger conceptual framework only with the theoretical contributions of Edgar Allen Poe. Short fiction is considered as America’s most significant native literary genre. While writing, Poe and Hawthorne constituted the short story as a romantic form which brought realism into it. The transformation from the short story being dramatic with major importance to plot came to be renounced in the modernist short story. The twenty-first century short story fiction has been highly influenced by the Chekhovian techniques which interlink realistic portrayal along with the romantic poetic lyricism. The plot and design in modern short fiction have been interiorized and subjectivized. The book *Short Story Theories: A Twenty-First-Century Perspective* (2012) by Viorica Patea, Associate Professor in Spain, stated short fiction with the modernist narrative techniques which develop in a mosaic of feelings, moods, and impressions rather than a sequential narrative. Privileging “objectives correlatives for the abstract state of mind and feeling”, the modernist short story becomes bound by images, symbols, and themes. Intensity derives not from the plot but, rather, from strategies of the point of view, effects of imagery and tone, or formal and stylistic economy. Mood and atmosphere supplant events and articulate the structure of the story. The plot, conventional narrative strategies or marvelous occurrences are replaced by moments of heightened awareness. (18)

While Chekov in Russia, Guy De Maupassant in France and Hawthorne and Poe in America transformed the short story into a modernist short fiction, it was the Canadian author Thomas Chandler Haliburton, who first published his *Clockmaker*
stories in series in the newspaper *Novascotian* prior to publishing it as a book. Later the rise of Canadian literature similar to American literature included well known short story writers like Alice Munro, Margaret Atwood, Marvis Alexis, and innumerable others.

It was Poe who identified the ‘Unity of Effect’ in Hawthorne’s short stories. It is this unity of effect that gets heightened in the modernist era which offers an ekphrastic picture of an individual character’s psychological state. Short stories of the modernist era remain to be open-ended. In modern short stories, the conclusion seems to be an epiphanic one. For example, James Joyce’s short stories conclude with these epiphanic revolutions. Particularly in his 1914 collection titled as *Dubliners*, the readers find these modernist endings. It is these strategies and Liberational techniques that have been deployed by many Canadian writers namely Morley Callaghan, Duncan Campbell Scott, and also 2013 Nobel Laureate Alice Munro.

Alice Munro is one of the internationally acclaimed short story writers who has reflected from time to time on the narrative techniques, plot and its development through her short stories. The techniques which Munro has made use of has created the impression that they are not fictitious but ultimate truths filled with realism. Apart from the realistic portrayal, the significant features of her short stories are that they are well structured though they fit into the general pattern of traditional short stories. The pre-designed effect in the plot, setting and characterization have been interlinked in Alice Munro’s short stories, thereby creating a ‘Dense Text.’

Alice Munro’s short fiction is not the outcome of imagination and creativity whereas it is filled with only truth. At times Munro’s short stories involve with the triple twist to the narrative techniques. That is, the narrator itself is a character who reflects the storytelling. The second method used by Alice Munro is to create an
impression of reality. Almost all the stories are not linear. They fluctuate in time, location and in their characterization. The third technique is to create the reality effect which the readers find almost in all her short stories. The varied technique which Alice Munro has implemented both to her short stories and to her narrative art has created a sense of realism in fiction.

Alice Munro in her short fiction has used myriad techniques and styles. The basic interest of this chapter is to search the way in which Alice Munro has convinced the primary appearance to exaggerate the essential themes of her fiction. Munro's fiction explores the experiment and casual celebration with the particular experiences in developing from childhood and youth to maturity and probes the reader’s intuition into the complicated growth of life through her profound rendition of human experience. It is Alice Munro's knowledgeable dramatics of life that makes all of her short stories and novels acknowledgeable to the readers. She enjoys the capability to present 'real life' distinctly and adequately and incorporates her talent to develop each story through her use of important and usually repeated appearance. These forms are frequently introduced obliquely at first, yet the reader is forced to be attentive in his understanding because of Munro's practical mind to dramatic and sensual part. When each story reaches a turning point or epiphanic moment it is owing to its form that has been cumulatively framed up and completely highlighted as fundamental to its decisive moment. The themes in each of her collection are identical and are often imitated in greater intensity from earlier to later works. As a writer of fiction, Munro has created collections of short stories and novels which are essentially altered in the maturation process. The appreciation of moral and social tension gets influenced in the particular. Munro's images are often sensuous and effortless for they are spontaneous in thoughts. As the individuals in her stories grow to understand the
turbulent attitude of the society, Munro's images at becoming unnatural and almost Gothic. In becoming so they reflect the corruption and pressures of the society which produce the madmen, suicides and paralyze her world who lands up as destitute and are in need of a spiritual transformation.

Isla Duncan, the British scholar and critic/theorist of Canadian women’s writing were fascinated by Alice Munro’s narratology. Duncan reminds that Munro wrote only one novel and more than a hundred short stories which range from ten to seventy pages. Duncan’s *Alice Munro’s Narrative Art*, Palgrave Macmillan which appeared in 2011 submits a theoretical analysis to Alice Munro’s narrative variations. The Canadian short story of the modern age presents the bewildering variety of themes, forms, and narrative techniques.

