

**THE TRUE VOICE OF A CANADIAN EXPATRIATE:  
MAVIS GALLANT, *HOME TRUTHS* (1981)**

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**Abstract**

Mavis Gallant is a typical contemporary Canadian short story writer, who has strongly contributed to the formation and the proliferation of the contemporary Canadian short story. Her short story collection *Home Truths* (1981) is a good example of the exploration of time. Gallant has said on several occasions that she is not particularly interested in discovering typical Canadian elements, but she wishes, above all, to convey *the truth*. She does not get deeply engaged in the psychological development of her characters, but is interested in specific situations, in reconstructing the state of mind and heart, therefore, we find her writing on the edge of imagination and reality. *Home Truths* is about identity, alienation, and the importance of memory. These issues still are, 30 years after the publication of this collection, a matter of great concern among Canadians *at home* and *abroad*.

**Key words:** Mavis Gallant, criticism and interpretation, studies in Canadian literature, contemporary Canadian short story, Canadian identity, alienation, expatriatism, Canadian literary canon.

Born Mavis de Trafford Young, on 11 August 1922 in Montreal, Mavis Gallant is among the finest and most challenging of contemporary Canadian short story writers. John Metcalf believes she should be classified as a Canadian Classic.<sup>1</sup> In spite of her achievements and being held in high estimation in international literary circles, Gallant was neglected as writer in Canada year after year.

The reasons for being overlooked should be linked to Gallant's decision to leave Canada and live in Europe, mostly in Paris, and write primarily about Europe, Europeans and Americans in English. Most of her stories were not published in Canadian newspapers and journals, but in the USA, e.g. in *The New Yorker*. Ignored for too long, Gallant was finally given well-deserved recognition in Canada for her achievements for the collection of short stories *Home Truths* (HT), by being awarded the Governor General's Literary Award for the year 1981. Following this exceptional triumph, the attitude of Canadians to her literary work changed completely. The Canadian newspaper *The Globe and Mail* wrote: "Mavis Gallant writes some of the most superbly crafted and perceptive stories of our time" and the most popular Canadian weekly magazine

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Metcalf, *Canadian Classics* (1993).

*Maclean's* wrote: "Probably the finest collection of short stories published this year in Canada - or anywhere else".

The collection HT<sup>2</sup> consists of sixteen short stories, which are divided into three groups:

1. At Home: "Thank You for the Lovely Tea", "Jorinda and Jorindel", "Saturday", "Up North", "Orphans' Progress" and "The Prodigal Parent".
2. Canadians Abroad: "In the Tunnel", "The Ice Wagon Going Down the Street", "Bonaventure" and "Virus X".
3. Linnet Muir: "In Youth Is Pleasure", "Between Zero and One", "Varieties of Exile", "Voices Lost in Snow", "The Doctor" and "With Capital T".

An important characteristic of the short stories in HT is that they are different by theme. Gallant uses various narrative techniques. On principle, she does not use autobiographic material, e.g. as Alice Munro and Clark Blaise do in their stories. The "Linnet Muir" stories are an exception. Linnet Muir is a heroine, whom Gallant describes as an inaccurate portrait of herself: "quite another person, but it would be untrue to say I invented everything" (HT, xxii). Gallant wishes to lose herself deeper into her characters by whatever means necessary. She is especially interested in individuals, who are different from her, i.e. disappointed, married housewives, bachelors, hard-working mothers, lady's maids, prisoners of war, etc. Most of the stories address the question of alienation. In the stories, which are rich with detail, Gallant pictures reality in a way that is unfamiliar, rather unknown, even extraordinary, to say the least, to Canadians. There is no outburst of emotions, but the stories are a genuine reflection of the cruelty of life. In Gallant's prose, love is not possible and it has no credibility.

Gallant is passionately interested in politics. As readers, we need to know a lot about European history and geography to be able to understand her characters. Her stories take us to Germany, Paris, southern France, Italy, Spain, Switzerland, England and Eastern Europe. As a result, the characters in Gallant's stories are almost always travellers or guests, expatriates, foreigners, or feel as if they were foreigners in a metaphoric sense.

