



Journal of the Short Story in English

Les Cahiers de la nouvelle

61 | Autumn 2013

Special Issue: The Transatlantic Short Story

Alice Munro's "Princess Ida": Revisiting Alfred Tennyson, Marcel Proust, and others in Southwestern Ontario

Héliane Ventura



Electronic version

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/jsse/1377>

ISSN: 1969-6108

Publisher

Presses universitaires de Rennes

Printed version

Date of publication: 1 December 2013

ISBN: 0294-0442

ISSN: 0294-04442

Electronic reference

Héliane Ventura, « Alice Munro's "Princess Ida": Revisiting Alfred Tennyson, Marcel Proust, and others in Southwestern Ontario », *Journal of the Short Story in English* [Online], 61 | Autumn 2013, Online since 01 December 2015, connection on 03 December 2020. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/jsse/1377>

This text was automatically generated on 3 December 2020.

© All rights reserved

Alice Munro's "Princess Ida": Revisiting Alfred Tennyson, Marcel Proust, and others in Southwestern Ontario

Héliane Ventura

- 1 Alice Munro's second collection, *Lives of Girls and Women* (1971), provides a portrait of the artist as a young girl together with a portrait of the artist's mother in the fictional or "apocryphal" town of Jubilee, in southwestern Ontario. The title of the third story, "Princess Ida," is explicitly indexed to Alfred Tennyson's long poem "The Princess" (1847) since it refers to the pseudonym used by the narrator's mother for the letters she sends to the local newspaper, the *Jubilee Herald Advance*: "she used the nom de plume Princess Ida taken from a character in Tennyson whom she admired" (LGW 80).
- 2 The explicit reference to the British Poet Laureate's verse narrative should not blind us to the innumerable other sources from which Munro has more implicitly or clandestinely borrowed. From James Joyce's *The Portrait of the Artist*, she has borrowed the structural frame of the *Künstlerroman*; from *Dubliners*, the break-up into separate stories developing in a single location. Her collection of stories is narrated from the point of view of a single first person, Del Jordan, who is Munro's persona, growing up in the rural background of the forties in Ontario. The narrator's mother is a fictionalized version of Anne Chamney Laidlaw, Munro's own mother, and she is given a first name, Addie, which reinforces her fictionalization because it resonates with a remarkable number of intertextual feminine figures or mother figures: Addie Bundren from Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying* is alluded to if only because of the play of metaphors. We remember Vardaman famously remarking: "My mother is a fish" (Faulkner 84), while Del Jordan evokes the slow and menacing advance of her uncle's car towards her mother's house as that of a fish.¹ Munro's Addie is called Ada by her family, and like Nabokov's Ada or Ardor, she has had an incestuous relationship with a brother of hers. Because the story finishes with a reference to Egypt, Aida is also encapsulated together

with the story of the Goddess Isis, explicitly alluded to, conjuring up the related story of the rivalry between siblings, Osiris and his brother Seth. Gertrude Stein's *Ida* began as a short story and finished as a novel, while Munro's short story began as a novel which was eventually turned into a series of interlinked stories. Both Stein's and Munro's narratives are concerned with twin characters and more specifically in Munro's story with the reversibility of the mother/daughter relationship, a process which is already announced in their names. As noticed by a number of critics,² *Del* and *Ida* both reverse back and forth into a single longer Christian name: *Adelaida*, which is also the full name of Nabokov's *Ada* and is destined to parody *Anna Karenina*.