Alice Munro has been consistently praised for her narrative techniques. She developed her narrative art even from her first stories in the collection *Dance of the Happy Shades*. She concentrated on its developments, plot, and setting. Gradually she permitted in her narrative art a distinctive retrospective narrative approach. To be brief, the narrative art of Alice Munro proves to be a catalytic factor in her substantial art. This chapter titled ‘Canadian Liberational Aesthetics’ examines the varied narrative techniques from the plot, setting and characterization to other varied Munrovian narrative techniques which aided her literary art of storytelling to surpass other writers and acclaimed herself as the ‘Modern Chekov.’

Munro’s plot and style tend to concentrate more on the significance of old age and soul happiness and the way her narrators recall a story based on memories from their childhood and adulthood. Coral Ann Howells states on Munro, “topics have not changed, but her narrative methods have” (68).
She has expanded a new outlook of maturity and self-sufficiency as her characters have grown older along with Munro herself, reflecting on their individual account.

The narration through the first person or through the third person, almost all the narrations gets reflected only through the female voice. There lies a Munrovian feminist aesthetics even in the narrative voice. For, from a state of innocence, the voice gets transformed into an empowering one thereby proving the characters to be progressing towards feminist thoughts. A literary technique or literary device is a specific structure used in writing which can be recognized and used for literary analysis. These tools are used by the writer to enliven and provide a voice to the writing. Omniscient third-person narrative is a literary technique where the narrator is fully aware of the views and feelings of every character in the story. The writer brings a whole world of the characters to life, moves and allowing different voices to interpret the events through omniscient narrative. The omniscient narrative reveals the life story of every character by representing that only the narrator acquires information. The third-person narration gives the maximum flexibility to the writer. It is the most generally used narrative form in literature. The third person narrator refers to all the characters in the story as he, she, it or they. The narrators will never refer to themselves as the first person. In third-person narrative, it is essential that the narrator be an unnamed person or detached individual that conveys the story. They may know completely everything about a single character of the story and every piece of fact in that character's mind. They have omniscient awareness of time, people, places and events of the story. One of the significant advantages of omniscience is that this technique improves the sense of objective truthfulness of the plot. The third-person narrator has the capability of being reliable and the omniscient narrator can have his/her own individuality, presenting judgements and opinions on the activities of the
characters in the story. The writers using omniscient technique is allowing the readers to know everything about the characters. They can penetrate into characters’ minds and create a connection with them. Readers also perceive and scrutinize the responses of all characters which help them to realize the plot of the narrative. This technique also allows writers to make use of various voices in a story. By experiencing a narrative through multiple voices, readers dwell deep into the plot, characters, and setting.

The readers can have an objective analysis of the characters and events and can overcome more personal or subjective interpretations. The effective technique, an omniscient narrator allows for better storytelling by involving multiple characters and some plot lines with different analysis of the same incident. Hence the story could be more remarkable when the plot moves from character to character. Free indirect discourse is a type of third-person narration. It is a special narration. It freely expresses the characters’ consciousness. In other words, characters' thoughts, feelings, and words are filtered through the third-person narrator in free indirect discourse. In the short story, ‘Dance of the Happy Shades,’ expresses the character’s thoughts, feelings, and words which are conveyed and filtered through the third-person narrator. Alice Munro creates an intimate, personal and realistic experience in the mind of the readers.

Munro’s writings are distinctive as she uses a realist style. She portrays the life of several common characters without idealization, but she challenges the story’s realism by adding gothic elements to the plot, thereby making it impossible to attain at a final truth. Through Alice Munro’s short stories, the reader is certainly left with a feeling of suspense in the end. Some of her short stories tend to end abruptly, and mysteries remain unanswered. The technique of Gothic usually deals with insanity, demons,
mystery, live burial, dread and horror. Though the threat to the female protagonist in the Southern Ontario gothic tradition hails from the wilderness particularly from uncommunicative male characters, yet the female protagonist's reign supreme.

In Munrovian short fiction, the supernatural elements appear in the form of ridiculous characters like Lloyd in the short story ‘Dimensions,’ who is a murderer of his own three children. Typical of gothic narrative, Lloyd seems to have both good and bad side and evil groomed within him. Even after the three murders, the judgment is that Lloyd is insane. Munro uses the gothic conventions in this terrifying story. She depicts Lloyd as a grotesque traitor, who is unable to control his evil side. On the other hand, the heroine and protagonist of the story, his wife Doree is not afraid of him. After the horrible murders of her own three children by her husband, she continues to meet him in the prison and tries to understand him for his act. She thinks he helps her to move on with her life. He fools her that he has seen their children in another dimension and that they are happy in that state. This gives Doree again a kind of strength and spirit to live. In the last part, when an unknown young boy is the victim of a traffic accident, Doree helps him and saved him from death then realized the value of life. In Gothic Forms of Feminine Fictions (1999), Susanne Becker states as, “Neo-Gothicism reflects the feminine dimensions of the ongoing cultural and literary change: after all, gothic horror is domesticated horror, family horror, and addresses precisely these obviously ‘gendered’ problems of everyday life” (4).