The collection HT is a good reflection of time and truth. Gallant deals with stories about the past, which she narrates for a purpose to be able to comprehend which they were misunderstood. To get to know the typical characteristics of Canada and the people that live in this region is not Gallant's primary interest, the author wishes to share with us her understanding of the truth. Gallant does not get deeply engaged in the psychology and development of her characters or even in the plot. She is interested in the specific situations and especially in the reconstruction of the heart and soul. Therefore, she always stays close to the line between the worlds of imagination and reality. It is a fact that Gallant wishes to search for answers to all "her" problems. She is constantly asking herself rhetorical questions, the answers being absorbed in her deep thoughts.

Gallant deals with views on childhood in "Thank You for the Lovely Tea", the first short story in the first group of short stories "At Home" in HT. Children play an

<sup>2</sup> Gallant, Mavis. *Home Truths: Selected Canadian Stories*. Macmillan, 1981. Toronto: Stoddart, 1992. Further references to this book are noted in the text.

important role in Gallant's prose, or as she says: "Children are regularly abused and ill-treated and some of them die of their wounds."<sup>3</sup> Children should be given more attention is the main message of this short story. "Life is Hell" (HT, 2) is written by the protagonist Ruth Cook on the school bench in girls' school in hope to cause a conflict situation. Instead, she receives praise from her Art's teacher, Mrs. Fischer.

Ruth is a common and plain girl, who does not show any special interest for what is happening around her: "a placid girl, to all appearances - plump, lazy, rather Latin in looks, with glossy blue-black hair, which she brushed into drooping ringlets" (HT, 7). Mrs. Holland is too spontaneous and emotional, as Ruth asserts (HT, 3), determined by a third-person narrator, and continues: "Emotion meant "being America"; it meant placing yourself unarmed in the hands of the enemy." [...] "Emotion was worse than bad taste; it was calamitous" (HT, 3).

Mrs. Holland goes to school many times to pick up Ruth and they spend the rest of the afternoon together. This time they are joined by two schoolmates, May Watson, lost in her world of dreams, and shameful Helen McDonnell. Ruth does not understand the relationship between her father and Mrs. Holland: "There was innocence, a lack of prudence, in her references to the situation; she said things that made shame and caution fill Mrs. Holland's" (HT, 10). Mrs. Holland invites them to tea, where we see them chatting and getting to know each other. The afternoon passes by, they return to school, where the principal thanks Mrs. Holland for her patience: "The headmistress sensed that things were out of hand, but she had no desire to be involved" (HT, 16).

In "Jorinda and Jorindel", the children remain in the centre of interest. The story is filled with small events and details about the 8-year-old Irmgard and the way she was kidnapped, her cousin Bradley, Germain (Irmgard's *bonne d'enfant*), and Mrs. Bloodworth who has come up to Canada for a party – she came up for just one weekend and never went away. As most of Gallant's stories in the first group of short stories "At Home" in HT, this one takes place in Montreal, the town of Gallant's childhood.

The short story "Saturday" is a story about language and one literary character, Gérard. Gérard lives in a world, which is interviewed with dreams and nightmares, out of which he sees no last resort. His father is an odd fellow like his younger brother Léopold, and his mother is disappointed, her marriage not being a happy one, believing that she was married against her will:

She is French-Canadian, whether she likes it or not. They see at the heart of her a sacrificial mother; her education has removed her in degree only from the ignorant, tiresome, moralizing mother, given to mysterious female surgery, subjugated by miracles, a source of infinite love. (HT, 38)

Her negative attitude towards English is illustrated very skillfully in the following section:

If it had been a dream, then why in English? Dreaming in English made him feel powerless, as if his mind were dying, ill-fed from the soil. They spoke English at home, but he, Gérard, tried to dream in French. He read French; he went to French movies; he tried to speak it with his little brother;

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<sup>3</sup> Gallant, *Paris Notebooks: Essays & Reviews*: 130.

and yet his mind made fun of him and sent up to the surface “Elizabeth Barrett.” (HT, 33)

As Gallant states in the “Introduction” to HT, Gérard’s hatred towards English is “blind and irrational. Deprived of the all-important first language, he is intellectually maimed. The most his mind can do is to hobble along. Like every story in this collection, “Saturday” needs to be read against its own time - the Montreal of about 1960”. (HT, xviii) The story ends with Léopold’s birthday party, attended by his five sisters (Sharon, Marilyn, Cary, Gary in Gail). All his sisters left home early and got married too early.

