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**Exploring Marginality and Cultural Displacement in Post-  
Colonial Writings:**

**The Case of Carol Shields' *Unless* (2002)**

A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of English in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Master Degree in Literature and Civilization

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## **Abstract**

Marginality and cultural displacement are among the themes that were tackled by post-colonial authors. Precisely the Canadian writer Carol Shields' tries to introduce the peripheral position of Canada which leads to the sense of marginality experienced by people who have distinct roots and origins. Her last novel *Unless* (2002) examines the manifestation of marginality and cultural displacement in Canada and how they affect the daily life of its citizens. Likewise, the quest for cultural affiliations is an essential thing that the cultural displaced people look for in a multicultural society like Canada. This dissertation explores the new contribution in post-colonial literature that encompasses the main concerns of post-colonial Canadian authors, who want to create a new space for Canadian literature to express the concerns and interests of Canadian populace. In order to achieve that the qualitative approach is relevant to this work. The aim is to comprehend people's behavior towards problems. In addition to that the descriptive analytical method will be used to describe and analyze concepts like marginality and cultural displacement.

## Résumé

Marginalité et le déplacement culturelle sont parmi les thèmes qui ont été traité par les auteurs postcoloniaux. L'écrivain Canadien Carol Shields essaie d'introduire la position périphérique du Canada. Cette position engendre le sens de la marginalité chez ceux qui'ont des origines et des racines différentes qui ont eu une expérience en ce sens-là. Son dernier roman *Unless* (2002) examine la manifestation de marginalité et le déplacement culturel au Canada et comment ils affectent la vie quotidienne des citoyens. Pareillement la recherche de l'appartenance culturelle est la chose essentielle pour les personnes déplacées dans cette society multiculturelle. Cette thèse explore une nouvelle contribution dans la littérature postcoloniale qui sous-tend les préoccupations principales des écrivains Canadiens postcoloniaux qui veulent crée une espace pour la littérature Canadienne. Le but est d'exprimer l'inquiétude populace Canadienne. Pour arriver à ce là, l'approche qualitative convenu à ce travail. L'objectif est de comprendre l'attitude des gens vers les problèmes. En plus de cela, la méthode analytique descriptive sera utilisée pour décrire et analyser des concepts tels que marginalité et le déplacement culturel.

## ملخص

يعتبر التهميش والازاحة الثقافية من بين المواضيع المتداولة بين كُتّاب فترة ما بعد الاستعمار. تحاول الكاتبة الكندية كارول شيلدز عرض الوضعية الهامشية لكندا وكيف انها تؤدي للتهميش الذي يقاسيه الشعب ذو الجذور والاصول المتعددة. روايتها الاخيرة (2002) *Unless* تدرس تجلي التهميش و الازاحة الثقافية في كندا و كيف انهما يؤثران على الحياة اليومية للسكان. بطريقة مماثلة؛ يعتبر الانتماء الثقافي شيء جوهري يبحث عنه السكان المنزاحون ثقافيا في مجتمع متعدد الثقافات مثل كندا. تكشف هذه الدراسة منظورا جديدا لأدب فترة ما بعد الاستعمار والذي يطوق الاهتمامات الاساسية لروائي فترة ما بعد الاستعمار الكنديين الذين يريدون خلق فضاء جديد للأدب الكندي للتعبير عن شؤون واهتمامات الشعب الكندي. من أجل تحقيق هذا قد يتناسب المنهاج النوعي مع هذا العمل. الهدف منه فهم سلوك الناس اتجاه المشاكل. بالإضافة إلى أنه سيتم استخدام الطريقة التحليلية الوصفية من أجل وصف وتحليل مفاهيم مثل التهميش والازاحة الثقافية.

## **Dedication**

We dedicate this work to our supportive parents whose prayers helped us to accomplish this work.

To our lovely sisters.

To our dearest brothers.

Finally, to our loyal friends with whom we shared joyful memories.

## **Acknowledgements**

We thank Allah the Almighty for his guidance and strength that he provides us with to realize and perform this dissertation.

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## **General Introduction**

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Experiencing life in the colonial age is not the same within the post-colonial era. Thus, thoughts, beliefs, and feelings differ from one period to another. In this regard, one of the topics that took position in post-colonial writings is a counter discourse in which the colonized uses the colonizer language and culture to reach certain objectives. Therefore, the amalgamation of the past events with new ones has become a central theme in post-colonial writings. The rise of post-colonial literature in all over the world gave birth to a new kind of writing that was presented by authors who have distinct cultures. Notably, the literature that has been written about the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized discussed the residual effects of colonialism, the conflicts, and the struggle of the colonized nations to fulfill their self-control. Meanwhile, post-colonial literature has paid more attention to the concepts of marginality and cultural displacement and how they were presented by post-colonial writers.

Marginality, hybridity, and cultural diversity, which exist in the Canadian society, have been regarded as a hallmark of the Canadian culture. Thus, the latter has found itself in a distinctive dilemma; either to accept its belonging to the colonial country (Britain) or to create its own sovereign national solidarity. Equally important, post-colonial Canadian literature emerged from the urgent need to establish a pure Canadian literature that is independent from the British culture. Therefore, post-colonial Canadian literature is regarded as a reflection to the real life, a mirror by which the Canadian people see themselves. From this view, post-colonial Canadian writers introduced their works in order to present and address several issues in the society that had a great impact on Canadian people. Consequently, self-representation, marginality, displacement, and cultural affiliation have obtained a good position in the field of post-colonial Canadian writings.

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The aim of this study is to revive history and catch sight of life after the colonial departure through the analysis of Carol Shields' last novel *Unless* (2002). Thus, the latter provides a vivid picture of Canada's post-colonial status at different levels. Moreover, it exposes how the colonial process has shaped the past, present, and even the future of Canada as a marginal state. In this vein, this research is based on revealing how marginality and cultural displacement were introduced in post-colonial Canadian writings with reference to the selected novel.

Post-colonial Canadian writers tend to redefine the lost identity of Canadian people who had experienced a complicated process of national identity construction. This research also tends to analyze the concept of marginality and its outcomes on a specific group of people in Shields' novel who are considered as marginalized from the whole group. It is of interest to show the impact of cultural displacement on those marginalized nations.

The problem of this research is to explore marginality and cultural displacement in Carol Shields' *Unless*. In order to solve this problem, the research questions that would be intended to pursue are: To what extent post-colonial literature contributed to the emergence of Canadian literature? What are the reasons that would push Shield's characters to be marginalized? How does cultural displacement affect Carol's characters' identity, behavior, and belonging?

It is hypothesized that thanks to post-colonial literature, writers have the chance to express their ideologies and perspectives towards the colonial experience. Post-colonial Canadian writers gave voice to the marginalized societies describing their complex position. In this light, Carol's characters are combating to find solutions for their marginal condition. The latter can be adopted either by personal choice or by force. In addition, Shields' main characters are suffering from identity formation since they are on

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the edge of two cultures. Based on that, it is said that the new and the changeable environment may influence the static nature of identity and makes it unstable.

This study merits research because it tackles a new contribution in post-colonial writings precisely post-colonial Canadian literature that differs from the African and Indian one. After the colonial process Canadian people have experienced marginality and cultural displacement position in which they were eager to redefine their lost identity. The choice of Carol Shields as a representative of the Canadian position was not introduced in vein. As mentioned before Canada has a hybrid culture that goes back to the colonial dominance. It is important to acknowledge that Carol Shields is an American- Canadian citizen who had a cultural diversity and double identity at once. Thus, she tried to speak on behalf of post-colonial Canadian people as marginalized and displaced entities.

A plethora of works have been done on the current topic to rely on while conducting this dissertation. Ashcroft Bill, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin's *Post-Colonial Studies: the Key Concepts* (2007) examines the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized nations. Thus, it describes the primitive communities' life before and after colonialism. Furthermore, this work also stresses the idea that those communities are considered as marginal and neglected societies.

Likewise, Ashcroft Bill, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin's *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literatures* (2002) highlights that the British hegemony did not just impose political control, yet went even further to the cultural issues. The book contains descriptions about the post-colonial literatures and how language is used as a weapon to strengthen the colonized cultural identity.

On the other hand, Raghubir Chand, Etienne Nel, and Stanko Pelc's *Societies, Social Inequalities and Marginalization: Marginal Regions in the 21th Century* (2017)

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explains the connection between marginality and globalization in a sense of local and global entities, when marginal regions and groups were affected by globalization during the imperial dominance. The issues of cultural identity, home, belonging, and self-depiction are recent studies that go in parallel with the notion of cultural displacement.

Stuart Hall and Paul Du Gay's *Questions of Cultural Identity* (1996) states the idea that identity remains a crucial topic for discussion and interpretation among writers. This book highlights that the cultural diversity that was brought during the imperial age had shaped the individual's identity. Besides, the struggle of colonized nations in finding their own belonging. As a result, they are considered as displaced people.

On the light of what have been said about Carol Shields' novel *Unless* (2002) it is noticed that Michèle Roberts' review "Unless by Carol Shield" tackles the novel from a feminist perspective and sheds light on the relationship between mothers and daughters. Roberts also observes that shields' heroine is trying to find answers to the gender exclusion and social injustice in her society

Although many studies have been done in the arena of post-colonial literature. However, a little attention has been given to the field of post-colonial Canadian literature especially in the light of the discussion related to marginality and cultural displacement.

The approach that would help the researcher fulfill the planned objectives is the qualitative approach. It is the most appropriate and relevant one to the chosen work, aiming to comprehend people's behavior towards problems and conditions that they had experienced. Besides, Data will be collected from books and websites to verify the hypotheses cited above. The descriptive analytical method will be devoted to interpret and discuss concepts like marginality and cultural displacement.