Similar to the short story ‘Dimensions,’ a real-life incident of Allan Schoenborn was convicted of killing his own three children in his estranged wife’s house in Merritt, British Columbia where he stabbed and smothered his children- Kaitlynne-age 10, Max- age 8 and Cordon- age 5 in the year 2008. He was experiencing psychosis at the time of killings and at present being held at the Forensic Psychiatric
Hospital in British Columbia. The best lawyers in Texas Darcie Clark and Stacy Gaul states the murder as in the following image,

Plate X. Images of Allan Schoenborn and his murdered children

https://goo.gl/images/E5Zk97

The Gothic is situated in distress in marital conditions that create psychosis or criminal action. Insanity is a feature of the bizarreness that underlies much of ‘ordinary’ Southern Ontario experience. Within this Southern Ontario background there lies regularly a failure of communication between family members or social groups which makes it balanced to the setting of Gothic stories. ‘A Wilderness Station’ is the short story from the collection *Open Secrets*, with its timeline in the nineteenth century. The protagonist Annie experiences the wilderness as a danger to her physical and psychological integrity. Since as an orphan, Annie does not have the chance of getting either education or a family. She was distinctively selected by her husband Simon to do the strenuous work of a silent wife without any objections. It portrays the male characters in Canadian history who represent the wilderness and threat wherein the protagonist Annie turns wild after her husband’s murder by her brother-in-law George. The plot explains the early narrative tradition of gothic wilderness. This asserts to a historical perception which is further reinforced by the
information that the incidents of the short story provide an artistic history of Munro’s family which has two brothers emigrated from Scotland to Canada. One of them was reportedly killed by a falling tree, similar to Annie’s husband Simon. The twisted vision and results are partly caused by the haunting incidence of the wilderness and the gothic elements which appear in the story ‘A Wilderness Station.’

Autobiography is a popular literary technique. It is quite natural that people are fascinated in the actual lives of others and have a desire to know about others’ past life, feelings, and desires. Autobiography is a genre which systematizes the story of one’s life and reproduces on to the past in order to better understand the present. Most autobiographies in the literature are written from the first person singular perspective. This is appropriate because autobiography is typically a story where the narration reflects about himself/herself and about their life journey. It would not be so interesting if the writers would narrate their past from a second or third person perspective. Autobiography possesses a structure of introspection. When writers write down their past life, it is filled with feelings and emotions. Revealing the other characters of the story and their significance and emotions is an additional way that the narrator appraises the reason for the events encountered in the life of the writer. By writing down the incidents of the past, the writers are able to state to the readers of their experiences, sins, realizations, and confessions.

Most of the collections are through Bildungsroman series. A bildungsroman narrative could be termed as a Novel which means ‘Roman’ and of education and formation that refers to ‘Bilung.’ For example in the collections like Who Do You Think You Are? and Lives of Girls and Women, the readers are made to witness the plight of a girl through adolescence and who pass on into their turbulent adulthood state. In Lives of Girls and Women, which is yet another bildungsroman contains eight
sections which represents the experiences and perceptions of a young girl, Del Jordon and her struggles and eccentricities, her encounters with the complexities of death, chaotic relationship with her mother, her conflict with religion, art and at last a sexual awakening with concludes with an epilogue on her decision to consider her vocation to be a writer. Similarly, in *Who Do You Think You Are?* the gradual transformation of Rose, from her childhood to middle age gets depicted. Though a bildungsroman yet the development of the character is revealed only through third-person narration. The main reason to narrate the story through the third point narration is to allow the readers to interpret the meaning and irony of the story, according to his or her point of view.

The most refined and postmodern literary technique is Intertextuality. It is the textual reference and forming of a text’s meaning by another text. Instead of employing referential expressions from various literary texts, intertextuality illustrates the idea, or ideology from other texts to be combined in the other text. It may be the retelling of a previous story or the rewriting of acknowledged stories in the modern background. An allusion is a short and crisp reference that a writer uses in another narrative without affecting the storyline. Intertextuality, on the other hand, uses the reference of the complete story in another text or story as its backbone. Most of the writers make use of ideas from earlier works to give a layer of meaning to their recent own works. When readers read the latest text with reflection on previous literary work, they can relate supposition, result, and ideas of the other text which provide them a completely different meaning. It changes the method of analysis of the original piece. Since readers take influence from other texts and while reading new texts they go through records. This device gives them relevance and clarifies their understanding of the new texts. For writers, intertextuality allows them to open
new perspectives and possibilities to build their stories. Writers may discover a particular ideology in their narrative by discussing new rhetoric in the original text. Munro considers the writing of history by presenting a standard use to record the events of the past in a language. In order to make the character’s memories understandable to others, narrators express them in their own dialect. To the contrary, the method of externalizing experience is dangerous, because the relationship between the language and the world that language represents has temporal signs.

Open endings are towards the completion of a story exasperating the audience in Alice Munro’s writing. As a story-telling technique, Open endings are unsatisfying for most audiences. By leaving the major conflict initiated does the suspense plot get unresolved. It can also force us to confront the themes. It does not give a conclusion and it is based on the reader's opinion. Alice Munro uses the theme of open ending in her short story, ‘Dance of the Happy Shades.’ From the beginning of the story, the narrator and her mother have been criticizing and commenting on their piano teacher Miss Marsalles and about her party. Towards the end, their point of view about the teacher has changed. Alice Munro leaves the final opinion of the character in the story, to the readers. In the ‘Day of the Butterfly’ and ‘The Time of Death’ despite finding out the cause of death, the mystery is not the main focus so the ending remains unsatisfactory. The author leaves it to the reader for their intimacy as,

But the driving home, driving out of the hot red-brick streets and out of the city and leaving Miss. Marsalles and longer possible parties behind, quite certainly forever, why is it that we are unable to say – as we must have expected to say – Poor Miss Marsalles?. (DHS 224)