In “Saturday”, Gallant does not only speak about language, she wishes to accent her anticlericalism:

The family had not deserted French for social betterment, or for business reasons, but on the matter of belief that set them apart. His mother wanted English to be freedom, at least from the Church. There were no public secular schools, but that was only part of it. Church and language were inextricably enmeshed, and you had to leave the language if you wanted your children brought up some other way. That was how it was. It was simple, and as complex, as that. (HT, 33)

In the short story “Orphans’ Progress”, the main topic is the contrast between the internal and the external, between emotions and public opinion, between the intimate experience and reality, which is conceptualised by society – the society, which uses language to force on us its norms and standards. While social pressure is introduced gradually, the image of the orphan girl as a material institution disappears.

Memory is, as Gallant ascertains, “something that cannot be subsidized or ordained” (HT, xv). In “Orphans’ Progress”, the symbiosis of language and memory is present. The Collier girls are brutally taken away from their incompetent French-Canadian mother, who they “loved without knowing what the word implied” (HT, 56). They are sent to their father’s mother in Ontario, where they live for a long period of time and learn to use the Ontario dialect in their speech. They spoke French and English with their mother, but when they return to their relatives in Québec, they are faced with a new reality. Their relatives will not listen to them, unless they use French:

Language was black, until they forgot their English. Until they spoke French, nothing but French, the family pretended not to understand them, and stared as if they were peering in the dark. They very soon forgot their English. (HT, 60)

The only word, which the youngest child Mildred cannot forget is “Mummy” (HT, 61), until she is punished for using it. The children are parted and the youngest is adopted by a distant relative. The reader sees them as they later meet in life and have nothing to say to each other. The memories of childhood (the room above the garage, the bed, etc.) have remained, but not the language. The children have forgotten their mother tongue, the language that meant so much to them. As Anice Kulyk Keefer determines rightfully, “as Gallant develops the issue in this story, language

is a more complex and emotional affair than the political question of French versus English”.<sup>4</sup>

In “The Prodigal Parent” the in-depth thought, which Gallant once wrote in *Paris Notebooks: Essays & Reviews* (1986), takes front stage: “All lives are interesting; no one life is more interesting than another. Its fascination depends on how much is revealed, and in what manner.”<sup>5</sup> In the first-person narrative, the reader observes the mother visiting her daughter Rhoda, who bought a new house after her divorce on Vancouver Island in British Columbia, Canada’s most western province. This is a short story about “the world of women”, about the complex communication and relationship between mother and daughter, about the good and the bad, and about men and their role in the universe. Their conversations, which are full of confrontations, were always like this – “collisions” (HT, 66), Gallant says. “The Prodigal Parent” is the last short story in the first group of short stories in HT.

In the second group of short stories in HT, the reader deals with short stories that speak about young Canadians, who wander around the European continent. However, it is Gallant’s primary interest to show “North American varieties of innocence over against European versions of experience”.<sup>6</sup>

“In the Tunnel” is a short story about Sarah, sent by her father to Grenoble “to learn about French civilization - actually to get her away from a man he always pretended to think was called Professor Downcast” (HT, 72-73). We see Sarah’s father as “her only antagonist [...] who had not touched her self-confidence” (HT, 79). Sarah later meets a man, an Englishman, by the name of Roy Cooper, who is an inspector of prisons in Asia and twice her age. They start seeing each other almost each day:

They seemed to Sarah to be moving toward each other without ever quite touching; then she thought they were travelling in the same direction, but still apart. They could not turn back, for there was nothing to go back to. (HT, 76-77)

Sarah quickly learns about the bitterness of love. Roy rents a cottage from two English expatriates, who are absurdly limited individuals, and invites Sarah to join them. Through Sarah’s visualisation of events we learn about the characteristics of these people who “have carefully shut themselves off from any real contact with the world or with others”,<sup>7</sup> and forms an opinion of Roy, who was “a bachelor because of the selfishness of men, and the looseness and availability of young women” (HT, 87), and later adds: “Nothing was wrong except that he was cruel, lunatic, Fascist - No, not even that. Nothing was wrong except that he did not love her. That was all” (HT, 101).

In “The Ice Wagon Going Down the Street”, the third-person narrator tells us a story about expatriates and their unpleasant experiences in Europe. The family Frazier, who spent part of their life in Paris, Geneva, Sri Lanka and Hong Kong, are now residing in Toronto, Canada, and reminiscing about the times living abroad. This is how Peter sees the life of a Canadian in a foreign country, i.e. in Switzerland:

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<sup>4</sup> Keefer, *Reading Mavis Gallant* (1989): 15.