This study consists of three chapters. The first chapter sheds light on the theoretical background and overall ideas about the post-colonial era and its influences on people and

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cultures in reference to the works of the main critical theorists that characterized that period like Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, and Gayatri Spivak and how they draw an attention to post-colonial theory and the main concepts that characterized post-colonial literature. Moreover, this chapter highlights the concepts of marginality and cultural displacement from a theoretical perspective. Similarly, it shows how marginality and cultural displacement were pronounced in post-colonial writings. The second chapter explains how marginality regardless of its type might menace human's life and ways of thinking. Likewise, it encompasses the difference between the desired alienation and the forced marginality that are depicted in the novel events. The third chapter contains an analysis of Shields' novel about cultural affiliations and cultural métissage. The latter leads to the sense of hybridity in the Canadian society. Consequently, the displaced person is eager to find his cultural affiliation in a multicultural community.

## **Chapter One:**

### **Exploring Marginality and Cultural Displacement in Post-Colonial Era**

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### **Introduction:**

The last few decades were a turning point in the history of the world. The aftermath of the Second World War had brought European colonialism to its end. The liberal movements in all over the world led to the appearance of a post-colonial era that was characterized by a tendency toward making all nations free from the bonds of imperialism. This chapter will address the post-colonial era and its consequences on people and cultures and how it participated in the emergence of new literature and new theory. The new literature produced by ex-colonies during post-colonialism is directed to colonialism and its effects on people; it also discusses issues related to identity and culture. Consequently, post-colonial theory deals with circumstances in which post-colonial literature was written. Moreover, it focuses on the impact of the colonizer on oppressed colonized countries.

Marginality and cultural displacement are two interrelated terms in post-colonial theory. The first notion can be related to those people who suffer from the alienation within their society, while the second concept may refer to the change of culture according to some circumstances that affect it such as imperialism. This chapter is an attempt to trace the impact of colonialism on people's lives and ways of thinking.

Canada is one of many countries that suffered from colonialism. Post-coloniality in Canada was different from that in other areas. Canadian writers took the opportunity to clear the way for muted voices that were once silenced by hegemonic powers. In addition, they see that the cultural displacement created by dominant ideologies during colonial age led to the so-called multiculturalism, and this diversity of cultures is the pillar of the Canadian cultural heritage.

## **I Insights Concerning Post-Colonial Era**

Post-colonialism or the post-colonial era indicates the period during which many colonized and brutalised countries around the world took their independence from their European colonizers such as France and Britain. The post-colonial age emerged from the colonies' need for self-governance. In other words, the rise of liberal movements led to the explosion of post-colonialism.

The emergence of post-colonialism in the wake of 1970's as a 'critical theory' which focuses on the study of the influence of colonialism on oppressed countries from the beginning of colonization to the departure of colonial rules, led critics and theorists to assume that post-colonialism is not only about the period after colonization; however, it indicates before and after the process of decolonization. In their book entitled *The Empire Writes Back*, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin state "We use the term 'post-colonial', however, to cover all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day. This is because there is a continuity of preoccupations throughout the historical process initiated by European imperial aggression" (2). It seems that granting colonies their independence was just on the political level, there exists a kind of preoccupation on other levels such as the social and cultural ones, and from here we assert that the hegemonic imperial powers colonized the lands as well as the minds.

## **II Post-Colonial Literature**

The twentieth century was a turning point in the history of English literature. The process of decolonization in all over the world had led to the explosion of a new kind of writing in English. Those writings were later known as post-colonial literature. It is important to say that post-colonial literature refers to Britain's ex-colonies in Africa, India,

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Australia, Canada, and the Caribbean. “[...] The literatures of African countries, Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, Caribbean countries, India, Malaysia, Malta, New Zealand, Pakistan, Singapore, South Pacific Island countries, and Sri Lanka are all post-colonial literature” (2). Through the use of the colonizer language, post-colonial authors try to depict the combating and resistance of their nations against colonial powers; their works highlight the suffering of people during and after colonialism. In addition, they discuss issues related to identity, immigration, marginality, and cultural displacement. Julie Mullaney expresses “Postcolonial literatures encompass that complex and various body of writing produced by individuals, communities and nations with distinct histories of colonialism and which diversely treats its origins, impacts and effects in the past and the present” (3). Despite the fact that post-colonial literature is a combination of writings introduced by people from different independent places around the world, it sheds light on imperialism and its consequences on societies and cultures.

### **II.1 Post-Colonial Theory**

The rise of post-colonial literature was due to several circumstances such as violence, social and racial discrimination that was once created by imperialism. Writers from different liberated places in the world began to express themselves and share their experiences in their works. The current situation led to the birth of new theory in history. The post-colonial theory investigates the effects of the imperial subjugation and its negative impact on colonized societies. Additionally, it attempts to examine the circumstances in which the new literature was written. In their book entitled *The Empire Writes Back*, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin confirm

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[...] ‘post-colonial literary theory’ emerges from the inability of European theory to deal adequately with the complexities and varied cultural provenance of post-colonial writing [...]. Post-colonial theory has proceeded from the need to address this different practice. Indigenous theories have developed to accommodate the differences within the various cultural traditions as well as the desire to describe in a comparative way the features shared across those traditions. (11)

Post-colonial theory is based in ‘a large part’ on concepts such as otherness, subaltern, hybridity, and cultural displacement. At first, according to post-colonial theory, otherness is the situation in which one person or one group of people excludes or discriminates another group on a social or cultural basis. It is worth acknowledging that the subaltern studies goes in parallel with the notion of otherness since otherness means the exclusion of people according to some conditions subaltern then means the weakness of lower, voiceless classes who ‘cannot speak’ who cannot access to the external world, whose intervention to social and political life of a society is neglected. Therefore, post-colonial theorists are looking for space to those marginalized people whose voices were once muted by ‘dominant ideologies’.

Second, the term hybridity denotes the meaning of crossbred culture resulted from a clash between two cultures. Hybrid people’s identity is in a situation of loss because of the exchange of cultures. Consequently, this cross-culture will easily threaten the purity of the cultural identity of those people who were once victims of oppressive powers. In this regard, post-colonial theorists blame colonialism for its impact on peoples and cultures. Hans Bertens says

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Postcolonial theory and criticism radically questions the aggressively expansionist imperialism of the colonizing powers and in particular the system of values that supported imperialism and that it sees as still dominant within the Western world. It studies the process and the effects of cultural displacement and the ways in which the displaced have culturally defended themselves. Postcolonial theory, in particular, sees such displacements, and the ambivalences and hybrid cultural forms to which they lead. (200)

In other words, the ultimate goal that the post-colonial theory attempts to achieve is to account for the remaining effects of colonialism on communities and cultures. Besides, it focuses on finding a space to those marginalized groups and how to incorporate them in all the spheres of a given society as well as the external world.

### **II.2 Positioning Canadian Literature: The Question of Identification**

When the European powers stretched its areas, it becomes necessary to divide the colonies into white settler colonies and colonies of occupation. The latter is related to African and Indian countries where native societies are colonized by European nations. Whereas settler colonies are non-native people descending from European origin, who displaced to create a new culture in a white colony (*The Key Concepts*, 193). Therefore, this colony is considered as a new place for them. Canada was a settler colony which was once ruled by the British Empire.

In this vein, those settlers are considered as foreign citizens who brought their culture and tradition in this land which is a source of cultural diversity. That is why the Canadian position is ambiguous and different from the African and the Indian situation. People in Canada were keen to solve problems of language, place, and identity. Thus, it was clearly indicated in post-colonial Canadian literature. The latter had a sophisticated change in presenting a pure literature.

## **II.1 The Ambivalent Nature of Canadian Literature: Being in Between Two Worlds**

Literature is used to represent any country or writer, more specifically those who passed through a colonial experience. Post-colonial Canadian writers were banned from using their own language; they are rather obliged to use the colonizer's ones. That's why the case of Africa and India is different from that of Canada. Canadian authors were aware of the peripheral position that results to a disenfranchised feeling. Nevertheless, they started to develop an independent Canadian literature distinct from the colonizer's French and English literature. Their aim is to gain a self-representation. The Canadian author Laura Moss declares

The history of English Canada, 1867-1984 may be read as the progressive casting off of shackles of British\_Victorian \_morality and staid culture and the rejection of supposedly congenial "provincialism". Yet, the [...] vanishing of "(Imperial) British Canada" from our cultural consciousness had its own consequences, one of which has been the rapid evaporation of Canadian sovereignty. (30)

From the passage above, we could notice that Canada passed through a harsh and complicated process of separation from the British dominance in all levels of life such as the economic and cultural issues. Consequently, the ramification of this procedure results in ignoring the Canadian autonomy. Klàra Kolinskà said that Post-colonial Canadian literature is related much more to the 'Anglophone'<sup>1</sup> culture, which has its root from the

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<sup>1</sup>According to Merriam-Webster Dictionary, Anglophone is "consisting of or belonging to an English-speaking population especially in a country where two or more languages are spoken".

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‘mother country’<sup>2</sup>, Great Britain (141). Since the British English was incorporated in Canadian literatures, authors do not have the choice just to practice that language of the ‘Mother country’. For that reason, they want to rebuild their own pure Canadian literature. Linda Hutcheon declares “In places like Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, the English language and culture were transplanted—by settlers, convicts, slave, and masters— to a foreign territory where the indigenous inhabitants were either annihilated or marginalized” (qtd. in *is Canada Postcolonial*, 32). In addition to the problem of improving literature, those settler colonies faced also troubles like marginality and displacement in their new lands.