Imagery is the effective use of language by writers to draw images in the mind of the readers. The essence of any story is brought to life through the technique of
imagery which captures moments that can remain with a reader for a lifetime. Imagery includes rhetorical and metaphorical language to enhance the reader’s experience through their senses. Imagery means to use figurative language to represent objects, acts, and ideas in such a way that it demands to the physical senses. Imagery technique makes use of exacting words that create a visual representation of ideas in the reader’s minds. The word ‘imagery’ is connected with mental pictures. In reality, Imagery is more complex than just a picture. The use of imagery in literature is to produce an attractive and graphic presentation of a scene that appeals to as many of the reader’s senses as possible. It helps the reader’s imagination to think about the characters and scenes in the short story clearly. Apart from this, images were drawn by using figures of speech like metaphor and simile, etc., aid the function of beautifying a piece of literature. Imagery is a technique that uses evocative language to create a sharp, mental picture for the reader. These images make the readers understand the importance of the storyline by imagining the situation and feelings of the characters and the scene of the story. This technique of imagery helps the writers to build their story more descriptively and in a well-designed structure. The imagery allows the readers to imagine and experience the seasons like warm spring, hot summer, crisp fall, and harsh winter. For example, in the short story ‘Boys and Girls,’ the narrator describes the season winter as,

We were afraid at night in the winter … this was the time of year when snowdrifts curled around our house like sleeping whales and the wind harassed us all night, coming up from the buried fields, the frozen swamp, with its old bugbear chorus of threats and misery. (DHS 112)
Munro is more attentive with the feelings of love and is also passionate about the small town- Ontario settings. So, Munro is compared with the great playwright of Russia, Anton Chekhov (1860 -1904), who is considered as one of the most significant short fiction writer in history. Space is being made legendary by the ekphrastic excellence of the writer Alice Munro by picturizing the Sowesto’s Huron County which has paralleled the depiction of William Faulker’s Yoknapatawpha County. Munro is a native of the Huron County, in South Western Ontario, Canada. Ontario is a large provincial district which stretches from the River Ottawa to Lake Superior. Though it spans a large space, South Western Ontario is a prominent part of it. It was painter Greg Curnoe, who named it as Sowesto (SO-uth WES-tern O-ntario). This geographical place, according to his view, Sowesto was a space filled with psychic shadows and peculiarity and it was the same view assumed by many. For example, in the short story ‘Walker Brothers Cowboy,’ Munro narrates the Lake Huron through the conversation between the narrator girl and her father as,
He tells me how the Great Lakes came to be. All where Lake Huron is now, he says, used to be flat land, a wide flat plain … They were new, as time went. I try to see that plain before me, dinosaurs walking on it, but I am not able even to imagine the shore of the Lake when the Indians were there, before Tuppertown. (DHS 3)

Of places, the readers are given a picturesque view through the exuberant style of Munro. For example, of the places of the Huron County and its Lake, Munro extrinsically portrays her own childhood experience in the short story ‘Night’ from the collection Dear Life as,

Of course, there were no streetlights- we were too far from town… The trees around the house were always called by their names- the beech tree, the elm tree, the oak tree, the maples … the white lilac tree and the purple lilac tree … the east side of our house and the west side looked on two different worlds, or so it seemed to me. (DL 278)

Plate XII. Satellite image of Lake Huron in Canada

https://goo.gl/images/uRbeUv
Technically, Alice Munro beautifully delivers this emotional compassion to the evanescence of human time through her view of landscape and narration. The presence of her narratives renders to the readers the bright and dark sides of rural life.

Munro’s short stories have always been of incredibly high intensity and manipulate in the world which is deeply embedded in real life. Her understandings of reality are based on the life of herself in the small town of Ontario in Canada. The reality of the strong conversation between the characters in her short stories creates the art of aesthetic thinking. Munro’s most of the short stories deal with the domestic situation and the small town of the Canadian landscapes, through cultural features of Munro’s small-town Ontario in the middle of the city and the rural geological account of the town, Alice Munro invented distinctive thoughts. With the transformation of provincial, small town people, who sense the town of geographical eccentricity and produce individuality chaos in numerous different forces both the cities and its people are brought to life. The knowledge and explanation of small town people of the distant land, the town people from regular life experience unconnected, steady pursuit of self to find a way out and to grab the exact meaning of life in the world of escape and come back to their own native space has been dialectically depicted.

Most of Alice Munro’s short stories have great detail to share the live experience of Canada with her characters and her readers. The landscape and significance of small-town life are effectively portrayed by Alice Munro in the stories Boys and Girls, Walker Brother Cowboy and The Shining Houses. The narrative techniques of Munro’s town through her precise and emotional style do not submit with usual surprise. By combining her surveillance towards reality and her own life experiences, Alice Munro presents her readers with a multi-dimensional form of life by the use of her distinctive description and sharp examination. By the use of the narrative
techniques like the keen linguistic phrase and quiet narration under the erratic emotions, the writer creates a covered but tensed society, relating a dynamic town as well as the bright destiny of the people in the town Ontario. The area represented by the towns makes up an exclusive world, reflecting Alice Munro’s profound views towards the transformation of a period and its universality.