<sup>5</sup> Gallant, *Paris Notebooks: Essays & Reviews* (1986): 142.

<sup>6</sup> Besner, *The Light of Imagination: Mavis Gallant’s Fiction* (1988): 122.

<sup>7</sup> Besner, *The Light of Imagination: Mavis Gallant’s Fiction* (1988): 122.

“I’ll tell you one thing about us,” said Peter. “We pay everything twice.” (HT, 128)

The family returned to Toronto, because Peter could not find an adequate job, which would have an aristocratic Canadian background. Agnes Brusen is the opposite of Peter. She is young, successful and very ambitious, but disappointed with her personal life. At a party organised by Mike Burleigh, Peter’s friend, she gets drunk and meets Peter. Peter is asked to escort her home. In front of her apartment, she asks Peter to follow her upstairs, but he declines, because he has a wife (Sheilah) and two daughters (Sandra in Lucille). Agnes is a victim of society and life is a cruel game:

She said, “I’m from a big family. I’m not used to being alone. I’m not a suicidal person, but I could have done something after that party, just not to see any more, or think or listen or expect anything. What can I think when I see these people? All my life I heard, Educated people don’t do this, educated people don’t do that. And now I’m here, and you’re all educated people, and you’re nothing but pigs. You’re educated and you drink and do everything wrong and you know what you’re doing, and that makes you worse than pigs.” (HT, 131-132)

Gallant wishes to let the reader know that these people are completely lost in this world and have created an invented perception of loneliness. They have become totally alienated living abroad and are vegetating on their memories, trying to avoid the reality of today. In “Bonaventure” Gallant returns to Montreux in Switzerland, where the 21-year-old Douglas Ramsay, who was awarded a fellowship, is studying music. Ramsay is asking himself questions about his identity:

He was besieged, he was invaded, by his mother’s account of the day he was conceived; and his father confirmed her version of history, telling him why. He had never been able to fling in their faces “Why did you have me?” for they told him before he could reason, before he was ready to think. He was their marvel. (HT, 135)

He lives with the Mosers and gets into heated conversations about arts with Catharine, the conductor’s widow. He believes that with the support of arts one can keep away from one’s past and run away from time. With the use of irony, Gallant demonstrates to the reader that this can be done, but only temporarily.

Gallant continues with her portrayal of Canadians who left for the continent after the war in “Virus X”, the last story in the second group of short stories in HT. Lottie Benz, a student of Sociology, residing in Paris with the intention of putting up “a show for her own country, which is Canada” (HT, 174). In Paris, she meets Vero Rodno, a Ukrainian Canadian, who is living between Paris and Rome. Although we can notice that Vera is a disturbing factor in Lottie’s life, acting as a virus, it is important to her to have lunch and dinner together regularly.

Gallant reveals her thoughts on the question of identity:

That’s the strength of Canada, that it hasn’t been a melting pot. Everybody knows that. The point is, I’m [Lottie, n. A. K.] taking it as a good

thing. Alsace is an example in an older civilization. [...] “The Poles paint traditional Easter eggs. Right? They stop doing it in the States after one generation, two at most. In Canada they never stop. Now do you see?” (HT, 178)

Toward the end of the night, he [Kevin, n. A. K.] began bemoaning his own Canadian problems of national identity, which Lottie thought a sign of weakness in a man. (HT, 181)

“I don’t see why a Canadian should have any trouble,” said Lottie. “He’s only sort of Canadian,” said Vera. “If you ask me, I don’t think he should have a passport. I mean, he sort of picks on the place.” “You can’t be sort of Canadian. If he is, he doesn’t have to be in trouble anywhere.” (HT, 190)

“I know all that,” said Lottie, in her slowest voice, “I’m only trying to say that if there are people here who don’t want to belong to France, then my proposition doesn’t hold water. The idea is, these people are supposed to be loyal but still keep their national characteristics.” “There aren’t many. Just a couple of nuts.” “There mustn’t even be one.” “It’s your own fault for inventing something and then trying to stick people in it.” (HT, 194-195)

“I always felt I had less right to be Canadian than you, even though we’ve been there longer,” Vera said. “I’ve never understood that coldness. I know you aren’t English, but it’s all the same. You can be a piece of ice when you want to. When you walked into the restaurant that day in Paris. I felt cold to the bone” (HT, 210)

It is very clear to the reader how Gallant wishes to share with us her great effort in finding an answer to the question of Canadian national identity, if possible at all.<sup>8</sup> Lottie cannot live the life she is living anymore. She is fed up with Vera and needs to return to Canada: “There was no sense to what she was doing. She would never do it again. That was the first of many changes” (HT, 216).