- 3 These are some of the most obvious hypotexts that Munro playfully included in her narrative but they do not exhaust the possibilities that are open to the reader. The opera by Gilbert and Sullivan "Princess Ida," which is a burlesque of Tennyson's long poem, is also relevant to the construction of Munro's ironic portrait of a woman's epistemophilia or unappeasable desire for knowledge. More covertly, the opera by Gluck, *Orfeo ed Euridice*, is also present in *filigree* and strikes a more disturbing note as it suggests a tragic sense of loss in the remembrances of things past.
- 4 The purpose of this article is to exhume and to analyze some of the probable connections with the Western European canon that are partly concealed and partly disclosed in this short story through a discursive strategy based on appropriation, critique and burlesque. It also consists in pinpointing the ways and processes through which Munro renews the genre of the literary portrait by simultaneously consecrating and desecrating a protagonist who is at the same time a character type in the tradition of La Bruyère or Molière, "une précieuse ridicule," and a mother figure closely derived from her personal life story towards whom she performs an ambivalent act of recognition and repudiation. Finally it will attempt to demonstrate how the story extends the limits of human affiliation, as it reaches back towards the origins of the species and an evolutionary conception of the expression of emotions, rooted in atavistic archaisms.
- 5 Tennyson is perhaps one of the English poets who has garnered the most derogatory critical responses. One remembers W. H. Auden's famous claim that while Tennyson "had the finest ear [. . .] of any English poet, he was also undoubtedly the stupidest" (Auden 222). One also recalls Stephen Dedalus bursting out: "Tennyson a poet! Why he's only a rhymester" (Joyce 73). As pointed out by Daniel Denecke: "[t]his way of reading his lyrics reflects the persistence of modernist appraisals of Tennyson as a gifted lyric poet, but an at-best inarticulate, and at-worst insidious social thinker."³ This divided appraisal is in many ways matched by some of the contemporary judgments passed on Munro. Roxanne Rimstead, for example, considers that Munro's writing does not demonstrate an engagement with social concerns or a distinct political dimension. She attempts to cap the point by contrasting her stories with Margaret Laurence's "poverty narratives":

Laurence renders [...] cultural memories of poverty and class stigma as matters of political importance and community alliances, rather than of primarily personal shame, melancholy, or aesthetic enthrallment as Alice Munro does in *The Beggar Maid*. (Rimstead 215)
- 6 Rimstead contemplates Munro's writing (at least in *The Beggar Maid*) as non-progressive because it is oriented around middle-class lives and "moves the reader ideologically away from social criticism and a systemic understanding of stigma" (Rimstead 215-216).

⁴ In the same fashion, Tennyson's poems have been sometimes interpreted as

conservative political tales of "the triumph of domesticity and the consolidation of the state," as versions of the "romantic lyric," as "expressions of a solitary speaker providing a revelatory account of the self."⁵ Munro's *Lives of Girls and Women* are similarly contemplated, by Christian Lorentzen for instance, as emanating from a responsible speaker who is a proper spokesperson for the community:

A novel in the form of interlocked stories, *Lives of Girls and Women*, followed in 1971. It's narrated by a young, bookish girl, living, as Munro did, in a house at the end of a dead-end road at the edge of a 'half-village', and its opening episode—about a good-hearted eccentric simpleton who acquires a deranged wife through an ad in the newspaper—establishes the way Munro writes about the 'freakish' (her word). She's often applauded for telling stories from odd angles, but what that usually amounts to is telling the story from the point of view of a timid and awkward but also responsible and perhaps even precocious young person: an authorial stand-in, someone normal and able to understand the misery of one of her freakish characters' pathetic lives better than they ever could. (Lorentzen 11)

- 7 Rimstead and Lorentzen contemplate Munro's narrator as the very instance of the emergence of a "lonely voice," to take up the title of Frank O'Connor's celebrated essay on the short story. Originating from a rural and initially underprivileged background, Munro's narrator is envisaged as looking at a submerged population group from the vantage point of her own emancipation and rise to middle-class prosperity and articulateness.
- 8 Such readings do not take into account the politics of ambiguity which suffuse both Tennyson's poems and Munro's stories to the extent that many readers do not comprehend the ideological work performed by the verse narrative and the short story alike. "The Princess," by Tennyson, endorses women's rights to higher education by displaying the establishment of a college run by and for women exclusively, but simultaneously shows the transformation of the head of college into a nurse and eventually an angel in the house. "Princess Ida" by Munro displays a mother figure who ventures on the high roads of rural Ontario to sell encyclopedias door to door to reticent farmers, who writes letters to the newspaper to champion women's higher education, but occasionally returns to the values of domesticity and small town doxa.
- 9 The poem and the story are equally conceived of as a juxtaposition of heterogeneous (and occasionally clashing) fragments: the subtitle of Tennyson's "Princess" is a "medley," and Munro resorts to the Proustian simile of the lantern slide to allude to the cropping up of stories in the young narrator's life: "scenes from the past were liable to pop up any time, like lantern slides, against the cluttered fabric of the present" (*LGW* 73). The narrator in Tennyson's poem, who is quite clearly Tennyson's persona, is required to create a summer's tale with a heroic female figure:

"And make her some great Princess, six feet high,
Grand, epic, homicidal"
(Tennyson, "The Princess")
- 10 The narrator adjusts to the circumstances of his visiting a neighboring estate to draw a portrait of the princess which is in keeping with the spirit of the place:

Heroic seems our Princess as required—
But something made to suit with Time and place,
A Gothic ruin and a Grecian house
(Tennyson, "The Princess")

- 11 The portrait of Munro's female character is also conceived of as a composite image in which the romantic and the classical are not opposite but coexist. This is the picture of the mother's fight for the education of the peasant population:

And in the meantime there was my mother, gamely lugging her case of books, gaining entry to their kitchens, their cold funeral-smelling front rooms, cautiously but optimistically opening fire on behalf of Knowledge. A chilly commodity that most people grown up, can agree to do without. But nobody will deny that it is a fine thing for children. My mother was banking on that. (LGW 64)

- 12 The portrait is grounded on heroic aggrandizement and conjures up classical images of a war goddess who has Athena's or Hippolyta's fighting spirit at the same time as Ulysses' cautiousness and cunning in an environment which is close to Gothic, with "cold funeral-smelling front rooms," but situated in the backwoods of rural Ontario instead of the Apennines. The comparison of both women to warriors cannot be bypassed: Tennyson's is equated with the most handsome warrior in the Trojan War:

A Memnon smitten with the morning Sun.
(Tennyson, "The Princess")

- 13 Munro's is presented as opening fire on her potential customers. Both of them are promoting the cause of women's rights. As Tennyson's Princess says, she intends:

To lift the woman's fallen divinity
Upon an even pedestal with man.
(Tennyson, "The Princess")

- 14 Similarly, Munro's Addie reproaches her daughter with wanting to hide her brains under a bushel to fall in step with small town ideas about the place of women in society in the mid-twentieth century. Both Ida and Addie are represented as fighting against the limitations imposed on women in their respective environment. In both cases their fight is ambiguously endorsed by their respective narrators, who represent the heroine as a woman of mettle who is praise-worthy, but at the same time they critique and openly burlesque her.

- 15 Given the classical framework of the poem and the story, I would like to demonstrate the ambiguous positioning of both narrators, by starting with the assessment of female qualities, which is set down by Aristotle in his *Rhetoric* and translated into French by Françoise Frontisi Ducroux:

Pour le sexe féminin, les qualités corporelles sont la beauté et la taille, les qualités morales sont la tempérance et le goût du travail sans rien de servile.⁶

- 16 Both Ida and Addie similarly fall into and swerve from the categories set down by Aristotle for the feminine ideal. Ida is remarkably tall:

[...] She stood
Among her Maidens, higher by the head,
(Tennyson, "The Princess")

- 17 Addie's height is not explicitly mentioned, but she is shown as cutting a mannish figure and there is nothing servile or ingratiating about either of these figures of authority. The Princess has a "steel temper" and is in charge of a woman's college of six hundred maidens. She emancipates herself from her mentor, Lady Blanche, eventually dismissing her, while Addie is similarly shown to emancipate herself from her own mother. Del, on the contrary, stands in awe and finds it more difficult to achieve her liberation from her mother: "Over all our expeditions and homecomings and the world

at large, she exerted that mysterious, appalling authority and nothing could be done about it, not yet." (LGW 68).