Epistolary form is a literary technique in which writers use a series of letters, journals, and diary entries in their stories or convey messages in the form of letters. Writers use some other forms to convey messages other than a usual form of letters, through dairy, newspaper clippings, and recently also with electronic documents such as e-mails, blogs, radio and mass media. The epistolary structure can include realism to a narrative, as it replicates real-life mechanism. It portrays different angles of the story. The major purpose of this form of epistolary writing is to provide readers a close outlook of the characters’ feelings and thoughts. It enlarges a straight link with the events through letters without the writer’s interference. This technique makes the literary section an actual understanding for the readers. The epistolary technique is an outstanding form to convey the character’s feelings and thoughts to the readers through the actual dialogues. In the short story ‘A Wilderness Station’ from the collection *Open Secrets* is narrated by an epistolary form. The main character Simon’s life and death are described through the letters of investigators in the case of Simon’s murder.

Munro’s short stories have been adapted as films too. For example, Pedro Almodovar directed the Spanish movie, ‘Julieta’ in the year 2016, which is based on the stories of Alice Munro’s ‘Chance,’ ‘Soon’ and ‘Silence’ from the collection *Runaway*. The film received very positive reviews from the people and has made its debut at the Cannes Film Festival-2016. One critical review stated below exhibits the
craftsmanship of Munro. Jeffrey M. Anderson, from a non-profit organization ‘Common Sense Media’, reviewed the movie as, “Spanish director Pedro Almodovar adapts three stories by Nobel Prize-winning writer Alice Munro; though his sensibilities are quite different from her style, the result is surprisingly satisfying.”

Plate XIII. Poster of the Spanish movie Julieta

https://goo.gl/images/ueMcwA

Using Colours as a literary technique have been used in stories from the time immemorial as early as the first story was told. Writers and poets utilize colours to create solid images of their characters, scenes, and incidents. The language itself uses a structure of symbols both in the form of verbal and written. Consequently, a colour allegory in literature communicates deep importance to the words which help to convert the written material into an extra authoritative device. Obviously, the readers ought to have a previous perceptive with the colour in order to understand the writer’s symbolism perfectly. This is the major purpose for, poems and books stand for
various aspects too varied readers. Writers and poets have the elegiac style to authorize the use of the different colours in a way that produces different significances in their story. Colour symbolism in literature does not just provide character information but is also a technique of conveying a reader about a scene without explaining much information. A reader can even generate a stronger attachment with the characters in the story for a comfortable reading ability through the colours and its meaning.

| We play I spy, but it’s hard to find many colours. Grey for the barns and sheds and toilets and houses, brown for the yard and fields, black or brown for the dogs. The rusting cars show rainbow patches, in which I strain to pick out purple or green; likewise I peer at doors for shreds, of old peeling paint, maroon or yellow. | (9) |
| Nora’s dress is flowered more lavishly than anything my mother owns, green and yellow on brown… | (12) |
| The soft scrawls of blue and red and orange… | (191) |
| They had copper rinses on their hair, and blue eyelids, and a robust capacity for drink. | (192) |
| I recognized with alarm the peach-colored be-jacket I had sent for Christmas. | (205) |
| Pink cut-glass bowl. | (210) |

Fig.13 - Illustration of using colors in *Dance of the Happy Shades*
Robin Lakoff states in his essay *Language and Women’s Place* (1972) that using colour is one of the special features of Munro’s writing. In a women’s language there lies specificity in the use of words of colours. Alice Munro’s exactness of depicting the colour is seen in her short stories from the collection *Dance of the Happy Shades* which is illustrated in the above figure.

Alice Munro’s writings have proved to be illuminating and are filled with female aesthetics. Almost in all her short stories, she employs a language that gives voice to the female experience even within the Phallocentric system of signifying. As in the words of Toril Moi in *The Kristeva Reader* (1986) “is the outcome of language is the product the continual interaction between the symbolic and semiotic realms” (80). Through the process of listening and observing it is a woman who has to recognize the ‘unspoken of the spoken’ in the male-dominated language and bring it to the surface. It is this linking characteristic feature of the marginalized voice that gets depicted in almost all of Munro’s short stories. Lorna Irvine in *Probable Fictions: Alice Munro’s Narrative acts* (1983) reflects on the linguistic revolution of Alice Munro to be to “See with eyes more sensitive to the complexities and necessary contradictions of human existence” (108). For example in ‘Walker Brothers Cowboy’ in the collection *Dance of the Happy Shades*, the physical and inner territory could be witnessed as observed by the adolescent female unnamed protagonist. While having a walk with her father she describes the experience as,

Then my father and I walk gradually down a long, shabby sort of street, with Silver woods Ice Cream signs standing on the sidewalk, outside tiny, lighted stores. This is in Tupper-town, an old town on Lake Huron, an old grain port. The street is shaded, in some places, by maple trees whose roots have cracked and heaved the sidewalk. (DHS 1)
While traveling on the road again with her father, the traveling salesman, the narrator/adolescent female catches the glimpse of the backcountry. It is through the voice of the female that the father’s buried emotions get exhibited.

I feel my father’s life flowing back from our car in the last of the afternoon, darkening and turning strange, like a landscape that has an enchantment on it, making it kindly, ordinary and familiar while you are looking at it, but changing it, once your back is turned, into something you will never know, with all kinds of weathers, and distances you cannot imagine. (DHS 18)

When she returns to the familial territory once again the girl observes with the depth. In the words of critic Levine, who comments on the narrator/female voice as being filled with "a zone of memory that will always be separate from the narrator as both daughter and as teller" (85), Munro marvels in her feminine aesthetics.

