

O. V. Babenko,

National university of life and environmental sciences of Ukraine, Kyiv

UNKNOWN WORLD LITERATURE: A SHORT STORY «TO REACH JAPAN» BY ALICE MUNRO

Стаття присвячена творчості сучасної канадської англомовної письменниці Еліс Манро, її авторському стилю. Зосереджено увагу на різноманітних психологічних станах головної героїні твору, їх опису засобами мови.

Ключові слова: канадська проза, авторський стиль, коротке оповідання, стилістичні прийоми.

Статья посвящена творчеству современной канадской англоязычной писательницы Элис Манро, её авторскому стилю. Большое внимание уделено многообразию психологических состояний главной героини произведения, их описанию средствами языка.

Ключевые слова: канадская проза, авторский стиль, короткий рассказ, стилистические приёмы.

The article is devoted to the works of a contemporary Canadian English-language writer Alice Munro, her author's style. Much attention is paid to the variety of psychological states of a main character of the short story, their description by language means.

Keywords: Canadian prose, author's style, short story, stylistic devices.

2013 will remain forever in the history of Canadian literature. Alice Munro became the first Canadian English-language writer and the 13th woman to receive the Nobel Prize in Literature (2013).

A. Munro began writing stories as a teenager but success came at the age of 37 with the story collection «Dance of the Happy Shades». She shares Chekhov's obsession with time and our much-lamented inability to delay or prevent its relentless movement forward [6].

Researches on Munro's works have been presented since the early 1970s in Ph.D. theses, international conferences, thematic journals in Canada and some other countries.

A literary critic from Ukraine, Yaroslav Holoborod'ko, says, «Alice Munro's key characters are often women. She conveys the physiology of nature and the inner world of a female nature. A woman in her stories is almost always dependent – dependent from the problems of a man. And Munro recognizes the legitimacy and, obviously, the fundamental need for such relationships. A woman in her works is for a family life and cares, though not for the fact that she will find what she seeks in the family. It's vivid that a woman in Munro's stories due to some subconscious force searches for him – her husband, and if it's to speak more general – the only once chosen woman's lover [2].»

A. Anisimov and A. Vasilyeva emphasize that A. Munro's works are a great example of modern prose style for women [1, p.11].

Characterizing herself as a Canadian writer she says, «I am intoxicated by this particular landscape... I speak the language. The language she may have learned from the «brick houses, the falling-down barns, the trailer parks, burdensome old churches, Wal-Mart and Canadian Tire [5].»

This article claims to focus on compositional elements and linguo-stylistic features in a short story «To reach Japan» by Alice Munro.

The latest short story collection «Dear Life» (2012) by Alice Munro is interesting to readers and admirers of her creativity, as it reflects the highest level of her literary mastership as a writer. This collection includes two parts. The first part consists of ten short stories, and in the last part of «Dear Life» Munro introduces the closing stories as «autobiographical in feeling, though not, sometimes entirely so in fact [5].»

In the first story collection «To reach Japan» we may find all short stories six basic elements such as a setting, a conflict, a plot, characters and character development, a theme and a point of view. The plot of the story centers round the intriguing relationships between Greta and her husband Peter. The story is not so much plot driven, as it is character driven. The tone is dour, but not slow; Munro moves the stories craftily.

At the beginning of the narration readers see how this couple is completely opposite: he's the practical engineer who likes useful things, while she likes to dramatize and romanticize things, reading «Paradise Lost» [4]. They differ from each other in appearance: 'his light-colored skin was never flushed like hers, never blotchy from the sun, but evenly tanned whatever the season.' While she might get emotional, living from extremes, he's flat – always solid, but always the same [7]. Men marry women with the hope they will never change. Women marry men with the hope they will change. And they are both disappointed.

No doubts Greta is craving for something new, extraordinary and emotional in her life. Being fed up with the routine daily life and having a chance to change something in her female destiny, she makes up her mind to write a message to a familiar journalist Harris in Toronto.

«Writing this letter is like putting a note in a bottle –

And hoping

It will reach Japan».

A message like that would make anyone madly curious.

While travelling by train to Toronto Greta and her daughter Katy make friends with two young actors, one of whom Greta has a sudden fling with. She's left Katy in her compartment, asleep. After that she is exhilarated, «weak, shocked, but buoyant, like some gladiator – she actually thought this out and smiled at it – after a session in the arena [3].» And then, back to the compartment, where the unthinkable has happened: Katy is gone. «And there, between the cars, on one of those continually noisy sheets of metal – there sat Katy. Eyes wide open and mouth slightly open, amazed and alone. Not crying at all, but when she saw her mother she started [7].»

