

The Figures of Death in Alice Munro's The Dance of the Happy Shades

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Abstract

Death is a day to day event around the world whether it is preferred or not. The epiphanic revelations related to death play a major role in various facets of lives of human beings, which is artistically focused in the Dance of the happy shades by Alice Munro.

Keywords: epiphanic, Alice Munro, Happy Shades, Gothic fiction, spiritual manifestation.

Death is a day to day event around the world whether it is preferred or not. The epiphanic revelations related to death play a major role in various facets of the lives of human beings, which is artistically focused in the Dance of the happy shades by Alice Munro. In an interview with Graeme Gibson, Alice Munro said,

I'm not a writer who is very concerned with ideas. I'm not an intellectual writer. I'm very, very excited by what you might call the surface of life, and it must be that this seems to me meaningful in a way I can't analyze and describe. (Gibson Eleven Canadian novelists 241).

It is important for Munro to recall even the minutest detail which might help to picture and portray the human emotions and predicaments. She unwraps and rips off layers of experience meticulously like an artist who expresses a keen insight of his situation through a particular brush stroke, texture or color. Munro admires the work of Canadian painters Alex Colville, Jack Chambers and Tom Forrestal who create the something noteworthy from the run of the mill, ordinary common scenes and objects; a significance which is not deliberately articulated but sensitively experienced or sensed by the observer. Alice Munro just like the artists of her admiration practices a unique technique of writing which specifically highlights and expresses the memories of her childhood and her experiences in South-, Western Ontario which is mentioned below in her own words.

"I mean the part of the country I come from is Gothic. You can't get it all down."(Gibson, Eleven Canadian novelists 243.).

The term Gothic fiction refers to a style of writing that is characterized by elements of fear, horror, death, and gloom, as well as romantic elements, such as nature, individuality, and very high emotion. These emotions can include fear and suspense. The use of the word "Gothic" significantly reveals the fact that Munro is a writer with a particular vision and not of ideas. This vision rejects an extensive manipulation of image and symbol, relying more on the significance of what is there. In an essay written for "The Narrative Voice," Munro explains that

I do think symbols exist, or rather, that things are symbolic, but I think that their symbolism is infinitely complex and never completely discovered. (Munro, The Narrative Voice, 132)

Nothing is simple or obvious in Munro's imaginative world; the power of her writing is created by the revelations which come from everyday life.

"Poets are linguistically aware, intensely aware, of the pathos of our situation as sentient beings, swimming in time," says Wallace-Crabbe. Alice Munro, as per the well-expressed quote of Wallace-Crabbe shines like a fine poetic star who responds poetically and artistically to temporality as a creative and motivating attitude. She pitches her portrayal of stories with sparkles of epiphanic moments linked with silence/death shaping temporality through the rhythms of narration as a means of exerting a bit of control over time.

This Chapter aims to highlight and discuss the epiphanic moments linked with *"The Figures of Death in Alice Munro's Dance of the Happy Shades."*

Epiphany in Alice Munros' stories

David Arnason defines epiphany in Munro's stories as *"A moment of insight that changes forever the way the narrator can see the world."* Marjorie Garson speaks of *"flashes of clear-sightedness that enable the heroine to wake up and move on,"* hence the recurrence of images of light and shadow in the stories. In *Boys and Girl*", the epiphany comes rather in a flash of action as the girl *"lets the horse go"* (Munro, *Dance of the happy shades* 125). Improved vision on the mode of the narrators' lives stimulated by this epiphany often leads to nuisance or an unwelcome exposure as, in *Walker Brothers Cowboy*, the comprehension of something you will never know, silence in *Images*, or an insight into the character's tender spot as on *Sunday Afternoon*. At times as an alternative of providing a higher level of ethical or emotional evolution, the epiphany occasionally twists out to be more or less exactly the opposite of epiphany, as in *An Ounce of Cure* in which the narrator gets "a glimpse of the shameless, absurdity", Once again the oxymoron occurs at a key moment in the narrative. The magic lies in this balancing, this sometimes paradoxical blending of

the ordinary and the extraordinary. Alice Munro serves delicate episodes in her stories revealing the subtle and dramatic use of extended images which stimulates an innate consciousness of the impact of each story. She handles her themes with subtle humor, irony and sympathetic perception delivery her message or vision to her readers. Ahead to this vision or message delivered to the readers, her works connect the characters 'experience with the readers, making them recognize the moment their perspective of the current situation is changed or altered, contributing to both a significant or fresh conception of the world. This occurrence might best be described as an epiphany, a moment which James Joyce defined as a "sudden spiritual manifestation" and Munro, admits her lack of ability to make images, to a certain extent she finds them inborn in her narratives. She does not consciously maneuver images but "finds" them, through her ability to explore the surface of life.

The stories in her first collection, *Dance of the Happy Shades*, are epiphanic in a straightforward, Joycean kind of way—at the end, characters come to on-the-page realizations about the things they've witnessed throughout the story. A few people have criticized Munro for holding fast to the "epiphany" short story approach, but that seems to be the nature of short stories. You get an idea across, and usually, it does involve the main character either revealing something hidden about themselves (to the reader) or realizing profound something about them.

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