Even in fixing the narrator a female voice, Alice Munro has moved towards the retrospective first-person narrator as a teller of her short stories. Her narrators observe, listen, judge, understand and reflect almost in all of the short stories in Dance of the Happy Shades. For example in ‘Boys and Girls,’ ‘Red Dress- 1946,’ and ‘Walker Brothers Cowboy’, the readers could witness a mature female narrators voice telling the story. For example in ‘Red Dress-1946’ when the female narrator- the adolescent girl decides no more to have any infatuation towards men, her feminist voice reflects a matured decision taken by a teenager wherein it reflects a transformation in the girl with a conscious awakening. While the collection Dance of the Happy Shades gets narrated through first-person narration, Alice Munro also uses the third person narration in the collections like Who Do You Think You Are?, The Progress of Love and Friend of My Youth. For example, in ‘Royal Beatings’ from the
collection *Who Do You Think You Are?*, the character Rose gets revealed when she suffers from the beatings from her father and school teacher which is narrated as,

Rose and her father soon got beyond anything presentable. Her father was king of the royal beatings. Those Flo gave never amounted too much; they were quick cuffs and slaps dashed off while her attention remained elsewhere. You got out of my road, she would say. You mind your own business. You take that look off your face. (LGW 3)

In the short story ‘The Albanian Virgin,’ she portrays a tribal society as a microcosm of the modern world in which the subjugation of the woman takes place in the name of customs and ceremonies. That a woman who wants to remain unmarried has to take an oath not to marry again is preposterous. To call her Albanian Virgin which means a woman made man is not justifiable as she has to bear the spinsterhood as a life-long punishment. Such a custom is never forced on a man and the tribal society provides freedom for the man to change his intentions again and again. The same tribal custom ironically reflects the discrimination against a woman who exercises her will instead of remaining passive.

Lottar, in the short story ‘Albanian Virgin,’ is forced to take a vow of purity and wear male clothes. If she desires to continue to live in the patriarchal Albanian tribe society. The intertextuality of a tribal society aids the readers to gain a Canadian tribal knowledge. The other names for Albanian Virgin are Albanian Sworn Virgin, Mashkull, Verjinesa, Avowed Virgin and Sadik. The real Albanian Sworn Virgins are portrayed in the following images.
Plate XIV. Albanian Sworn Virgin in 20th C.

https://goo.gl/images/eEd8x5

Plate XV. Albanian Sworn Virgin in 21st C.

https://goo.gl/images/Ze81fC
Alice Munro implements fiction within fiction and fact within fiction in her short stories. Fiction in a Fiction does not conform to the facts which are considered to be true within the world of storytelling. For example, a dead character sitting for a conversation could be witnessed in ‘Carried Away’ in *Open Secrets*. For example, in the short story ‘Carried Away’, the recollection of an imagined conversation between Louisa and the dead Jack proves to be an example of fiction within fiction. Fiction is also at times speculative in nature. Alice Munro’s characters often speculate on events which have not occurred and also imagine events that are contradictory to what had happened or the events which even the narrator could not recollect. For example, in ‘Carried Away’ Jack Agnew decapitated thirty years earlier sits along with Louisa at a bus stop and converses of her personal life and informs Louisa all about his wife and daughter which Louisa assures is not true.

Though Louisa listens to it, she realizes it is not true for Grace has remarried and Lillian never completed her high school, so that ‘to be’ she could not be a high school teacher. The logic behind Jack’s appearance is ambiguous for it might also be a product of Louisa’s imagination or a dream. There is also a suggestive remark that it is Louisa’s hallucination for it might be Jim Ferrari.

Munro implements Contrast and Juxtaposition as a powerful technique both to disrupt and at times shock the readers too. She explores the darker side of the human face and ultimately depicts the complexities of life. For example, the drowning of the disabled child Verna by the two young girls Charlene and Marlene in the short story ‘Child’s Play’ from the collection *Too Much Happiness* gets exhibited in detail.

Consciously, because our eyes did meet as the head of Verna tries to rise up to the surface of the water. ... Charlene and I kept our eyes on each other, rather than looking down at what our hands were doing. ... The whole
business probably took no more than two minutes. Three? Or a minute and a half? (TMH 222)

To the contrary, even shocking experiences get mildly portrayed which keeps on disrupting the readers. In the narration of the father murdering the three children simultaneously in the short story ‘Dimensions’ from the collection *Too Much Happiness*, the strategy of killing the adolescent children for suspecting his wife have not been described in detail but with the passing reference. While the former story ‘Child’s Play’ gives detailed pictures of the murder, this brutal murder has been made with mild references.

Something mildly rude, like “Holy Shit.” “Lloyd. Where are the kids?”

Dimitri still in his crib, lying sideways. Barbara Ann on the floor beside her bed, as if she’d got out or been pulled out. Sasha by the kitchen door- he had tried to get away. He was the only one with bruises on his throat. The pillow had done for the others. (TMH 15)

The short story ‘Meneseteung’ from the collection *Friend of My Youth* does not belong to the type of people and time of the present age. The narrator of the story Almeda Roth, a spinster is a poet of 1880s, driven to madness because of her loneliness and loss of family. She creates a haunting atmosphere to the story by the portrayal of a hysterical woman which disrupts the readers. Her unawareness of her own menstruation gets exhibited as,

She goes out to the privy again and discovers that she is bleeding, her flow has started … On her way through the kitchen, she walks through the pool of grape juice … and she walks upstairs leaving purple footprints and smelling her escaping blood and the sweat of her body that has sat all day in the closed hot room. (FMY 70-71)
Parallel to time being a fundamental feature of existence, it has also been a fundamental element in literature. Almost all the stories take place in some time framework of literature which is set to involve four different and potentially individual time frames. They are Author time, Narrator time, Plot time and Reader time. The time in which the work was written and published is termed as ‘Author time.’ The Narrator time is the time in which the narrator describes the story in the fiction. The time in which the action depicted really takes place is called ‘Plot time.’ Finally the ‘Reader time’ is the time when people read the story. Munro’s strategy of narration going back and forth has occurred in most of her short stories.