- 18 It is their authority which eventually disqualifies both women: Ida is reproached with being "crammed with erring pride" and unable to perceive her mistakes while Addie is shown to be eccentric and to pass judgments which are not corroborated by other people. More specifically in the case of the stories she narrates to her daughter about her own mother, she represents her as a villain who fell into bigotry and deprived her childhood of all enjoyment and happiness while the same woman is represented by Addie's brother as a saint who instilled love of life and hopefulness in her children's minds. Both Ida and Addie are shown to be blinded by ideology, deprived of wisdom, and lacking in temperance. Temperance or "sophrosyne," as Aristotle calls it, is the moral quality which prevents women from falling into excesses ("akolasia") and which ensures happiness for men and women.⁷
- 19 Because they are represented as falling short of the classical ideal they have implicitly set for themselves, both Ida and Addie become the butt of derisive or sardonic comments which equally emphasize their superior and suspicious status. Consider the comment passed by the Prince on Ida: "And so she wears her error like a crown/To blind the truth and me" (Tennyson, "The Princess"). And examine carefully the brief but vivid description of Addie's dress at the time when she gives a ladies' party in her own house, in Jubilee, a custom which is foreign to the town: "My mother was wearing a red dress semi-transparent covered with little black and blue pansies, like embroidery" (LGW 71).
- 20 This description creates an effect of resonance which extends further than Tennyson's portrait of the princess. If Addie is overtly drawn from the Princess, she is covertly delineated through mock-references to Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*. Munro acknowledged the fact that she was reading *A la recherche du temps perdu* at the time when she was writing *Lives of Girls and Women*⁸ and indeed some of Ida's features are clearly homologous with Odette's. Compare the description of Ada's dress with Odette's finery: "Une fois seulement elle laissa son mari lui commander une toilette toute criblée de paquerettes, de bleuets, de myosotis et de campanules d'après la Primavera du Printemps" (Proust 618). This motif of the dress covered with spring flowers is a literary topos which originates in the description of Andromaque in the *Illiad* weaving a crimson coloured fabric and intermingling bright and sparkling flowers on its surface.⁹ Munro appropriates this topos from *Mundus Muliebris* (the domain of women) and weaves her own fabric, a fabric which is obviously burlesque since she makes the narrator's aunt debunk its initial glory: "We thought it was beetles she had on that dress" whispered Aunt Elspeth to me. It gave us a start! After that it did seem to me that the party was less beautiful than I had supposed" (LGW 71). The introduction of the beetles literally belittles the Trojan and Botticellian motif and ridicules the mother by taking her down from her pedestal. Neither Botticelli's Primavera nor Queen Andromaque, Addie is twice deflated by being implicitly compared with a burlesque version of Odette de Crécy, the demi-mondaine, who is herself, at least at the beginning of her social ascent, a deflated version of the aristocratic duchess of Guermantes.
- 21 Contrary to Tennyson who documents the transformation of Princess Ida and her final reintegration into normative orthodoxy, Munro does not allow Addie to metamorphose into an icon of silenced womanhood, yet both Tennyson and Munro's strategies remain equally ambiguous. The Princess Ida's metamorphosis is so unlikely that it has been

interpreted as a strategy of concealment and she herself as an embodiment of crypto-feminism in the Victorian age.¹⁰ Addie's heterodoxy is equally puzzling and mysterious. The sense of an unsolved mystery is equally inscribed in the very construction of Munro's story since it finishes on a puzzle and a suspended resolution:

"There is an Egyptian god with four letters" said my mother frowning at the crossword "that I know I know and I cannot think of it to save my soul."
(LGW 89)