The last group of short stories in HT include the “Linnet Muir” stories. Linnet Muir, beyond comparison in Gallant’s prose, is a woman who is independent and fights for each and every triumph in her life. We could say that Linnet’s views are parallel to Gallant’s observations and inspection of life,<sup>9</sup> or as Gallant says in her “Introduction” to HT:

The character I called Linnet Muir is not an exact reflection. I saw her as quite another person, but it would be untrue to say that I invented everything. I can vouch for the city: my Montreal is as accurate as memory can make it. I looked nothing up, feeling that if I made a mistake with street name it had to stand. Memory can spell a name wrong and still convey the truth. (HT, xxii)

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. Kustec, »The Contemporary Canadian Short Story« in *Essays on Australian and Canadian Literature. Eseji o avstralski in kanadski književnosti*. Edited by Mirko Jurak and Igor Maver (2000): 193-202.

<sup>9</sup> Hancock, “An Interview with Mavis Gallant”, *Canadian Fiction Magazine* 28 (1978): 28.



Among all the literary characters in HT, Linnet is the best reporter of her memories. Firstly, in “In Youth Is Pleasure”, she returns to Montreal from New York and the reader learns from the first-person narrator all about Linnet’s childhood. In her first 15 years, Linnet lost her interest for her mother, who did not play an important role in her life. We learn about Linnet’s reason for not answering her mother’s letter: “It was not rejection or anything so violent as dislike but a simple indifference I cannot account for. It was much the way I would be later with men I fell out of love with” (HT, 218). Linnet’s disappointment is evident, backed by her emotional outcry.

Childhood is a world without sentimental associations for Gallant. When she describes the relationship between child(ren) and parents, parenthood represents supremacy over the weak and vulnerable. In the stories about Linnet, Gallant wishes to communicate “the reality of childhood as this writer envisions it: the devastating effect our relations with adults can have on our lives if we do not work ourselves free of our need for our parents”.<sup>10</sup>

At the age of 18 Linnet not only became economically independent from her family but also emotionally: “I was solely responsible for my economic survival and [...] no living person felt any duty toward me” (HT, 219). She is constantly managing and arranging matters, trying to get things into order: “The past, the part I would rather not have lived, became small and remote, a dark pinpoint” (HT, 225). Linnet recalls things to her mind from the past with the intention to “free herself of it”.<sup>11</sup>

She starts from scratch to be able to learn more about herself. This is how Linnet describes her first days:

[...] there was almost no such thing as a “Canadian.” You were Canadian-born, and a British subject, too, and you had a third label with no consular reality. [...] In Canada you were also whatever your father happened to be, which in my case was English. (HT, 220)

When she returns from Montreal, Linnet walks around frustrated from one father’s friend to another to find out more about her father’s death: “My father’s death had been kept from me. I did not know its exact circumstances or even the date” (HT, 228). Unfortunately, she cannot get a straight answer. Linnet wishes to exorcize her father from her mind, because this is the only way she will achieve redemption and personal freedom, and get rid of the trauma and tyrannies from her childhood, or as she says: “the prison of childhood itself” (HT, 225).

“There was a space of life I used to call “between Zero and One” and then came a long mystery” (HT, 238), says Linnet, when she is contemplating about men and women in this world. She believes that men “came up to their wall, their terminal point, quite a long way after One” (HT, 238). She recalls the time of war, when she was as a 19-year-old listening to the Canadian national radio about how the allies were losing on all fronts in Europe. We see her preparing in a shameful way for an interview. At the time, Linnet was not too self-confident: “My only commercial asset was that I knew French, but French was of no professional use to anyone in Canada then - not even to French Canadians; one might as well have been fluent in Pushtu” (HT, 243). This was

<sup>10</sup> Keefer, *Reading Mavis Gallant* (1989): 98.