### III Theorizing Marginality and Cultural Displacement

#### III.1 The Perception of Marginality and Cultural Displacement: a Theoretical Perspective

Marginality, as a technical term, is recently used among theorists. At the first glimpse, the word margin would simply refer to border, periphery, and limit. Thus, it is clearly understood that there is no border without a center. As mentioned in *Post-colonial Studies* the ‘binary opposition’<sup>3</sup> of center verses margin becomes the essential endeavour for studying marginality. Subsequently, the center paved the way to open up a dialogue with the concept of marginality.

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<sup>2</sup> According to Merriam –Webster Dictionary the term mother county refers to “the country of one's parents or ancestors” it also indicates “the country from which the people of a colony or former colony derive their origin”.

<sup>3</sup> According to Bill Ashcroft et al (2007) “Colonialism could only exist at all by postulating that there existed a **binary** opposition into which the world was divided. The gradual establishment of an empire depended upon a stable hierarchical relationship in which the colonized existed as the **other** of the colonizing culture” (32).

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In this regard, people who have experienced the situation of marginality had faced several circumstances such as imperialism. In addition, the process of marginalization did not happen in vain it is obviously determined by certain aspects. For instance, the sovereignty of the developed countries over the undeveloped ones (*The Key Concepts*,121). Consequently, the marginalized nations were affected by the political systems imposed on them. In addition to that, the lack of suitable living circumstances (religious diversity, social struggles, poverty, and the civil wars). Eventually, the marginal groups feel a sense of alienation due to the characteristics given to the hegemonic powers. All what have been said was a description of the so-called imposed marginality.

Equally important, the theory of marginality did not tackle just issues related to the lower classes. Likewise, it affected the upper-class society regardless of its higher status among the entire world. Heikki Jussila, Roser Majoral, and Fernando Delgado-Cravidao claim

Despite the relativity of the concept of marginality, there is nonetheless a set of characteristics associated with the population in marginal areas, and these are important references. These include the existence of low population growth; fewer employment opportunities; less activity related to commerce, services, and a considerable degree of demographic ageing. However, marginality may be associated normally with areas of low population density, as well as marked migration. Furthermore, it may coincide with rural areas, but it is also present in urban areas, both in social exclusion, and in the different guises that poverty assumes. (194)

It is understood that marginality is not just related to weak states, but rather it exists in civilized areas. Usually the inappropriate conditions for living do exist in undeveloped

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regions. For that reason people migrate to some sophisticated regions looking for suitable situations. Consequently, those areas are affected by marginality due to the existence of those migrants.

The eagerness of being on the margins is called desired marginality. There are factors that push the individual to be separated from the whole society. This desire of being on the periphery is introduced under some reasons as a response to the harsh characteristics that the powerful people described to draw a picture of inferior, exotic, and marginalized nations like immigrants (*Encyclopedia of Postcolonial studies*, 87). So those immigrants are the only people who are eager to find better opportunities in other places.

It is viewed that the theory of marginality is defined as being in-between two distinct cultures. The social group is fighting to create a unique space of belonging (Chand et al, 20). As a result, the individual is automatically shaped by a variety of features such as, ethnicity, race, and social classes. The sociologist theorist Robert Park suggests

Cultural hybrid, a man living and sharing intimately in the cultural life and traditions of two distinct peoples; never quite willing to break, even if he were permitted to do so, with his part and his traditions, and not quite accepted, because of racial prejudice in the new society in which he now sought to find a place. He was a man on the margin on two cultures and two societies, which never completely interpenetrated and fused. (892)

From the quotation above, it is elaborated that being in between two cultures would directly lead to the situation of marginality. Thus, the marginal man finds it hard to assimilate his traditions among other societies. Likewise, he will be mainly neglected just because of his situation.

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According to Raghubir Chand, Etienne Nel, and Stanko Pelc, the psychological part in the world of marginality has gained much importance in transforming normal life for human being into a chaos. The marginalized person takes part in the new geographical area adopting the group's traditions, yet he is still out of that universe (20). Georg Simmel writes "As such, the stranger is near and far at the same time, as in any relationship based on merely universal human similarities" (148). Moreover, the inner battle that happened inside the mind of the marginal individual would open an endless struggle.

The term displacement as an independent word means to move from one place to another to achieve a certainly desired aim. As mentioned in Freudian Psychology (1890), the displacement theory refers to the unconscious process of the mind, wherein a lot of transformation occurred. Consequently, this operation involves a radical move of emotions, actions, and a subrogated thinking that happened inside the human's mind.

Displacement can be seen as the separation of a person or a group of people from their own land either in direct or indirect ways. The first one comes from the individual's desire to move to other places; searching for peace lands. This type can be programmed. While the indirect way represents people, who are obliged to leave their locations under some cruel situations such as, unstable political systems, wars, and violence.

It is said that each country has its own culture and tradition that is defined by. The bodily displacement is highly linked to the cultural displacement. Displaced societies find it hard to find their own belonging under diversity. Therefore, cultural displacement is introduced as a segregation of culture which include (identity precisely) from the original source; which covers the term 'Mother country'. Hence, identity can be shaped by the produced one. It may be assimilated or can be a mixture of two identities to form an

unprecedented one. In this regard, displaced people would mainly elaborate on other's identity more than their original one.

## **IV Marginality and Cultural displacement within post-coloniality**

### **IV.1 Marginality within Post-coloniality**

The division of the world into two contradicted positions occurs under the discipline of post-colonial studies more specifically introduced in Edward Said's *Orientalism*. According to Said the aim of the colonizer is to push the colonized into the margin i.e. being alienated from the center. The term 'center' is a political propaganda produced by the imperial power in order to convince the weak state that anyone who is non-white is considered as a marginal person. The stereotypical images that the Western draw on the marginalized nations was just a mean to show their superiority. Besides, Gayatri Spivak (1988) claimed that under the colonial discourse the concept of marginality stressed the idea that a group of people have no voice in the operation of the public platforms.

One of the important modern terms that affect the marginal areas is globalization. The colonizers attempt to use this weapon to control the colonized nations. Thus, the changes that the imperial power brought in economic, politic, and culture affect directly lower class's situation and environment. Scholte (1996) writes

[...]Globalization 'has often perpetuated poverty, widened material inequalities, increased militarism, fragmented communities, marginalized subordinated groups, fed intolerance and deepened crises of democracy', they also see that it has a positive effect in [...] increasing ecological consciousness, and possibly facilitating disarmament. (qtd. in *Post-Colonial Studies*,101-102)

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It is viewed that the imperial powers presented themselves as 'Metropolis'. The latter is an ideological term refers to the center position that the colonizer holds. In contrast, the colonized nations are given a marginal position (*The Key Concepts*, 123). The colonizer attempts to describe the colonized societies as being 'Other'. According to the Oxford Dictionary, the word other means something different from the one or ones that have already been mentioned or understood. However, in post-coloniality the 'Other' is a kind of strategy used by the 'Metropolis' in order to ignore another group. i.e. being alienated from the spheres of the West. The explanation above concerns especially the marginalized communities. In this regard Spivak claims "If, in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern [...] is even more deeply in shadow" (28). Meanwhile, the binary opposition of the self (center)/and the other (margin) is described as two parallel lines.

The combination of two distinct cultures may push a human being to be marginalized. Accordingly, the post-colonial theorist Homi K. Bhabha summarizes the explanation above into one single word 'Hybridity'. Thus, the hybrid person holds two different cultures. It means two distinct linguistic forms (language), and two ethnicities. That's why the marginalized groups find themselves rolling around a closed circle of the mother country's identity.

### **IV.2 Cultural Displacement within Post-coloniality**

During imperialism, radical changes were brought resulted to a diversity of identities and various places, which drives people to the feeling of displacement. The latter happened when the person is alienated from a certain society. In their book entitled *The Empire Writes Back*, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin claim

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The phenomenon [displacement] may be a result of transportation from one country to another by slavery or imprisonment, by invasion and settlement, a consequence of willing or unwilling movement from a known to unknown location. The term is used to describe the experience of those who have willingly moved from the imperial 'Home' to the colonial margin. (65)

The most controversial crisis that faces the colonized people is the concept of cultural displacement. The latter has a profound impact on shaping the identity. Hence, the colonial legacies had brought a total modification not just at the political level, but even further to the cultural, social, and religious ones. Thus, the main exploitation goes practically on controlling the language.

Colonialism attempts to cut the line between place and language. It is hard especially for settler colonies to produce an original language in a new place. So, the language inherited by colonialism differs from one place to another. That is why the distinction between the Indian English, Canadian English, and African English is quite clear.

### **V Portraying Marginality and Cultural Displacement in Post-Colonial Canadian Literature**

As already mentioned, post-colonial Canadian literature “encompass that complex and various body of writing” (Mullaney, 3) that is characterized by a tendency toward making Canadian identity and culture known worldwide. Laura Moss observes

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What CanLit [sic] has failed to address is the complex issues of diaspora, the displaced or racialized experience that makes up Canada at a basic level. This is not the same argument that we are all racial and immigrant and different; this is an argument that racial conflict, inequity, and systematically damaging discrimination is a foundation of this nation. (287)

Canada was a settler colony, its people consider themselves as victims of imperialism and they ought to participate in post-coloniality to share their experiences with the external world. In years following independence, people in Africa and India were looking for solutions to reconstruct what the colonizer destroyed. But it was not the case for Canada; Canadians were seeking for their own lost identity in a country that is considered as the mother of multiculturalism, in a place that is unknown for its inhabitants. The Canadian writer Margaret Atwood confirms

Canada is unknown territory for the people who live in it, and I'm not talking about the fact that you may not have taken a trip to the Arctic or to Newfoundland, you may not have explored--as the travel folders have it—This Great Land of Ours. I'm talking about Canada as a state of mind, as the space you inhabit not just with your body but with your head. It's the kind of space in which we find ourselves lost. (Atwood qtd.in Sugars, 24)

When post-colonialism reached Canada, Canadians were ready to improve their country's situation in all domains. In the cultural domain for instance, the variety of works produced by authors revolved around the peripheral position of Canada as well as its multicultural society. Despite its multiculturalism, post-colonial Canadian literature introduces a

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powerful and profound cultural heritage. This varied cultural heritage led Canada to prove its position on the international scale.