The technique of Time frame is usually set and develops by the sign of the background and attitudes of the characters in the story. The setting of time involves particular references to date and event. The time, day, period and season are an important factor for a time framework. Walter Scott depicts a time frame of 300 year period in his historical novel *Rob Roy* (1817). Similarly Alice Munro’s bildungsroman collections like *Lives of Girls and Women* and *Who Do You Think You Are?* are narrated by the female protagonists looking back the years of their life from childhood to middle age. The short stories like ‘Chance,’ ‘Soon’ and ‘Silence’ are portrayals of the life of a woman from childhood to old age. In the collection *Open Secrets*, the two short stories ‘Carried Away’ and ‘A Wilderness Station’ span over 100 years between the 1850s and 1950s.

Alice Munro’s writings about childhood protagonists are linear because they are unaware of the cyclic nature of life. After the female protagonists of her stories shift to the adolescence stage, the linearity is broken and a cyclic formation emerges in her works. Her recent stories portray the mother-daughter relationship from the mother’s point of view and go beyond the traditional depiction of the mother-daughter theme.
They certainly do not reappraise maternal love. Mothers are present in the short stories but they are not glorified owing to the patriarchal set up which is universal. Munro is obsessed with the mother character suffering from Parkinson’s disease and pneumonia. These health problems are the subject of discussion in most of her short stories. Alice Munro’s stories explore the mother-daughter relationship with a quite amazing freakiness moving beyond the traditional style of maternal love, attachment and care resulting in clear images. The mother character in the short story ‘Red Dress-1946’ from the collection Dance of the Happy Shades is depicted as a mother sewing her daughter’s red dress for her dance day celebration in the school. The unnamed adolescent protagonist has begun to distance herself from her mother. She is also like all other adolescent girls in the society who feels insecure about themselves. She is in a crux of fear of the afraid of her dance party, fears about the slip away and hard to find a partner for the dance. To the contrary, the mother encourages her and sews an attractive red dress. After returning home from school lately, the girl sees her mother who is tiredly waiting for her daughter eagerly to talk about the day. Munro depicts the character of the mother who herself may never in her life have had a chance to fulfill her dream like the one her daughter has the chance to participate in the dance day. The relationship of the apathetic mothers to their daughters flourishes on mutual gratitude and respect that does not refer to the mother and the daughter into the land of objectification. In the story ‘Boys and Girls,’ the narrator explains the dominant figure in the house. The male (father) character is dominant while the women (mother) character is subservient. She always remains inside the house and does her household things and rarely comes out of the house. Del Jordon in the collection Lives of Girls and Women learns self-respect from her mother though she had rejected the views and advice of her mother initially. Alice Munro’s stories discuss the conflict
existing between the daughter and mother and reveal the actual experience finally when the daughter passes through the stages of adolescence and becomes a woman. Munro portrays the emotional distance between the daughter and mother as noticed in the short stories like ‘Boys and girls’ and ‘Red Dress-1946.’ To attain entirety and reform oneself, it is necessary for both the mother and daughter to accept their different selves which exist inside them.

As Alice Munro’s stories depict the emotional relationship between mother and daughter, Munro’s daughter Sheila Munro also has written a memoir *Lives of Mothers and Daughters* in the year 2001. As a writer growing up in the shadow of the world’s most admired short fiction writer, Alice Munro, Sheila is able to write honestly as a daughter and a writer. This book describes Munro’s family background, her early days and marriage, children and including grandchildren. Sheila Munro has recognized herself as a skillful and flourishing writer in her own way.

Plate XVI. Front Cover of a Memoir by Sheila Munro

https://goo.gl/images/f2QMRo
Introspection is one's own conscious thoughts and feelings. The process of introspection is built exclusively on observation of one's mental state. In psychology, the spiritual context refers to the examination of one's soul. Introspection is contrasted with observation. It is closely related to human self-reflection. The use of introspective narrators gets exhibited in the short stories of Alice Munro. The female narrators' girls from the short stories ‘Walker Brothers Cowboy’ and ‘Boys and Girls’ keep observing and examining the character of others in the story. It also is a reflection of one’s mental and emotional processes. The voices of introspective narrator belong to the author, narrator, and character. As these voices merge together their thoughts and ideas are expressed freely. Middle age is the period after the youth. It is a moment when a person re-examines his/her life in retrospection and evaluates his/her actions. Old age is an essential period in which many things get to settle down. Some people may get satisfied by the harmonious human relationships, they could nourish and develop. Middle Aged women are in a more unstable state than their male counterparts due to varied reasons which are quite noticeable. They dwell both in a state of ‘Liminal’ and ‘Liminoid.’