- 22 The young narrator provides "Isis" as an answer and is scornfully told off by her mother but the adequate answer is left in abeyance, a strategy very often used by Munro to inscribe latent meanings in her stories. The presence of another untold story under the manifest story is suggested through the references to Egypt which are recurrent. Addie's sister-in-law for example is called Nile: she dresses in green and uses the same matching colour to paint her nails. Should we try to answer the crossword puzzle which points towards Egyptian mythology, at least two answers to the mother's question are possible: Amon, whose name signifies the hidden one, also the invisible one, and who is the ancient universal god, the god for those who felt oppressed, or the god Seth who was jealous of his brother Osiris and eventually disposed of him by throwing him down the Nile in a wooden coffin (Vercoutter 1006-1016). Since the narrator's mother keeps evoking childhood memories in which she represents herself tortured by her own brother, even alluding to rape, the purpose of the unresolved crossword puzzle, ironically made of a four-letter word, may lie in an attempt at suggesting what cannot be decently uttered. Munro's strategy is allusive and "intraductive," to use one of Pascale Casanova's categories in *La République mondiale des lettres*. Munro brings into and around her specific plot an array or a medley of canonical references which work by analogy to reinforce or fill in the blanks in her own narration.
- 23 What are the consequences of such a multi-layered process of intraduction? Part of the answer might lie in the pinpointing of the type of autobiographical or semi-autobiographical process Munro resorts to. Through the character of Del Jordan, she mediates a child's accommodation to the stories of trauma related in a particular family, and through the multitextuality she alludes to, she extends the local stories into a global frame which is less related to aesthetic enthrallment than to ethical and political engagement with a universal lot. Munro engages with what George Eliot at the very beginning of *Romola* calls "the broad sameness of the human lot." From the banks of the Wawanash River, Munro journeys all the way across the Atlantic to the banks of the Nile to cast the rivalry between siblings in a frame which ensures the transformation of the autobiographical or semi-autobiographical into the mythical. She conflates the family and the literary descent, showing every woman in Del's family bearing the word from one generation to the other: Del's grandmother freely distributed Bibles to the whole community thanks to the money she had inherited, her mother sold encyclopedias, Del herself carries a Gothic novel in her head, while Munro eventually gives herself the role of Isis in a worldwide quest through which she collects and brings together as many fragments of the past from as many places and as many periods as possible in order to resurrect them in Jubilee. Munro allows Del's memories to be diffracted into a multitude of stories ranging from Victorian England to Ancient Greece and Egypt via Russia, the United States, and even China, since she also alludes to *The Good Earth* by Pearl Buck. In a very romantic fashion which is as closely affiliated with Tennyson as with Yeats ("Myself shall I remake") or with Goethe, Munro begets a

single bard-like persona who appropriates the multitextuality of world literature and synchronizes autobiographical or semi-autobiographical narrative with cosmogonic metanarratives.

- 24 Her appropriation of world literature is based on a process of resurgence of canonical texts within her own short story through displaced or disguised allusions and she goes as far as inscribing this resurrection through the use of a powerful self-reflexive allegory. During his unexpected visit to her mother's house in Jubilee, the narrator's uncle reminisces about a particular Easter Day in his childhood when he saw a butterfly emerge from a chrysalis. He resurrects on the occasion the words the defunct mother uttered: "Look at that. Never forget. This is what you saw on Easter" (LGW 88). The injunction about never forgetting is being relayed through the story narrated by the uncle and re-appropriated by the narrator. Not only does this allegory illustrate the ways and processes of Munro's fiction but it also performs a supplementary extension of the story's referential frame.
- 25 Munro relies upon an insect metaphor to reconfigure the deployment of her own story along a pictorial and bio-cultural axis. James Abbott Whistler is an American-born painter who is not only well known for the portrait he made of his mother, but also on account of the unusual signature he used on his canvasses: a butterfly signature to replace his name in order to enhance the decorative quality of his works.¹¹ We can posit the interpretative hypothesis that, with this reference to the butterfly, Munro is appropriating James Whistler via Marcel Proust in *A l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleur*. Consider for instance Proust's narrator's striking description of a butterfly in his bedroom at the Grand Hôtel in Balbec, when he himself creates an effect of a painting signed by Whistler:

Cependant qu'un petit papillon qui s'était endormi au bas de la fenêtre semblait apposer avec ses ailes, au bas de cette harmonie gris et rose dans le goût de celles de Whistler, la signature favorite du maître de Chelsea. (Proust 805)
- 26 Munro creates a symmetrically opposed picture: she reverses both Proust and Whistler's *Nocturne* by using her own narrator's uncle's memories of the awakening of the butterfly and his launching forth into the world. Her caterpillar, which is not set below the window but above the door, slowly comes out of its cocoon while a blizzard is raging outside, to figure the awakening of a new area and the possibility of resurrection on Easter Day.
- 27 This yellow butterfly conflates many fragmentary pieces and brings together a number of allusions: Nabokov is said to have used the character name Ada as a stand-in for a yellow butterfly and a yellow butterfly is also called a Carolina Sphinx moth. Thus Munro's yellow butterfly takes us back to the original enigma posed to Oedipus at the entrance to the city of Thebes by the Egyptian Sphinx. Munro is once more allowing words to be indexed to clandestine meanings. The incestuous relationship that the mother did not completely suppress from utterance but is reticent to put into words is obliquely allowed to resurface in a covert and displaced manner, mediated through the myth of Oedipus.
- 28 Close to the end of the story, Munro uses a simile which involves bird imagery:

Just before Fern came in one door and Owen came in the other, there was something in the room like the downflash of a wing or knife, a sense of hurt so strong, but quick and isolated, vanishing. (LGW 90)

- 29 In her own analysis of this story, Jennifer Murray rightly considers that "the associations opened up here are those of flight from pain, and, at the same time of hurt and symbolic castration, so that the image condenses the possibilities of escape and of reactivated pain and hurt to the self" (Murray 66). I would like to suggest further that this simile cannot be fully understood without being related to the poem by Tennyson which frames the story.
- 30 Tennyson compares the Lady Blanche to a vulture:
- Thereat the lady stretched a vulture throat
And shot from crooked lips a haggard smile
(Tennyson, "The Princess")
- 31 For this metaphor to be fully grasped, it is important to remember that the Lady Blanche was the Princess's substitute mother, a substitute mother she emancipated herself from and eventually dismissed, not without depriving her of her biological daughter, whom she was very much fond of, and desired to keep for herself as a companion. The metaphor of the vulture applied to Lady Blanche is remarkably ambiguous, since it characterizes the predatory instinct of the woman who is preyed upon and radically deprived. It seems to me that with the simile of the downflash of the wing or the knife Munro has borrowed from Tennyson the absolute violence of an all-encompassing predatory archaic instinct. Jennifer Murray considers that Munro's simile is the expression of the return of the repressed and a thinly veiled allusion to the rape the mother has endured. I tend to think that the simile is not limited to this single signification and may accommodate other interpretations. With the downflash of the wing or the knife, Munro may metaphorically inscribe rape into the sentence, but she may also allude to a more universal biological fact that concerns the mother/daughter relationship: that of the original severance of the child from the mother's body, and of their ensuing separate survival after the operation has been performed. She uses a simile that has deep evolutionary roots and potent chiasmic repercussions. By resorting to the conjunction "or," she envisages different possibilities which are connected because they are presented as an alternative. This alternative equates the bird's predatory act with the human's use of the knife: it performs an animalization of human existence and a humanization of animal life, which inscribes them along the same paradigmatic axis. Munro allows the canonical texts of western culture to migrate into her stories only to return readers to an anterior phase in the development of the species. She appropriates the monuments of culture, those of Proust and Tennyson among others, not to decorate her prose or increase her cultural credit, but paradoxically to cite primal history and to keep track of the foundational savagery of beginnings.
- 32 Through the canonical texts of culture she explicitly resorts to, through the paintings she conceals between the lines of her story, through the vertiginous multiplicity of intertextual allusions she clandestinely makes reference to, Munro constructs a complex and powerful palimpsest, based on a hermeneutic of continuity which reaches further than the syncretism of the western canon and its transposition in southwestern Ontario. Her heightened awareness of the primitive nature of emotions allows her to record the lines of evolutionary descent and to inscribe phylogenetics in her delineation of human action and motivation. By recording primitive predatory instinctual behaviour alongside and within the works of art she herself captures and incorporates, she self-reflexively articulates the archaic. She inscribes a primal past in