Some notable writers, like Joy Kogoya and Tomson Highway, have been interested in portraying the Canadian society and its hybrid identity in their works. For Kogoya, multiculturalism is the pillar of the Canadian identity that was shaped by immigrants who were forced to leave their countries because of colonialism. It is mentioned that “Her novels [...] trace the development of Canada and Japanese Canadians from World War II to the present and describe racism, injustice, and people fighting for redress. Her novels are postcolonial in their rewriting of a national history and giving voice to a muted ethnic group” (*Encyclopedia of Postcolonial Studies*, 78). Joy Kogoya’s works expresses her own perspective on life which is creating space for the voiceless.

Tomson Highway, on the other hand, is a native Canadian writer whose works encompass the cultural identity of Canada, he “ [...] is also looking for the new voice, the new identity, the new tradition combining the best of both worlds in which he has lived, his native Cree culture and that of the white people with whose he grew up when he started school” (78). Highway also sees that multiculturalism is the core of the Canadian society and Canadians must work together to make their cultural heritage known worldwide.

Women as such intervene in post-colonial Canadian writings and introduced themselves as doubly oppressed and doubly marginalized. In a patriarchal society like Canada, women’s intervention is limited. Writing becomes the only weapon for women to express their thoughts and feeling. Good examples for that: Sharon Pollock’s *Blood Relations* (1981), Aritha Van Herk’s *No Fixed Address* (1986), and Dionne Brand’s *No Language Is Neutral* (1990) (*Encyclopedia of Postcolonial Studies*, 80) and other works by female writers address colonial subjugation, social injustice, power, space, and identity.

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### **Conclusion:**

In the light of what have been said, it is assumed that writing and especially literature has been the most essential weapon for those people who passed through a harsh period of dominance. Thus, the heart of the post-colonial theory is the literature produced by writers of the colonized countries. The aim was depicting history, culture, and political events that happened once a time.

The 'post' in post-colonialism does not mean just the period after independence; in addition, it indicates the period during colonialism. Post-colonial writers as soldiers interfere in the process of re-building the lost identity. Those authors want to prove to the colonizer that they are able to speak their language. In this regard, post-colonial Canadian writers presented their works about the effects of the dominant powers that coincided with their struggle with identity and their marginal situation.

Marginality and cultural displacement have precedence among other concepts that swept over post-colonial Canadian authors. Thereafter, the settler societies brought their language to a new place that is different from their own. For that reason, Canada is considered as a 'multicultural' place where marginal and displaced writers do exist. Their position as 'victims of imperialism' is represented in their post-colonial writings.

## **Chapter Two:**

### **The Embodiment of Marginality in Shields' *Unless***

## **Introduction:**

Literature paves the way for writers to express their beliefs and thoughts. Post-colonial literature describes the ways in which the colonizer endeavors to drive the colonized nations to an enormous hole of doubt and uncertainty about their situation. They did not just colonize their lands, but they attempted to colonize their minds. Post-colonial Canadian literature emphasized much more on presenting dilemmas of cultural confusion and marginal position after their appearance during colonialism. Accordingly, Carol Shields is one of many post-colonial Canadian authors who attempted to draw the picture of the colonized nations' struggle about their constant status.

The novel *Unless* highlights the peripheral position of a marginal region like Canada as well as its citizens. They were presented as strangers in their territory. In addition to that, they suffered from a marginal situation which created a sense of suspicion about their complex condition and culture. *Unless* also reveals the ambivalent state which pushes human being into isolation looking for an authentic culture. In other words, this literary work provides instances about the results of the colonial process in Canada.

### **I. Exploring Ambivalence and Marginality of the Characters**

The colonial experience in Canada opens an endless discussion among post-colonial Canadian writers like Carol Shields whose main concern was presenting their ideologies through reviewing what had been written throughout history. It is viewed that Canada was a nation of disadvantaged minorities. It was occupied by early settlers from Anglophones, Francophones, and other European groups. Likewise, it contains indigenous people. Those ethnic groups that do exist construct a multicultural society which will never be a homogenous state (Moss, 37). Consequently, those settlers who formulate Canada

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were stuck between two worlds, two cultures, and two positions. Thus, they are considered as ambivalent and marginal groups.

Carol Shields' last work *Unless* projects the peripheral conditions that Canada lives in. Carol used the first-person narrator 'Reta Winters'. She is a writer who has the age of forty-four years old. At the beginning, it is noticed that the story is inside Reta's mind. She starts talking about her happy family that she has three daughters: Norah, Christine, and Natalie and her husband Tom. The story begun when her lovely daughter Norah left home for unknown reasons.

At the beginning, Reta as a protagonist speaks about happiness and how it is accompanied with a great pain. Then, she tries to count for her sorrow and unhappiness about her daughter's estrangement .Reta maintains "It happens that I am going through a period of great unhappiness and loss just now. All my life I've heard people speak of finding themselves in acute pain" (*Unless*, 1).Through the novel, it is identified that Reta thinks that writing is the only way to get rid of all her sorrow "My writing: this is a very small poultice to hold up against my damaged self, but better, I have been persuaded, than no comfort at all" (2). That is to say, even words and writing failed to express her inner struggle.

*Unless* sheds light on the effects of the colonial discourse on post-colonial writers who raised an enormous awareness among the Canadian people. According to Laura Moss they want to regain their lost identity. Canada is a multicultural nation with its hostile territory that would bring a kind of confusion of language, identity, and culture in the writer's mind (33). In such situation it is impossible to have a pure authentic culture. Reta asserts "My mother always spoke to me in French and my father in English, and I was

allowed to reply in either language” (97). Subsequently, the character Reta is having a hybrid position caused by the existence of two different cultures

Robert Young has suggested that the theory of ambivalence is Bhabha's way of turning the tables on imperial discourse. The periphery, which is regarded as 'the borderline, the marginal, the unclassifiable, the doubtful' by the center, responds by constituting the center as an 'equivocal, indefinite indeterminate ambivalence'. (*The Key Concepts*, 11)

Therefore, Reta holds a position of being in between two-separated worlds. Eventually, this ambivalent state produces an inner battle inside Reta's mind. In this case, the result of being confused by what is right and wrong, what to consider and what to ignore put human being on the margins and that exactly what happened to Reta. She was stuck in-between two colliding cultures. In addition to that, Reta suffered from a period of sadness when her eldest daughter Norah, nineteen years old, left home for unknown reasons. As she claims “I have suffered a period of estrangement from my daughter” (206). Reta's family has been separated and things went up sides down, which led her to be isolated from her family. She becomes odd and strange among her surrounding environment (family and society precisely). Thereafter, Reta declares

No one actually stares, but they know who I am. I'm Reta Winters the doctor's wife [...] the mother of three daughters, the writer. I live five miles out of town, in what used to be the countryside but is now becoming more and more a part of Orange town, almost a suburb, if a town of five thousand can have a suburb. (28)

Therefore, Reta as a writer has the attitude to visit a library near to her home. One day she entered the library as usual, she found all people staring at her. They were looking at her as

if she is responsible for Norah's departure. She felt that she is neglected despite her high status. Reta claim "At that moment I, her mother, was more absent from myself than she; I felt that" (9). Additionally, Reta realized her alienated self from the self and the society.

The sense of being alienated from the external world created a traumatic shock for Reta. When people were keen just to find perfection in the world neglecting other's pains. Reta was looking for suitable solutions for her daughter therefore; the self and the other are interrelated process in shaping one's identity, Rutherford believes "identification, if it is to be productive can never be with some static and unchanging object. It is an interchange between self [and other] structure, and transforming process" (14). Thus, the tensions between the self and the other promote that ambivalent state. Reta confirms

This will explain my despondency, and why I am burbling out my feelings to you. I am a forty-four- year- old woman who was under the impression that society moving forward and who carries the memory of a belief in wholeness. Now, suddenly, I see it from the point of view of my nineteen-year-old daughter. We are all trying to figure out what's wrong with Norah. (110)

Thereupon, the character Reta was eager to protect her daughter Norah at a time when people were looking for the world's perfection. Then, she was trying to understand the behavior that pushes Norah to the margins. Therefore, Reta was ready to sacrifice her life just to get her daughter back home.

According to the novel, childhood is a fundamental stage for every child. Since children are enthusiastic for gathering as much as answers to odd questions. Jacques Lacan believes that the child at a certain age start to recognize himself and his surrounding by the creation of the Ideal-I (94). Eventually, Reta faced a lot of troubles and ignorance during her childhood; more specifically when her parents ignored her own grief about the War and

its consequences on people. Reta felt that she was alienated and marginalized from her family especially for this stage.

