Introduction

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INTRODUCTION

This issue of *Revue Etudes Canadiennes/ Canadian Studies*, (n°77) is devoted to Alice Munro's short fiction writing and particularly to her first set of short-stories *Dance of the Happy Shades*¹.

You might say our *Revue* - which is dedicated for once to a Canadian author who is not a household name in France -, is printed very timely at the same time as it is probably too late. Indeed students taking the *agrégation d'anglais* in 2015 (a competitive advanced state exam for English secondary school teachers and university readers) are gladly discovering Alice Munro's *Dance of the Happy Shades*. This is a small « victory » for Canadian studies scholars in France as Canadian literature is rarely acknowledged or taught in our English Studies departments in European universities.

Some might observe that it comes too late as Alice Munro received the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2013 already. This as we all know was a first for a Canadian author, leading observers to wonder if Canadian literature might be less « international » than other literatures in English.

So taking into account this « renewed » interest in Canadian literature in France and in Europe, we wished to encourage contributors to think along two lines when we set up this call for articles. First we wondered how Canadian, Munro's writing was indeed (either in form or content), looking principally at her début story collection, *Dance of the Happy Shades*. Second of all, we invited academics to consider if Canadian literature in English was « less visible » than other English-speaking literatures in our university curricula.

I believe our readers will be fascinated by this series of remarkable papers on Munro's prose, style and motifs. All of them renew the traditional readings of Munro's short fiction writing, particularly thanks to their original close-reading of her texts.

First comes Professor Reingard Nischik's contribution which focuses on the virtuosity of Munro's short story poetics. R. Nischik analyses among other things how Munro breaks with traditional rules of short story writing. The scope of her paper written by a renowned academic in the field of Canadian literature, led us to place it at the beginning of this volume. Then Kelly

¹ I would like to thank Professor Charlotte Sturgess from Strasbourg University for her precious help and support in putting together this volume.

INTRODUCTION

MacPhail examines how Munro re-evaluates mid-twentieth century ideals of progress by illuminating the effects of a growing urban consciousness bound to forever change Canada, particularly in *Dance of the Happy Shades*. The complexities of progress often result, K. MacPhail argues, in a troubling centralized control that attempts to domesticate wilderness areas, animals, and human bodies. Third, Anca-Raluca Radu displaces the traditional feminist reading of Munro's short fictions towards another less-familiar gendered reading. A-R Radu focuses on Munro's representation of masculinity. Her essay investigates the way in which the men in Munro's stories participate in and relate to the discourse of "hegemonic masculinity" and how the stories outline moments of male crisis. Fourth, Carolyn Masel brings an Australian perspective on Munro's prose. Her essay connects the preoccupations of *Dance of the Happy Shades* with the creation of protagonists whose independence of mind is their only weapon against the larger forces of coercion. According to C. Masel, both coercion and Munro's strategies of resistance remain live issues, for Canadian and non-Canadian readers. Last in this series of enlightening and original contributions, readers will be highly interested in Thomas Dutoit's very close-reading of Munro's prose. T. Dutoit is fascinated by the Canadianess of her writing, which attests to a conception of geological time upon which is placed a shallow and ephemeral architectural world, the traces of which Munro, he argues, passionately attempts to secure from their fast-approaching disappearance. With him we discover Munro's "Ontario geolithic"!

Last but not least, this volume closes on a very interesting paper in which our young colleague Pierre-Alexandre Beylier presents the conclusions of his doctoral thesis (« La frontière Canada/États-Unis depuis le 11 septembre 2001 : mutations et continuité ») ; a research for which he received a distinction for Best Dissertation by our French Association in Canadian Studies, in March 2014.

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Editor