<sup>11</sup> Besner, *The Light of Imagination: Mavis Gallant’s Fiction* (1988): 117.



the time when Linnet showed her first interest for “sexual curiosity, sexual resentment, and sexual fear that the presence of a woman can create where she is not wanted” (HT, 244). Her thinking agrees with the atmosphere in Montreal of that time. Montreal was a town shrouded in mystery and “sustained by belief in magic” (HT, 245). Linnet got a job in a dull office, gaining enlivenment with the arrival of the 32-year-old Mrs. Ireland. They start talking about various topics, but are particularly interested in chatting about men. Linnet understands men as human beings, who do not criticize their wives and do not speak a lot, but possess something magic within. If a woman gets married, she becomes “a watershed that transformed sweet cheerful, affectionate girls into, well, their own mother” (HT, 259).

Linnet gets acquainted with war refugees, who fled to Montreal. She red their minds like a book, from the beginning to the end (HT, 261). Similarly as Alice Munro’s Rose in *Who Do You Think You Are?* (1978), Linnet in moments when she not knowing how to solve a situation vanishes into her world of imagination and writing. She does not think about refugees, but only writes stories about them. Her actions are not without reason, Linnet is fully aware that she is, figuratively, also a type of refugee. If she wishes to find out more about herself, she needs to see, e.g. what “an Austrian might see” (HT, 261). In “Voices Lost in Snow” Linnet returns to her childhood. She remembers going with her father on visits to his friends: “What was he doing alone with a child? Where was his wife?” (HT, 285). This is a story in which Gallant indirectly speaks about the dominance of parents, who tyrannize and neglect their children. In addition, it is also a story about Linnet’s complicated relationship with her father.

In the last two stories, “The Doctor” and “With a Capital T”, the reader observes Linnet drifting through her memory back to her early mature years. This is a time, when

I had longed for emancipation and independence, but I was learning that women’s autonomy is like a small inheritance paid out a penny at a time. In a journal I kept I scrupulously noted everything that came into my head about this, and about God, and about politics. I took it for granted that our victory over Fascism would be followed by sunburst of revolution - I thought that was what the war was about. I wondered if going to work for the capitalist press was entirely moral. “Whatever happens,” I wrote, “it will be the Truth, nothing half-hearted, the Truth with a Capital T.” (HT, 318)

Linnet continues her search. Her strong will to be completely emancipated and to become independent is not only the heart of the matter in the extract, but also of Linnet Muir’s complete cycle. Whenever Gallant’s characters are not capable of direct articulation, it is “Memory” and “History” that intertwine with “Voice” and “Imagination”. When Linnet is capable of articulating Truth that is when she can complete the long journey home “from exile into identity”.<sup>12</sup>

Mavis Gallant accompanies the collection HT with a very attention-grabbing and thorough “Introduction”, which she wrote in Paris in July 1981. Although Gallant,

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<sup>12</sup> Besner, *The Light of Imagination: Mavis Gallant’s Fiction* (1988): 139.

fluently bilingual in English and French, has lived in Europe for many years, she still thinks and writes only in English, and could not even imagine writing in any other language

for it seems to me inextricably bound to English syntax, to the sound, resonance, and ambiguities of English vocabulary. If I were to write in French, not only would I put things differently, but I would never set out to say the same things. Words have an association that the primary, dictionary definitions cannot provide, and that are all translations usually offer. (HT, xviii)

This is evident in Gallant's writing and the reader is strongly aware of this. Gallant will substitute a French phrase or entire sentence for an English equivalent if she needs to. She belongs to the group of writers who do not reread their own work unless they really have to. When writing, Gallant is convinced that "every line has been read and rewritten and read again to the point of glut".<sup>13</sup> Gallant wishes to tell us that we need to be careful not to get too close when reading (her) stories, because, as a result, the stories will become too distant for us to comprehend. Therefore, it is important for the reader to preserve a balance.

For Gallant, content, meaning, intention and form must make up a whole. There must be a justified reason for writing a short story. Literature is a matter of life and death, and, as a result, the writer's style is "the distillation of a lifetime of reading and listening, of selection and rejection. But if it is not a true voice, it is nothing".<sup>14</sup> In writing it is the "author's thumbprint, his mark", and cannot be copied, duplicated, reproduced or replicated:

Style is inseparable from structure, part of the conformation of whatever the author has to say. What he says – this is what fiction is about – is that something is taking place and that nothing lasts. Against the sustained tick of a watch, fiction takes the measure of a life, a season, a look exchanged, the turning point, desire as brief as a dream, the grief and terror that after childhood we cease to express. The life, the look, the grief are without permanence. The watch continues to tick where the story stops.<sup>15</sup>

In the "Introduction" to HT the reader also learns about Gallant's attitude towards literature and particular life situations and issues, which have become a part of Canadian reality and are still real today 30 years after the publication of HT. The "Introduction" gives us guidelines and indicates the flow of Gallant's writing. Gallant calls to our attention the problems of Canadian writers, who are expatriates (HT, xii). She reminds us that Canadian newspapers are inclined to using the term "expatriot" (HT, xii) instead of term "expatriate". It is expected that Canadian artists will "paint" only Canadian, but she also criticizes very strongly the Canadian readers, who are not interested in her "style or structure or content or imagination or control of subject and form" (HT, xii), but only her "concealed intentions" (HT, xii).