But what was a war exactly? What was napalm? How far away was Vietnam? No one told me, but I figured out it must be in the lane behind the Bloor Street delicatessen because I'd once heard loud noises coming from the store's back wall. I cried when I was taken to this place, even though my mother and father were holding my hand. They didn't ask me why I was crying probably they thought I was scared of Mr. Hopkins, who had a moustache and cut meat with a black blade as long as his arm. (96)

It is understood from that passage that Reta has no existence. That is to say that her painful feelings and weird questions were ignored by her parents. Raghubir Chand, Etienne Nel, and Stanko Pelc believe " 'The Stranger' is one that is near and far at the same time, the one who comes today and stays tomorrow. These characteristics are showing basic instability, unsecure social position that makes life complicated and unsatisfactory" (20). This mysterious situation caused a great dilemma of marginality since Reta's childhood. Subsequently, marginalized people have a deficiency in challenging the external world due to their position.

Equally important, Norah represents another central character in Carol's *Unless*. Yet, she felt homeless inside her own home despite her good situation. In addition, the events began when she met a young Muslim woman in Toronto. The woman burned herself in front of Norah's eyes. According to the novel, one might think that this woman is suffering from harsh circumstances due to her homeless and non-belonging in a foreign place since she is a Muslim. Meanwhile, the Muslim woman was pushed out and placed within a margin position that led to her death. in the light of this idea, Georg Simmel

suggests “Although in the sphere of intimate personal relations the stranger may be attractive and meaningful in many ways, so long as he is regarded as a strange he is no “landowner” in the eyes of the other” (145). From this vantage point, the woman’s status gives an intention to Norah that she is an attractive stranger, yet an alien human being who has a limited power. Eventually, the young Muslim woman has influenced Norah. Therefore, that was the reason that led her to search for virtue in the external world.

She is alienated from our family and from society. We don’t know the cause of Norah’s malaise, but I am more and more persuaded that she is reacting--morally, responsibly, the only way she can-- to a withholding universe. What she sees is an endless series of obstacles, an alignment of locked doors. Yet, goodness is exactly what she is seeking, the nature of goodness, how we learn to be good and what that means. (146-147)

Subsequently, Norah was looking for goodness in the world. At a time when she felt that she is marginalized from herself and society. In this context, our character Norah was trying to delineate her own identity by learning how to be good in that chaos universe.

As it was mentioned before, Reta was trying to detect her daughter’s attitude. She discovered that the only way to express her feeling and sorrow is by writing. Reta as a writer saw the need for a work that represents the current situation that she is living. Therefore, Reta produced a novel in the name of *Thyme in Bloom* that represents somehow the story of Norah. The protagonist of this novel is Alicia. The latter was keen to find goodness in the world. Thus, Alicia experienced the ambivalent state when she was lost between life and death. Moreover, she was alienated from her life and even herself. So that

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Alicia was guided by her 'id'<sup>1</sup> to do what is suitable for her. The quest for goodness was carried out unconsciously. Freud (1932) compared such struggle between the 'id' and the 'ego'<sup>2</sup> that is trying to create a balance inside the human's personality, like the relation between the rider and his horse. Usually, the rider guides his horse to win the race; however, the horse may sometimes rebel, so that the rider is forced to guide the race according to the horse's needs. Alicia as well was directed by her instincts.

Whenever Alicia thinks of idealized goodness, the image of granite comes to mind, polished surfaces, impermeable stone. But stone can be crushed, rather easily, in fact. Alicia has visited the quarry down near Straw Hill. She's seen the giant machines at work. Goodness is not guaranteed. A life of principle requires practice, and although a lot of contractual morality has been worked out, people continue to make mistakes. Then goodness becomes simply a matter of what we wanted to do all along. (170)

Eventually, Reta attempts to manifest the case of Alicia in romantic story in order to know what we mean by goodness and why her daughter Norah wants to achieve it. Meanwhile, the sense of being on the margins pushes humans to think in a different way towards the external world and that exactly what happened to Norah.

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<sup>1</sup> According to Merriam-Webster the id is "the one of the three divisions of the psyche in psychoanalytic theory that is completely unconscious and is the source of psychic energy derived from instinctual needs and drives".

<sup>2</sup> According to Dictionary.Com, the ego is:

1-the "I" or self of any person; a person as thinking, feeling, and willing, and distinguishing itself from the selves of others and from objects of its thought.

2-*Psychoanalysis*. the part of the psychic apparatus that experiences and reacts to the outsideworld and thus mediates between the primitive drives of the id and the demands of the social and physical environment.

## **II. The Eagerness for Isolation and the Decreed Alienation**

As has been noted, *Unless* celebrates the concept of marginality. Although it differs from one character to the other. The novel depicts that the chosen (desired) marginality is relevant to the character Norah. More specifically, Norah wanted to seek goodness and mark her presence in that world. So that she opts to be margin and strange. Reta believes “What Norah wants is to belong to the whole world or at least to have, just for a moment, the taste of the whole world in her mouth. But she can’t. So she won’t” (111). As a result, the reader would find out that Carol’s characters wanted just to be a visible human being; and part of that universe. Besides, this desired marginality begun during Norah’s childhood when her parents ignored her ridiculous questions. Thereafter, Norah chose the doors of isolation when there are no answers and responses. Eventually, Norah’s inner battle started between the self and self.

But we understood at once that this meant nothing, only that she had become conscious of the lifelong dialogue that goes on in a person’s head, the longest conversation any of us has. Oh hello, it’s me again. And again. The most interesting conversation we’ll ever know, and the most Circular and repetitive and insane. Please, not that woman again! Doesn’t she ever shut up? (This is why I read novels: so I can escape my own unrelenting monologue). (96)

In contrast, one might observe that Reta holds an imposed marginality. More precisely, she experienced the marginal condition when the people at the library ignored her existence. So, she was forced to cut off any relation with society. She writes “[...] a woman who has lost her daughter and is suffering acute separation anxiety” (158). Eventually, she wants to forget her pain and estrangement from her daughter through her writing.

### **III. The Ramification of Modernity and its Effect on the Decline of Values**

The rise of modernity in all over the world had led to the decline of values. Some theorists like Karl Marx and Daniel Bell have disputed that the modern age had brought with it several changes that affect communities and countries. With the appearance of television and social networks, the old values and norms, that the society holds will no longer exist. Thus, the economic prosperity and development that appeared in the world as a sequel of colonialism and imperial dominance, has affected the mental and physical life of younger generations. In this novel, the absence of values and respect is quite clear. Reta has three daughters, who belong to the modern age that is characterized by its juvenility. Therefore, they hold different perspectives, values, and norms that do not correspond with their ancestors' reflections on life.

Norah, Reta's eldest daughter, sees that such world of modernity is full of brutality and inhumanity. Thus, the incident that Norah witnessed last summer, about the Muslim women who burned herself, had just confirmed her reflections about this cruel age. Consequently, Norah is looking for a space that is clear from the savagery of people, a place where she can live a chastity life. However, her mother saw this eagerness for a life of virtue as a serious problem. She predicts that her daughter is facing difficulties, or maybe she is raving because of drugs and that she needs special care. Reta expresses

I felt the kitchen walls swell outward, everything curved as in a TV cartoon, and then shrink inward, pressing against the two of us. You do realize this is serious," I said to her. "You are in a serious psychological state and you need help. It is very likely that you are depressed. It maybe you have some mineral or vitamin deficiency, something as simple as that". (87)

Norah's eagerness about finding her own space and belonging didn't happen in vein. She felt that no one understands and appreciates her existence. So that her thoughts about isolation were transmitted to actions. She left the house and left her university to live in the street with a board on her neck that holds the word goodness providing that she was seeking for a life of virtue.

Thus, Reta claims that her daughters' behaviour changed after Norah's departure. Likewise, she mentioned that her little daughter Christine treats her and her husband Tom in a weird manner and she is ungrateful for bringing her to this life. Moreover, Christine does not show any respect to her parents, yet she ignores their roles as mother and father.

[...]Lately, when she speaks of her father, she refers to him not as Dad or Daddy but as my "husband," sometimes my "erstwhile husband," employing an exaggerated, plummy English accent. And when she speaks to him of me; it is always "your wife." Your wife has a weakness for chocolate," she told him last night as I scraped up the last of my cake crumbs. [...]Your wife needs some interesting new shoes to replace those running shoe things she's been wearing for the last hundred years. (102-103)

Consequently, Reta and her husband are under shock and they feel that they are unappreciated and offended, but at the same time they cannot understand their daughter's behaviour. In like manner, they see that their roles as mother and father in such epoch of modernity will no longer exist "Tom and I understand that this shift of rhetoric is meant to be ironic, and that our old familial names—Mummy, Daddy—can no longer be produced without a wince of embarrassment" (103). Eventually, Reta sees that such gaps or such discrepancy of ideas and reflections will only fess conflicts in her family that she is eager to protect.

The departure of Norah from the house led her sisters to rebel and disobey their parents; hence, the reader might understand that the marginalized person affects his life as well as his surrounding environment. Reta by contrast, feels that she is the cause of Norah's alienation moreover, she feels that her other daughters are trying to detach or excludes her from their lives and that her presence and her absence is the same.

#### **IV. The Communication Gap Between Two Generations**

The lack of communication between two different generations in the same family is like a calm sea, despite its serenity; however, it might be dangerous at any moment. The absence of communication between the last generations and the new one was clearly indicated in Shields' last work. The generation gap between Reta and her daughters was highly manifested through the novel events.

Reta, the forty-four years old, woman seeks to raise her daughters' in a good way that corresponds with the norms that each family holds; she rather sees that respect must be mutual between the family members. Throughout the novel, Reta is depicted as an old-fashioned woman who witnessed a very crucial and complicated childhood. Going back to her childhood, Reta expresses that her fears and beliefs as a child were taken with cynical views by her mother "My mother took this assault with remarkable good humour, as though she didn't know the real danger we were in" (95). We could notice that there is miscomprehension between Reta and her mother. Reta selected the way of silence and isolation "Such gaps of comprehension, such incompletions, had to be live with silently" (95) because she won't disobey her parents and make them worry about her.