the present that resonates with ambiguity because it represents "culture articulated at the point of its erasure" (Bhabha 132). In between the lines of her story that silently delineate an exacerbated sense of hurt, there appears an uncanny otherness, a riddle, a hieroglyph, that reaches back to unexplainable atavistic violence.

- 33 In the final analysis, the transatlantic dimension of Munro's story is not only to be grasped through the canonical discourses she transfers from Europe to Ontario and in the burlesque contestation she engages in. It principally lies in her strategy to use these discourses for "articulating contradictory and coeval statements" (Bhabha 132). With the downflash of a wing or a knife, she simultaneously splits open and confirms the authority of culture to assert the permanence of the link between the animal and the human; she equally accounts for her severance from the maternal body and for her reverence for a princess who remains first and foremost, *princeps*.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Auden, W. H. "Tennyson." *Forewords and Afterwords*. New York: Random House, 1973.
- Bhabha, Homi. *The Location of Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1994.
- Casanova, Pascale. *La République mondiale des lettres*. Paris: Points Essais, 2008.
- Denecke, Daniel. "The Motivation of Tennyson's Reader: Privacy and the Politics of Literary Ambiguity in *The Princess*." *Victorian Studies* Volume 43, Number 2 (Winter 2001): 201-227.
- Eliot, George. *Romola* [1863]. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1980.
- Faulkner, William. *As I Lay Dying* [1930]. New York: Vintage, 1985.
- Frontisi-Ducroux, Françoise. *Ouvrages de dames, Ariane, Hélène, Pénélope*. Paris: Seuil, 2009.
- Gault, Cinda. "The Two Addies: Maternity and Language in William Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying* and Alice Munro's *Lives of Girls and Women*." *American Review of Canadian Studies* 36- 3 (2006): 440-457.
- Jobert, Barthélémy. "Whistler James Abbott McNeill — (1834-1903)." *Encyclopædia Universalis* [en ligne], consulted August 22, 2012. URL <https://nomade.univ-tlse2.fr:443/http/www.universalis-edu.com/encyclopedie/james-abbott-whistler/v>
- Joyce, James. *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. London: Heinemann Educational Books. 1964.
- Lorentzen, Christian. "Poor Rose." Rev. of *Dear Life*, by Alice Munro. *London Review of Books* 35 (6 June 2013): 11-12.
- Minor, Kyle. "Today in Silly Book Reviews : Let us All Fight About Alice Munro." Rev. of *Dear Life*, by Alice Munro. *Salon* Monday 10 June 2013.12June2013. http://www.salon.com/2013/06/10/in_defense_of_alice_munro/
- Munhall, Elizabeth. *Whistler et Montesquiou : le papillon et la chauve-souris*. Paris: Flammarion, 1995.
- Munro, Alice. *Lives of Girls and Women*. Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1971.

Murray, Jennifer. "'Like the Downflash of a Wing or Knife': Repression, Sublimation, and the Return of the Repressed in Alice Munro's 'Princess Ida.'" *The Short Stories of Alice Munro*. Special Issue. Ed. Héliane Ventura. *Journal of the Short Story in English* 55 (Autumn 2010): 55-69.

Redekop, Magdalene. *Mothers and Other Clowns: The Stories of Alice Munro*. London: Routledge, 1992.

Rimstead, Roxanne. *Remnants of Nation : On Poverty Narratives by Women*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001.

Proust, Marcel. *A la recherche du temps perdu*, sous la direction de Pierre Clarac et André Ferré. I, *Du côté de chez Swann, A l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleur*. La Pléiade. Paris: Gallimard, 1954.

