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Situated Imagination and the Cultural Formation of Childhood Identity: A Comparative Reading of Anne of Green Gables and Majid's Tales

Paria Parseh , Zhang Li

Zhengzhou University, China

Abstract

Imagination in children's literature is often treated as an individual capacity associated with creativity or escape, an approach that can obscure the cultural and material conditions under which children imagine. This paper develops situated imagination as a comparative framework for examining how imaginative practices mediate between social constraint and identity formation. Through comparative close readings of L. M. Montgomery's Anne of Green Gables and Houshang Moradi Kermani's Majid's Tales, it analyzes episodes involving imaginative naming, storytelling, humor, and the reinterpretation of everyday difficulty. In Montgomery's novel, Anne renames unfamiliar places the "Lake of Shining Waters" and the "White Way of Delight," transforming outsiderhood into emotional attachment; her self-expression becomes sustainable through recognition within her adoptive family and the Avonlea community. In Moradi Kermani's linked stories, Majid uses humor and storytelling to reframe poverty, school judgments, and embarrassment, preserving dignity while negotiating familial and institutional expectations. The comparison reveals a shared identity-forming function but distinct cultural emphases: Anne's imagination supports expressive self-formation and belonging, whereas Majid's operates as tactical adaptation within material and disciplinary limits. The paper argues that children's imagination neither exists outside culture nor merely reproduces it. Rather, it reworks culturally available relationships, values, and constraints into resources for agency and belonging. Situated imagination therefore offers comparative children's literature a non-universalizing account of how childhood identity is formed through interaction between imaginative practice and social environment.

Keywords: Situated Imagination; Childhood Identity; Children's Literature; Comparative Literature; Cultural Identity