In addition, Reta declares that the ultimate goal that her parents attempt to achieve is to keep her alive (99). Reta's parents were afraid to lose their daughter. That's why they want to raise her in a good manner. However, they forget that she was suffering from

alienation because of their careless demeanour towards her. Even though, she kept her worries for herself.

### **V. The Impact of Marginality on the Performance of Characters**

No one denies the fact that marginality, regardless of its type, affects human lives and ways of thinking. The crucial events that face the marginalized person will subsequently shape his personality. Thus, marginality may cause deep pain for people who suffer from it. For example, the alienation of Norah from the whole world caused her a huge damage. Subsequently, Norah's mother Reta expresses that her two little daughters were affected by their sister's alienation and that they were visiting her every Sunday to check her and give her food and clothes. Moreover, she said that Norah's grandmother as well was influenced by her departure.

Her granddaughter Norah, her favourite—an endearing sweetness at the girl's core—has been going through a hard time. She herself understands about times of difficulty [...] except lately, she can't talk anymore. She doesn't trust herself. Toads will come out of her open mouth. She will hurt people's feelings. She has an opinion about what happened to Norah, and she doesn't want anyone else to know. (199)

Norah's marginality and escape led her grandmother to live in pain because she was the beloved granddaughter. Moreover, Norah's isolation and absence did not influence her grandmother and sisters only; her parents as well were affected. Reta is blaming herself and she is afraid that maybe she was harsh with Norah.

The long period that Norah spent outside her house, carried with it negative consequences on her life. Later in the novel, Norah is in the hospital and she is suffering from pneumonia (193), a serious disease that affects the lungs mainly because of the harsh situation she lived in. In addition, Norah's hands were burned. “A combination of severe

second-degree burns,” Tom continued in a voice I distantly recognized” (201). Reta recognized that Norah’s burns go back to summer, when Norah tried to help the Muslim woman, who burned herself because of the social exclusion that she felt. Thus, Norah assayed to stop the fire flames with the plastic dish that was on her hands. Eventually, she burned her hands, and she used to wear gloves so that no one notices that.

At the end Reta is happy because Norah is now at home “I have suffered a period of estrangement from my daughter—she is now at home, safe—and the period of our separation has been very like having a cold knife lodged in my chest” (207). Reta thinks that maybe she was the one who pushed her out, but in fact, Norah was looking for isolation, she wanted to live a life of virtue in such savage world.

It is viewed that passing through a stressful experience may cause a mental disorder for the person who is trying to amalgamate the past events with the new ones. Consequently, post-traumatic shock appears from the flashbacks and memories that the person remembers about the incident. Despite the fact that Norah returned home and she is recovering quickly, but she is still suffering from a “post-traumatic shock” (207). She is living an unconscious state; her mind is under shock. The effect that the post-traumatic shock causes may lead the person to live in shock all his/her life. In his book entitled *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* Sigmund Freud states “I am not aware, however, that patients suffering from traumatic neurosis are much occupied in their waking lives with memories of their accident. Perhaps they are more concerned with not thinking of it” (7). Freud’s views about trauma fits Norah’s status, her psychological troubles make her live inside her mind. Her estrangement triggered in her the unconsciousness feeling of living inside a vortex of thoughts about her isolation.

It is said that remembering joyful moments makes the human lives happy; by contrast, remembering sad and disturbing memories may bother human’s life and make it

miserable. So that individuals are required to forget because forgetting is the only way to get rid from the unwanted experience. Reta expresses that the unpleasant events that her daughter Norah witnessed caused her a 'traumatic disorder', thus, Norah is obliged to forget "But it's all right, Norah. We know now, Norah. You can put this behind you. You are allowed to forget. We'll remember it for you, a memory of a memory, we'll do this gladly" (210). Reta is trying to get Norah out from her trauma; she sees that such shocks may only be remembered as memories. As mentioned in Freud's *Heredity and the Aetiology of Neuroses* "Repressing of the memory of a distressing [...] experience which occurs in mature years is only possible for those in whom that experience can activate the memory trace of a trauma in childhood" (166,197,199). Freud explains how a memory can shape the fundamental stage in the human development. According to him the repression of memories is unconscious state that the mind offers as satisfaction when the person remembers the experience.

As a result of the experience, an instinctual demand arises which calls for satisfaction. The ego refuses that satisfaction, either because it is paralyzed by the magnitude of the demand or because it recognizes it as a danger [...] the ego fends of the danger by the process of repression, its precipitating cause, with its attendant perceptions and ideas, is forgotten. (*Moses and Monotheism*, 128)

In other words, Freud claims that sometimes memories might be dangerous if the circumstances that surround the person who suffers from post-traumatic shock are dreadful. As a result, Reta takes the opportunity to get closer to her daughter who suffered from a harsh estrangement that changed her view about the world. The frustration and sadness that surround the marginalized person may lead him/her to feel discomfort and even create a lack of communication between him/her and the external world.

### Conclusion:

As shown above, *Unless* examines the condition wherein the marginal man feels isolated from his own universe. Accordingly, Carol Shields illustrates the circumstances that push human being to be alienated from society and even from the self. Consequently, she centralizes her attention much more on marginal characters since marginality symbolizes a substantial concept in post-colonial theory.

From the preceding analysis, the binary opposition of the self and the other takes part within the condition of marginality. Therefore, it provides a comprehension of the situation that would drive humans to be strange. In addition to that, Carol Shields focuses through her novel on the harmful impact that marginality brings to people in general and to the characters of her novel specifically. Besides, the absence of communication between generations contributed enormously to the protagonist's alienation and estrangement.

## **Chapter Three:**

### **The Projection of Cultural Displacement in Shields' *Unless***

## **Introduction:**

Negotiating culture, identity, and belonging over the last few years opens an endless dispute among researchers and theorists who agree that culture is the regality of any community. Thus, identity is not a private property; it can only be created and erected within a society. Moreover, discussing identity brings home and belonging to the surface in the sense that the hybrid, the displaced, and the immigrant people may feel homeless inside or outside his country. From this vantage point, this chapter seeks to disclose the endless contention of the displaced person to pertain home and belonging. It projects the problem of cultural affiliations that comprises an interesting theme in post-colonial literature.

Hence, this chapter intends to look for the lost identities of hybrid people in the Canadian context, even though the problem of Canadian identity remains unsolved. From this vantage point, the purpose of this chapter is to show how Shields' characters seek to find their lost identities in a multicultural society like Canada.

### **I. Negotiating Cultural Métissage in Shields' *Unless***

The ones who are originally uprooted from their original countries are culturally displaced. So having different origins and roots would eventually lead to the quest for cultural affiliation and the sense of belonging to rebuild one's identity and questioning about having one authentic culture. According to the post-colonial theorist Homi Bhabha, hybridity means holding two distinct cultures. One of the colonized nations and the other from the colonizer. Thus, hybridity becomes an essential concept in post-colonial practices. In this regard, Carol pictures out this notion through her main character Reta. From the novel, the reader could notice that the colonizer has a great influence on Reta's performance toward her writing which makes her on the hybrid position. As mentioned in

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Post-colonial Studies “Hybridity has frequently been used in post-colonial discourse to mean simply cross-cultural ‘exchange’. This use of the term has been widely criticized, since it usually implies negating and neglecting the imbalance and inequality of the power relations it references.” (109). It is viewed that Canada is a multicultural country due to the existence of two different colonialism (France and England). This burden of holding two cultures, two identities was transformed into a rich baggage. In her novel Carol points out “Who led urged me to believe that the act of shuffling elegant French into readable and stable English is an aesthetic performance” (4). More specifically, Reta used the art of mixing two cultures to come up with a new and unique style.

No one denies the fact that Canada is a multicultural society. It is a nation where settlers from different countries constitute a new state with a new culture. The ethnic groups and the cultural diversity that do exist in Canada create what it is called cultural *métissage*. According to Prabhu and Quayson, *métissage* is recognized as a French word adopted into the English language. It is the intermixing of distinct races. Cultural *métissage* refers also to the mixing of identities and cultures. (231). Moreover, this term has been introduced in post-colonial studies to describe the project that analyses the interracial groups and races that brought a new culture during colonialism as Françoise Vergés declare

The social organization of slavery and colonialism produced *métissage*, that is, an intermixing of groups, new cultural forms, new language, and an identity that remained indecisive. Now global capitalism has adopted *métissage* as a new cultural commodity. (10)

From the passage above, we could assume that cultural *métissage* has a great impact on people who have suffered from problems such as identity crisis and a diversified culture.

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On one hand, the concept of hybridity and cultural métissage are interrelated. As Prabhu and Quayson suggest “While the concept of hybridity is readily linked to culture (particular through the notion of “ethnicity”), the ambiguous relationship between culture and race becomes implicated” (225). Eventually, hybridity and cultural métissage are recognized as prominence concepts in post-colonial writing. On the other hand, cultural métissage is a historical, social, and linguistical process that provides insights about the identity of the métis group in a particular history of colonialism (232).