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Gallant, "What Is Style?" in *Making It New*. Edited by John Metcalf (1982): 72.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Gallant, "What Is Style?" in *Making It New*. Edited by John Metcalf (1982) 75-76.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Gallant, "What Is Style?" in *Making It New*. Edited by John Metcalf (1982): 72.

Regarding the question of Canadian identity, Gallant is very firm in her justification:

I am constantly assured that Canadians no longer know what they are, or what to be Canadian should mean; for want of a satisfactory definition, a national identity has been mislaid. the most polite thing I can say about this is that I don't believe it. A Canadian who did not know what it was to be Canadian would not know anything else: he would have to be told his own name. (HT, xiii)

The writer, like any other artist, says Gallant in a liberal and humanist tone, "owes no more and no less to his compatriots than to people at large" (HT, xiii). Echoing Northrop Frye,<sup>16</sup> she accepts as true that the writer should be loyal only to his imagination.

Gallant reminds the non-Canadian reader with a sense of irony that Canada is "one of few countries that confers citizenship by birth" and it is pertinent to believe that "a national character automatically attaches itself to a birth certificate" (HT, xv). Gallant assumes that "a Canadian is someone who has a logical reason to think he is one" (HT, xiii), and expresses her frustration with her fellow Canadians due to their narrowness and appeals to them to separate "the national sense of self" from nationalism, which Gallant rejects completely, and patriotism.

Acknowledging the fact that Mavis Gallant has lived most of her life in Europe, she has always argued that she was never anything else, nor did it come to her mind to be anything else, but Canadian. Today she is rightfully considered a Canadian Classic, the *greatest* living Canadian short story writer, and the true voice of Canadian expatriates.

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<sup>16</sup> Cf. Kustec, "Northrop Frye on Literary Criticism, Identity and Canadian Literature during His Visit to Slovenia in 1990" in *Canada 2000: Identity and Transformation* (2000): 120.

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tovrstno književnost. Članek identificira razloge za posebno izbiro žanra v znanstveni literaturi in se naslanja na intervjuje z raziskovalci kot tudi z avtorji, v katerih testira njihovo motivacijo za sprejetje ali zavrnitev termina 'avtobiografija' pri oznakah domorodskih življenjskih pripovedi.

UDK 821.111(71)–32.09Gallant M.

*Aleksander Kustec*

RESNIČNI GLAS KANADSKE IZSELJENKE –  
MAVIS GALANT: *HOME TRUTHS* (1981)

Mavis Gallant sodi med najboljše in najbolj zahtevne sodobne pisce. Kljub velikemu mednarodnemu ugledu, dosežkom in veličini, so jo do nedavnega v Kanadi leto za letom namerno ignorirali. Razloge je treba iskati v njeni odločitvi, da živi v Parizu, in ker je pisala večinoma o Evropi, Evropejcih in Američanih. Večino zgodb ni objavila v kanadskih časopisih in revijah, temveč v ZDA, in sicer v reviji *The New Yorker*. Kanadčani so ji končno izrekli zasluženost, toda predolgo prezrto priznanje za zbirko kratkih zgodb *Home Truths* (1981), za katero je prejela Governor General's Literary Award za leto 1981. Od takrat se je odnos kanadske javnosti do njenega dela popolnoma spremenil. Načelno ne uporablja avtobiografskega materiala, kot npr. Alice Munro in Clark Blaise, izjema je le niz kratkih zgodb Linnet Muir, ki sestavljajo tretji sklop v zbirki *Home Truths*. Linnet Muir, pravi Gallant, je junakinja, ki jo opiše kot nenatančno podobo samega sebe. Gallantova se ne pogloblja v psihološki razvoj oseb ali v fabulo. Zanimajo jo specifične situacije in predvsem rekonstrukcija stanja duha in srca njenih junakov, zato se vselej giblje na meji med imaginarnostjo in resničnostjo.