Struthers, J. R. (Tim). "Alice Munro and the American South." *The Canadian Review of American Studies* 2 (Fall 1975): 196-204.

---. "The Real Material: An Interview with Alice Munro." *Probable Fictions: Alice Munro's Narrative Acts*. Ed. Louis K. MacKendrick. Toronto: ECW Press, 1983.

Tennyson, Alfred. "The Princess." 185-296. *The Poems of Tennyson*. Vol. 2. Ed. Christopher Ricks. Berkeley: U of California Press, 1987.

Vercoutter, Jean. "L'Égypte Antique." La religion égyptienne. *Encyclopedia Universalis* 7. Paris : EU, 1990, 1006-1016.

NOTES

1. The connection between Munro and the American South has been often demonstrated by a number of critics. An early example would be "Alice Munro and the American South" by Tim Struthers. More recently Cinda Gault has shown that not only were there at least two Addies, Addie Bundren and Addie Jordan, but also two Dells, Dewey Dell Bundren and Del Jordan, for whom motherhood is equally a dilemma that neither of them solves by the end of her story.

2. See in particular Magdalene Redekop's analysis of onomastics: "The name Del forms part of the name Adelaide, reflecting the difficulty a woman has in saying I when her identity threatens to merge with that of her mother" (63).

3. See Denecke 201-227.

4. Christian Lorentzen is particularly acerbic and critical of Munro's stories, more specifically of the Rose stories. In his recent book review of *Dear Life* he declares: "And Munro's incessant reworking of the material in *The Beggar Maid* has had the odd effect of diluting the original; later versions of the first sexual encounter story (Rose is molested by a minister on a train; she's disgusted but also likes it, 'victim and accomplice'), or the adultery story, or the stale marriage story, or the lonely single mother story, don't so much enhance the originals as point up their flaws, making them seem even more schematic." It is interesting to read Kyle Minor's defence of Munro which immediately followed Lorentzen's attack against her.

5. See Daniel Denecke's illuminating analysis of the poem, and of the critical responses it elicited.

6. "For women, the corporal qualities are beauty and height, the moral qualities are temperance and taste for work without servility" (my translation from the French version of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* (I, 5, 1361 a) as translated from the Greek and analysed by Françoise Frontisi Ducroux : Frontisi Ducroux 9).

7. See the analysis provided by Fontisi Ducroux on page 9.

8. See the interview with Struthers: "Well I was reading Proust all the time I was writing *Lives of Girls and Women*—[laughter] reading him mostly for encouragement because I used to worry about going into too much detail about things [...] There's an enormous reassurance there that anything is worth attention. And I love that about him" (14). To my knowledge, no critic in

Canada has ever documented Proust's influence on Munro, despite her clear acknowledgment of this transatlantic migration.

9. The *Illiad*, XXII, 441, as quoted by Frontisi on page 59.

10. See the already quoted interpretation of Daniel Denecke, which is particularly illuminating.

11. For a comparative essay on Whistler's life and works see in particular the volume by Elizabeth Munhall entitled *Whistler et Montesquiou : le papillon et la chauve-souris*.

AUTHORS

HÉLIANE VENTURA

Héliane Ventura is Professor of Contemporary Literature in English at the University of Toulouse 2 Le Mirail. Her research is mainly centered on the short story written by women in the contemporary English-speaking world, exploring the rewriting of the canon, the resurgence of images and the emergence of transatlantic literatures. She has recently devoted her research to Aboriginal writing and has written articles on Pauline Johnson, Eden Robinson and Tomson Highway. Since 2010, she has edited several volumes on *Hybridation Multiculturalisme et Postcolonialisme*, (P.U. Orléans), *Resurgence in Jane Urquhart's Oeuvre* (Peter Lang), *The Short Stories of Alice Munro (The Journal of the Short Story in English)*, and *Pratiques de la Transgression dans la littérature et les arts visuels* (Presses de l'Instant Même, Quebec).