Carol Shields through her novel *Unless* attempts to present some insights about the effect of colonialism on people. Reta’s family has suffered from the existence of two distinct colonial systems in their state namely the French and the English dominance. Carol states

Oddly, the epic confusion of my early years was not caused but rather mitigated by immersion in two languages; doubleness clarified the world; la chaise, chair; le rideau, curtain; être, to be; le chien, dog. Every object, every action, had an echo, an explanation. Meaning had two feet, two dependable etymological stems. I swam in English, a relaxed backstroke, but stood up to my hips in French. The French-English dictionary with its thread blue cover was our family bible. (97)

Therefore, after the colonial departure people were confused between their original language and the colonial one. This confusion is manifested in their mixture use of languages. That was seen in Reta’s family use of the French-English dictionary in their home. In their book *Questions of Cultural Identity*, Hall and Du Gay report “The... hybrid is not only double-voiced and double-accented...but it is also double-linguaged; for in it there are not only (and not even so much) two individual consciousness, two voices, two

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accents (58). So the protagonist Reta carried such hybrid condition which has affected her and her family precisely.

Carol Shields' placement of her characters was not designed in vein. She symbolizes the concept of cultural displacement in Reta's characters in a sophisticated way. Then, Reta was affected in the sense that her book portrayed her situation. The character Roman has suffered an estrangement from his mother country. "His parents were immigrants. They sacrificed their language, their cultural roots. Think of that" (190). Thereafter, it is hard for Roman to cope with the new place, traditions, language, and the new identity. In their book *The Empire Writes Back*, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin confirm

[...]The gap which opens between the experience of place and the language available to describe it forms a classic and all pervasive feature of post-colonial texts. This gap occurs for those whose language seems inadequate to describe a new place and for those whose language is systematically destroyed by enslavement, and for those whose language has been rendered unprivileged by the imposition of the language of a colonizing power. (9)

In this context, one might notice that the new place plays an essential role in constructing one's Identity. The latter can be affected by place, surrounding, and even family. This is seen in the analysis of the character Roman who found difficulties searching for an authentic identity because of his displaced position in a multiculturalism nation.

## **II. Carol Shields and the Dilemma of Cultural Affiliation**

According to Merriam – Webster dictionary, the word affiliation means a state or relation of being closely associated or affiliated with a particular group, or party. Thus,

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when we add the term culture that would mean being culturally affiliated. In other words, the desire to belong to one culture after a long period of identity crisis.

Living in a multicultural and hybrid nation creates a big problem of identity crisis. So the process of hybridization formed a kind of confusion of belonging. That would affect people's identity. This complex battle has been experienced by Shields' character Norah.

[...]The world is split in two, between those who are handed power at birth, at gestation, encoded with a seemingly random chromosome determinate that says yes forever and ever, and those like Norah, like Danielle Westerman, like my mother, like my mother-in-law, like me, like all of us who fall into the encoded [process of] otherness in which the power to assert ourselves and claim our lives has been displaced by a compulsion to shut down our bodies and seal our mouths. (179)

Accordingly, Norah has been displaced from her life, family, and her internal world. She passed through harsh situations finding her own identity in a changeable society. In addition to that, Norah wants just to search for a world to belong to. Carol Shields pays attention on the ways in which cultural variety influences one's identity formation and the sense of belonging. So the character Norah feels that she is an outsider looking for a safe home that could allow her have a sense of existence.

It is viewed that, immigrants are not considered alien from their home; if they are integrated into a certain society. In other words, if they are not accepted in this society, they will feel that sense of non-belonging (Etoroma,104). That's exactly what happened to the Muslim woman and Roman. First of all, Roman was an immigrant who left his home and he found difficulties to cope with the new home and environment he didn't get easily

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integrated into his new society. Second, the Muslim woman as well was an immigrant. She suffered from being marginalized in a marginal nation like Canada. Therefore, she couldn't amalgamate her identity and culture in a foreign society. Thus, her inner battle started when she didn't find a home that suits her norms, tradition, and values. The Muslim woman burned herself because she didn't accept such burden.

In this case, people who move from one country to the other face problems of inner struggle. So it is not just their bodies which displaced, but also their cultures, languages, identities, and even ideologies. In addition to that, they get easily affected by their new environment. Since the latter is unstable their identities are also shaped. As Bhabha sees

I want to take my stand on the shifting margins of cultural displacement- that confounds any profound or 'authentic' sense of a 'national' culture or an 'organic' intellectual- and ask what the function of a committed theoretical perspective might be, once the cultural and historical hybridity of the postcolonial world is taken as the paradigmatic place of departure. (21)

From the passage above, one might notice that the call for hybrid cultures is a quest to form and construct people's identities inspite of its peculiarities. Therefore, in this case home and surroundings play a core role in protecting one's identity.

### **III. The Debate about Home, Belonging and Identity**

#### **III.1 The Issue of Home and Belonging**

Along decades, home was and still a symbol of security and unity were the human can live. The fact of being between the host country and the country left behind created this problem of instability and untranquility. On the other hand, the hybrid person may feel

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the sense of belonging to two different countries, for him home is present and absent at the same time. Gomez Peña states “Home is both ‘here’ and ‘there’ or somewhere in between. Sometimes it is nowhere” (5). One might understand that the hybrid person is lost between his home land and the country of his origin.

Usually home is regarded as a safe haven where people live, discuss, and identify themselves. The profound feeling of home is based on whether the citizens are loyal to their society or not, and whether they are able to accept and apply the norms and values that rules it. Etoroma confirms that home is the place in which the individual identifies himself and where he feels accepted without any conditions (103). Likewise, Rapport and Dawson definition about home has drawn an attention to the environment in which the person lives and how it can affect his life .They state “One is at home when one inhabits a cognitive environment in which one can undertake the routines of daily life and through which one finds one’s identity best mediated –and homeless when such a cognitive environment is eschewed” (9-10). Based on that, it becomes clear that the person feels at home when the environment surrounding him is suitable for living a decent life. Moreover, he will be encouraged to create his own identity that accords with the current situation. However, the person may feel homeless if the environment where he lives becomes uncomfortable, chaotic, and unlivable. Thus, he may feel unaccepted and alien if he did not assimilate the immediate position.

It is believed that a home country is the original place where the person comes from; however a host country indicates the place where the individual live in. Thus, the concept home may sometimes indicate an obscure distance and unknown place if the circumstances are unsuitable. In the Canadian context, home represents unknown place for

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Canadian people who are due to their cultural diversities feel lost in this new country.

Atwood confirms

Canada is unknown territory for the people who live in it, and I'm not talking about the fact that you may not have taken a trip to the Arctic or to Newfoundland, you may not have explored--as the travel folders have it—This Great Land of Ours. I'm talking about Canada as a state of mind, as the space you inhabit not just with your body but with your head. It's the kind of space in which we find ourselves lost. (Atwood qtd. in Sugars 24)

Thereupon, the novel *Unless* spotlights the statelessness situation that the Canadians live. Canada is regarded as a victim of the colonial subjugation, even though it was just a settler colony, but it was affected by the tyrannical colonial process that shaped its present and future as a multicultural nation. Reta's parents, who are from different origins, affirm the diversity of the Canadian society, thus they are lost in this new territory. Reta states "My mother, a *pure laine* Marteau from Montreal, spoke a musical French and my father a crisp Edinburghian English, only slightly eroded by his years in Canada" (97). Canada represents a new home for people who have a variety of races and origins. This process of ethnicity leads them to quest for their lost identity.

It is generally believed that the feeling of loss and estrangement are always related to those who were once displaced from their countries because of several circumstances like imperialism. However, Carol's last work has clarified that home and alienation are not only correlated with immigrants around the world. Nevertheless, the one may feel lost and alienated inside his /her home.

Norah recognizes that the feeling of protection and comfort are not conditioned with house. She realized that house is no longer a place to live in. Therefore, she is eager to find the place to which she belongs. Moreover, she wants to experience how the homeless

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lives in this undisciplined world. Reta confirms “What Norah wants is to belong to the whole world or at least to have, just for a moment, the taste of the whole world in her mouth. But she can’t. So she won’t” (111). Norah’s thoughts about living a life of chastity were enhanced by the idea of being alienated. Thus, she wants to observe how the ‘sense of safety’ in this planet can lead the person to live a decent life, but this is impossible in the area where she lives. Reta states

In any case, Norah took up the banner of goodness—goodness not greatness. Perhaps because there was no other way she could register her existence. In the obscuring distance, melting into sunsets and handsome limestone buildings and asphalt streets and traffic lights, the tiny piping voice of goodness goes almost unheard, no matter how felt and composed it is. Norah had no other place to stand after the “event”; she was all perch, she and her silent tongue and burnt hands. (207)

Consequently, Norah was pushed indirectly to leave house and live in the street. The event that Norah witnessed about the Muslim woman, who inflamed herself, triggered the feeling of non-belonging to this nasty universe. Consequently, Norah recognizes that the place where she belongs is the place where she cannot feel safe and relaxed.

#### **III.2 Looking for Identity in a Multicultural Society**

Self-knowledge and consciousness of one’s own culture and identity are two major factors that help displaced people in the process of self-representation. For many years, identity remains a crucial topic for discussion and interpretation. According to Cambridge Dictionary identity is “who a person is, or the qualities of a person or group that make them different from others”. Therefore, the notion of identity is widely used in postcolonial studies to refer to a set of characteristics that distinguish communities from each other.

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Thus, Hall and Du Gay dispute that identity is “not ‘who we are’ or ‘where we come from’, so much as what we might become, how we have been represented and how that bears on how we represent ourselves [is important]. Identities are therefore constituted within, not outside representation” (04). In other words, identity is how we perform when we tend to profess ourselves, and not how we appear.