Alice Munro’s stories are strong and emotional and it includes the character’s reminiscences. In her writing, the narrator is totally different from a storyteller. Because the narrators of Alice Munro are connected to the readers they feel the story through their own eyes, feelings, and experiences. The readers can identify themselves through the first person narrator’s introspective technique in ‘Walker Brothers Cowboy’ and ‘Day of the Butterfly’ from the collection Dance of the Happy Shades. The Girl Myra observes every moment of her brother Jimmy. For example, in the story ‘Walker Brothers Cowboy,’ the narrator is a young girl and she differentiates the role of her mother and father through her observation. The adolescent narrator
observation explores in two places mainly - The first one is of her father and mother relationship. She observes her mother’s disinterested life. The father visiting Miss. Nora’s home and the father’s mental change is also keen observed. Miss. Nora informs her mother Mrs. Cronin of their arrival. At the time Nora called Ben for dancing while she did not know her father has known dancing. She states, “Dance with me, Ben. I am the world’s worst dancer, Nora, and you know it” (WBC 16).

The form of Gossip and storytelling is one of Munro’s most significant visionary techniques. Literary narratives have been very superior about Gossip as a framework. Even the most informal reader of the social activities will identify that gossiping is the most significant technique for the characters do most passionately. On the other hand, the characters can neither acknowledge nor be conscious of it. Only immoral and minor characters of the plot are allowed to indulge in its satisfaction of pleasures. Though Gossip is ridiculous, condemned and harmful, Alice Munro uses Gossip as a framework in her short story ‘Fits’ from the collection The Progress of Love. Middle-aged women, Chatty maidservants and talking little girls are the ones who gossip about others. The protagonists are designed to be tolerable with these idle characters. Two people converse enthusiastically about the happenings of a third and a fourth person, coverage about the world’s variable shapes and to unload the feelings, reasons, and purposes of the people in it. Writers often use gossip as their framing device. Female Gossip persistently favours several types of information over other types. Sexual humiliation, deception, family issues, failures and social climbing all take priority over other kinds of information. Gossip is always concerned with supremacy. It chases in the path of the immense and certainly clings for a very lengthy time space and out.
Munro expertly brings in the distinguished attitudes of old age in her stories. Her old women characters are powerful and unflagging by nature. If a nun leads a virtuous link and renders selfless service she is canonized as a saint whereas a spinster who also works selflessly for the sake of the other is branded as a freak. Munro presents the pathetic lives of spinsters in the stories ‘Walker Brothers Cowboy’ and ‘Dance of the Happy Shades.’ The encounter between a spinster who cannot marry her lover and the lover who got married and arrives with his two children to her house ironically reflects the plight of a spinster in a patriarchal world. Despite all the odds Munro's spinsters are refreshing, energetic, self-contented and possess the courage to face any kind of life struggle. Her spinster in Dance of the Happy Shades soothes and encourages the children suffering from Down syndrome. Her life becomes a critique on the society which neglects the children labeling them as poor babies. Spinsters are not objects for they are to be pitied and some of them prove their strong mettle by living alone and leading a happy lift shouldering the social responsibilities. Munro subtly proves that the man remains unchanged since the primitive days and under the veneer of civilization, the same barbarity remains undaunted.

Munro began her creative writing while she was quite young. She presents all her childhood experiences in many stories. Later she began portraying the lives, the struggles and the efforts of her fellow women. To conclude, her stories reflect the lives of women belonging to her age group. Her fictional work presents a comprehensive picture of women at different phases, as a child, young woman, married woman, spinster, middle-aged woman and finally an old-aged woman. She never hesitates to present the weaknesses, frailties, and drawbacks of the feminine space. In the same way, she has never portrayed men as villains or dark and decimal figures as they do have both good and bad qualities.
Munro's fictional world is a real world consisting of people with all their follies and foibles. She is not happy to be labeled as a feminist as she never wanted her fiction to be propagandistic. In an interview with *The Atlantic* magazine in 2013, Munro states it as,

Naturally, my stories are about women - I'm a woman. I don't know what the term is for men who write mostly about men. I'm not always sure what is meant by 'feminist.' In the beginning, I used to say, 'Well, of course, I'm a feminist.' But if it means that I follow a kind of feminist theory, or know anything about it, then I'm not. I think I'm a feminist as far as thinking that the experience of women is important. That is really the basis of feminism.

She is basically an artist who is always preoccupied with the truth. Her work naturally becomes feministic as a truthful image of the contemporary patriarchal society which gives undue importance to the man and denies the justifiable reckoning to the woman. Munro portrays her characters closer to the hearts of the universal readers too, as of her Canadian society readers. In spite of its permissiveness and broken families, it contains many similarities to that of the Indian society. Those women behave very much like traditional Indian women and their reaction and attitudes are not different from those of Indians. Munro's catholic approach and her ability to transform the general into universal are responsible for that achievement. As a short story writer, Munro has the skill of capturing a dramatic situation in the life of the people and by delineating that situation she ingeniously grasps the different facets of the complex truth. They are not simple narratives as they reflect the multi-dimensions of the truth by a seemingly simple way of narration. She is quite an assertion that the fundamental duty of a writer is to tell a plausible story through the other dimensions of it, social, political, psychological and so on and follow it
afterward. She is an adept in understanding and unraveling the psyche of the injured and insulted but never becomes pessimistic or cynical. Though Munro indulges in an in-depth study of the psyche of the characters like Samuel Richardson, her work never makes the reader sickly and suffocating. To enter the fictional world of Munro is always like entering into a sprawling lawn, refreshing and rejuvenating. The next and the final chapter ‘Conclusion’ summarizes the previous chapters, submits the findings, and scope for further research and asserts Alice Munro to have attained the state of ‘Vita Activism’ through her literary art.