The description of Greta's reaction is quick, direct, and harrowing, beginning with, simply, «She went crazy». She finally finds Katy in the cold, noisy area between two cars, «not crying, not complaining, as if she was just to sit there forever and there was to be no explanation offered to her, no hope [7].»

The image of Katy stuck between the train cars is very powerful, but there are more hidden images blended in that add to the story.

Throughout the story we cannot help thinking that there are some symbolic characters. They are nature, a train, a railway road.

Firstly, the weather: Her dreaming of this new man is described as being «like the Vancouver weather – a dismal sort of longing, a rainy dreamy sadness, a weight shifted round her heart». But then, as the summer is starting to give her some options there is «a

clear break in the weather, an access of boldness». And when she arrives at the train station in Toronto: «the day was dark, with summer thunder and lightning. Katy had never seen such commotion». The scenery from the train is also vividly described by the author: while the adulterous events and the subsequent daughter's missing are happening, the train is going through the Rocky Mountains, the aftermath happens while going through the prairies, and after that there is just black spruce that goes on forever [8]. The train, rail roads symbolize long term changes in the life of a main character.

Munro doesn't continue the story, an abrupt ending follows. Readers can only predict the future events. The author uses expressive means and stylistic devices skillfully to describe characters and impress readers which are becoming so close to the characters.

So, on the lexical level several layers of words are found. The bulk of the vocabulary is represented by neutral and colloquial words. As events take place in Canada the author uses a number of proper names and Americanisms such as North Vancouver, Lions, Gate Bridge, Stanley Park last fall, did get. Specific atmosphere of the story is created with the help of emotive and highly colloquial words, for example, sullenly relentlessly, fire off, crash into, sleek, snooty, to throw her any old bone of conversation.

A semasiological level is characterized by a great number of stylistic devices such as metaphors (Noise seeped out around the closed door, People's eyes slid round her), logical comparison (Modern houses, picture windows, as in any up-and-coming suburb), litotes (and was not unhappy to think that), simile (looked like pink lemonade, his opinions were something like his complexion), epithets (a thirsty gulp, the long hot walk, the long solitary ride home, a giddy atmosphere, dull clumping feet, a scorching shame, peering, whimsical turns of phrase, waning afternoon, ferocious noise),

On the syntactical level we find climax (Not noticing, not intruding, not suggesting, though in every single household skill or art she left her daughter-in-law far behind), antithesis (the atmosphere was pleasant though the talk was boring), anticlimax (The outside air had altered her mood, from an unsettled elation to something within reach of embarrassment, even shame), parallelism (He didn't see the point in going further. He watched television; he read a book in somewhat the same way. He had patience with such things.), repetition (The people who did it did their best but their best was not good enough so it fell down).

Alice Munro uses rhetoric questions to convey complex human feelings in a simple way (Nobody looked at her with any recognition or pleasure, and why should they?; Was she satisfied?; And what about her poetry?). Author's graphic forms also contribute to the expressiveness of the narration:

«It was not the same thing, he said.

No?

No».

Due to these linguistic resources the atmosphere of the story is very emotional and strained from the beginning of the story to the end.

The plot of the analyzed short story is formed by overlapping fable lines, situations, characters with the help of principles of contrast and intertextuality, makes the global image, where the dominant is a human mental-psyche being. The tone of narration is semi-detached portraying the kind of unglamorous lives associated with Canada.

The author's concept of a personality, which arranges the structure of the short story, is revealed through a synthesis of the lyric and melodramatic discourses, reflecting in the image-motive and chronotopic levels of the text. Using uncomplicated language, the author moves effortlessly around in time and place.

To sum up, we may assume that there are some specific structural features which are typical of the analyzed text: the abrupt beginning, little people prospects, description of a fateful episode in a person's life, and the abrupt ending. Munro's short stories are finely crafted. They're about people more than things, yet the characters are unambitious, reserved folk, content to remain in their narrative for years unnumbered. The author teaches us to think about the fragility of people's lives, their love, their possibilities. The most typical features of her style are imagery, simplicity, symbolism.

Thus, we see the perspectives of a further research in terms of complex linguo-stylistic analysis on some other Alice Munro's short stories. It makes sense to pay more attention to translation of her works into Slavic languages. Not so many of them were translated. In post-Soviet countries a wide circle of readers is familiar with a few translations («Face» and «Boys and Girls») into Ukrainian and Russian.

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