Many researchers like Madan Sarup questioned about cultural belonging and identity crisis. According to them, identity is not a static thing, however, identity can change due to several circumstances that affects it, such as social, political, and geographical displacement. Therefore, identity may take different forms according to the suitable situation. Foreseeing that identity can be created in relation to the environment that surrounds the person, and that this environment can influence the nature of his identity. Sarup states

Whenever I [...] read, and discuss questions about identity: personal identity, social identity [...] now it has become a key word; there are conferences, lectures, books and articles on every aspect of identity that one can think of. There are talks and discussions on the meanings of home and place, displacement, migrations, and Diasporas. Distinctions are made between immigrants, economic migrants, refugees and exiles [...] Identity can be displaced; it can be hybrid or multiple. It can be constituted through community: family, region, the nation state. (1)

Based on Sarup's ideas about identity, we may say that identity is not stable; however, it can change if the person experiences displacement or estrangement from his country, and this will only affect his life as a displaced person. Consequently, we observe that identity formation represents a significant process for displaced people.

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In the post-colonial context, hybridity constitutes a huge discussion between post-colonial theorists who agree that these crossbred cultures are the result of the colonial process who endeavour to separate people from their culture. Thus, the hybrid may unconsciously obtain some characteristics like language from his exposure with the host country's culture. Gomez Peña confirms

[...] The artist who understands and practices hybridity in this way can be at the same time an insider and outsider, an expert in border crossing, a temporary member of multiple communities, a citizen of two or more nations. S/he performs multiple roles in multiple contexts. At times s/he can operate as a cross cultural diplomat, as an intellectual coyote (smuggler of ideas) [...] s/he speaks from more than one perspective, to more than one community [...] His/her job is to [...] interconnect, reinterpret, remap, and redefine ; to find the outer limits of his/her culture and cross them. (12)

Due to the variety of the Canadian society, hybridity plays a significant role in the context of Canadian identity. Since Canada contains a mixture of races and ethnic groups around the world, Canadian citizens find themselves caught in a situation of in-between “[their] Canadian belonging and [their] multiple cultural backgrounds” (Hoerder,62). That is to say, Canadian people hold the position of hybridity due to the variety of races that Canada hosts.

Shield's novel *Unless* explains that Canada is the land of many displaced people who were once estranged because of colonialism. Thus, *Unless* highlights that immigrants identity is stuck between their original countries and their new belonging. Reta's parents are depicted as immigrants from two different destinations. Therefore, Reta asserts that her

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mother speaks French and her father speaks English, and that she learned both languages and she was allowed to speak the language that she wants

My mother always spoke to me in French and my father in English, and I was allowed to reply in either language. This was part of a pact the two of them had made before my birth, that any child of theirs would grow up in two languages, and that they would share responsibility for this plan. (97)

The reader will understand that Reta's identity is in between her parent's diverged identities and her own identity as a Canadian citizen. However, Reta is smart enough to deal with the current situation, she is able to accept and embrace both her parents' belonging and her country of birth.

Equally important, Reta's sense of holding two identities is manifested in her work *Thyme in Bloom*. Reta represents her protagonist Roman as the son of an immigrant family who is struggling to find his own lost identity. Likewise, Roman is eager to visit his ancestors' country so that he knows his origins. Sarup affirms that knowing one's origins may help in the process of affirmation of one's identity. Sarup states

It is important to know where we come from. All people construct a home. All people have a place to which they feel an attachment, a belongingness. This is in contrast to some post-modern writers who stress the subject as nomad, wonderer roaming from place to place. We have to understand the power and pull of home. (181)

Sarup's vision about finding home land possesses a risk for displaced people who are suffering in their living countries. Consequently, they are living inside a closed circle of their lost identity and the new adopted one. Thus, displacement comprises an obstacle in

### **Chapter Three: The Projection of Cultural Displacement in Shields' *Unless***

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the process of identity formation as Ben –Yoseph agrees “Moving from home to another, between countries, cultures and languages is not only a matter of ‘physical displacement but of interior experience’ as well. Different places create different experiences which in turn create different memories. And a memory plays a significant role in the construction of identity” (118). Experiencing displacements will eventually lead to hybridization of identity that can always be a burden that may distinguish the hybrid from the rest people.

#### **Conclusion:**

As a conclusion, it is noticed that the displaced person brings his identity, language, and culture to the destined place that opened its doors of struggle. Carol Shields portrays that through her characters who have experienced their pain in a multicultural society. So *Unless* depicts how this multicultural nation would affect the hybrid person and put him in-between two worlds.

Accordingly, the displaced man faces a serious collision during his presence in a foreign society; for instance, identity crisis and home belonging. Thus, Identity remains considered as a controversial topic of debate in all literatures and especially for the post-colonial literature. In this regard, *Unless* provides the reader with some insights that identity could be constructed by the surrounding, cultural diversity, and the new environment. Thus, the quest for a stable identity is one of the desired aims for cultural displaced people.

## **General Conclusion**

## General Conclusion

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The up growth of post-colonial literature paved the way for post-colonial writers to express their ideas. Those writers who were once colonized by colonial powers share nearly the same goal which is transmitting an overall view of the process of colonialism and its impact on the colonized nations despite the fact that they originate from different places around the world.

Canada is one of those colonized nations since it was a settler colony. It is considered as a marginal nation, living in a marginal society leads to the sense of marginality. For this view, post-colonial Canadian authors seek to bring their writing to the surface. They try to give a voice to the marginalized and displaced people. Eventually, all of that have been discussed in the first chapter.

The second chapter was devoted to the problem of marginality and how it was embodied in the case of study. It depicts that marginality could be studied from the sociological and the psychological aspects. The marginal nations have experienced marginality due to reasons that push them to leave their origin country such as colonialism. In addition to that, marginality takes the form of imposed and chosen. In this regard, this chapter highlights the reasons behind Carol's characters estrangement and marginality. *Unless* portrays how the generation gap between Reta and her parents led her to hold an imposed marginality. Likewise, the environment surrounding Reta forced her to be on the periphery.

By contrast, the novel pictures how the person can choose to be alienated from the society. The propagation of modernity and its effects on the decline of values, triggered in Norah the sense of being alienated. She wants to live far from the savagery of this modern age. Moreover, the incident of the Muslim woman has just stimulated Norah's desire for estrangement.

## General Conclusion

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The theme of cultural displacement was discussed in post-colonial literature that shares with the colonial power the responsibility of identity crisis. The third chapter discussed that issue and how the displaced people suffered to cope with the new position. As mentioned before that Canada represents a marginal and new nation for ethnic groups who are lost in this hybrid nation. According to the novel *Unless*, we could notice that the characters are culturally displaced people who have experienced the condition of the Canadian diversity. Thereafter, the character Reta holds a hybrid position since her parents have distinct origins. Hence, this process leads to unstable identity that is affected by the new environment. It is deduced that identity can be shaped by the experience of displacement and it can take a hybrid form. Consequently, Home and belonging represent a key pillar in the construction of one's identity. The main problem that faces the displaced people is the quest for cultural affiliation in their home land.

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## **Appendices**

## Appendix A

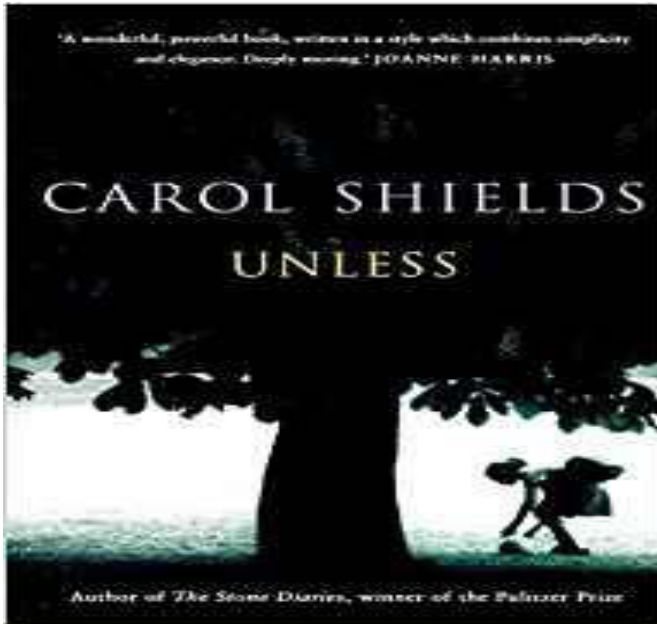
### Biography of Carol Shields:



Carol Shields born on the 02<sup>nd</sup> June, 1935 in America and went to Canada in 1957. She is an American-Canadian writer and poet. After that Carol became a Canadian citizen. So she knows very well the dilemma of being on the edge with the sense of finding home and place where to belong. So that is highly stressed in her novel *Unless*. She is among the writers who have a marginal position that caused for her a sense of grief and loss. *The Stone Diaries* is considered as Carol's best publication which tackles the life of one person. It won the *Pulitzer Prize for Fiction*. Moreover, Carol passed through a period of estrangement from her father. Thus, this incident leads her to engage the subject of the lack of communication between family members in her writings. She died in 2003 after her publication of her novel *Unless*.

## Appendix B

### Synopsis of *Unless*:



*Unless* is the tenth and last novel of the Canadian writer Carol Shields. It is a semi-autobiographical novel. She used the first-person narrator Reta Winters to accomplish her story. It talks about the life of the protagonist Reta who is a writer. At first, we could notice that the story is made up in Reta's mind. She lives with her husband Tom and three daughters Norah, Christine, and Natalie. At the beginning, everything is alright between Reta and her family until it comes a cloudy day for Reta when she knows that her lovely daughter Norah left her classes, friends, and her house for unknown reasons. During the novel, we might notice that Reta used her novels to detect the reasons that led her daughter to be a homeless girl using two characters Alicia and Roman. Norah is holding a cardboard with the word 'Goodness' So Reta and Tom wants to know why Norah is seeking for goodness in the world.