

Juxtaposition of the Past and the Present: A Pragmatic Stylistic Analysis of the Short Story “Too Much Happiness” by Alice Munro

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Abstract : Alice Munro is a Canadian short-story writer who has been regarded as one of the greatest writers of fiction. Owing to her great contribution to fiction, she was the first Canadian woman and the only short-story writer ever to be rewarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2013. Her literary works include collections of short stories and one book published as a novel. Her stories concentrate on the human condition and the human relationships as seen through the lens of daily life. The setting in most of her stories is her native Canada- small towns much similar to the one where she grew up. Her writing style is not only realistic but is also characterized by autobiographical, historical and regional features. The aim of this research is to analyze one of the key stylistic devices often adopted by Munro in her fictions: the juxtaposition of the past and the present, with reference to the title story in Munro’s short story collection *Too Much Happiness*. The story under exploration is a brief biography of the Russian Mathematician and novelist Sophia Kovalevsky (1850 – 1891), the first woman to be appointed as a professor of Mathematics at a European University in Stockholm. Thus, the story has a historical protagonist and is set on the European continent. Munro dramatizes the severe historical and cultural constraints that hindered the career of the protagonist. A pragmatic stylistic framework is being adopted and the qualitative analysis is supported by textual reference. The stylistic analysis reveals that the juxtaposition of the past and the present is one of the distinctive features that characterize the author; in a typical Munroian manner, the protagonist often moves between the units of time: the past, the present and, sometimes, the future. Munro’s style is simple and direct but cleverly constructed and densely complicated by the presence of deeper layers and stories within the story. Findings of the research reveal that the story under investigation merits reading and analyzing. It is recommended that this story and other stories by Munro are analyzed to further explore the features of her art and style.

Keywords : Alice Munro, Too Much Happiness, style, stylistic analysis

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