Gallantova pospremi zbirko *Home Truths* z zelo zanimivim in izčrpnim uvodom, iz katerega izvemo marsikaj zanimivega o njenem odnosu do literature in do določenih problemskih vprašanj, ki so postali del kanadske realnosti. Uvod nakaže smernice in tokove njenega pisanja, zato ga je treba obravnavati ločeno od kratkih zgodb. Gallantova nas opozori na probleme kanadskih piscev, ki imajo predznak »izseljenec«. Izpostavi, da se kanadski bralci ne zanimajo za njen slog, temveč le za njene »prikrite namere«. Gallantova meni, da pisec, kot tudi vsi drugi umetniki, dolguje svojim rojakom le toliko, kakor dolguje drugim ljudem na tej zemeljski obli. Pisec mora biti lojalen le svoji imaginaciji. Prepričana je, da Kanadčani pravzaprav ne vedo več, kaj pomeni biti Kanadčan. Njena definicija je zelo preprosta: To je oseba, ki razumno misli, da je Kanadčan(-ka). Gallantova smatra sebe za pravo Kanadčanko. Njeni rojaki jo jezijo predvsem zaradi svoje ozkosti, zato jih posredno poziva, da enkrat za vselej začnejo razlikovati med nacionalno zavestjo, nacionalizmom in patriotizmom.

Zbirka *Home Truths* je dobro ogledalo časa. To so zgodbe o preteklosti, ki jih Gallantova upoveduje z namero, da bi doжела, zakaj so bile napačno razumljene. Spoznati

tipične značilnosti Kanade in ljudi, ki živijo v tem prostoru, ni njen primarni interes, avtorica nam želi predvsem sporočiti svoje razumevanje resnice.

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*Tina Grobin*

## RAZVOJ INDOANGLEŠKE POST-KOLONIALNE ŽENSKÉ PROZE

Začetki indoangleške post-kolonialne proze, ki nastaja pod peresom pisateljic v domovini in indijski diaspori, segajo v drugo polovico dvajsetega stoletja, ko so se na literarni zemljevid umestile avtorice Kamala Markandaya, Nayantara Sahgal, Ruth Praver Jhabvala in Anita Desai. Prevladujoča tematika je prikaz indijske ženske v odnosu do (nenaklonjenega) družbenega okolja, ki je v zgodnji prozi umeščen v kontekst nastajajoče postkolonialne družbe in njenih dilem. V luči družbenih sprememb se lik indijske ženske poda na pot utiranja identitete in širjenja meja v dojemanju ženske družbene in literarne vloge, ter doživi razcvet v sodobnih delih indijske proze, ki v bogatem literarnem slogu ponudi bralcu pisano paleto aktualnih tem širšega družbenega pomena, ki se prepletajo z izročilom indijskega subkontinenta. Namen članka je prikazati razvoj na področju ženskega literarnega ustvarjanja in njegov pomen pri oblikovanju ženske družbene vloge. Članek se osredotoča na obdobje od začetkov pisanja avtoric pa nekje do poznih devetdesetih let prejšnjega stoletja, medtem ko si zadnje desetletje na področju ustvarjanja indijskih avtoric zasluži že samostojni članek.

UDK 81'42:821.111(73)–311.6.09Vonnegut K.

*Monika Kavalir*

## MODALNA ZGRADBA V VONNEGUTOVEM ROMANU *KLAVNICA PET*

Članek obravnava mehanizme, s katerimi Kurt Vonnegut v romanu *Klavnica pet* skozi modalno zgradbo (slovnični čas, polarnost), ki je analizirana po načelih sistemsko-funkcijske slovnice, izgrajuje ključne teme besedila. Podrobna obravnava modalnih elementov v osmem poglavju romana (skupaj 4.533 besed) pokaže, da v besedilu prevladujejo pozitivne pretekle oblike (396 stavkov od 522). Med sedanjiškimi oblikami, ki se pojavljajo, je 9 nepričakovanih glede na sobesedilo in udejanjajo Vonnegutov koncept časa: ta ni linearen, temveč preteklost, sedanost in prihodnost v vsakem trenutku soobstajajo. Prav tako je pomenonosna pozitivna polarnost stavkov; negativna polarnost se pojavlja samo v 19 izmed analiziranih stavkov, s čimer roman konceptualizira idejo fatalizma in vdanosti v usodo.