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Adverbials of Time, Time Expressions and Tense Shifts in Alice Munro's "Dance of the Happy Shades"

ABSTRACT

Alice Munro, the first female Canadian to have been awarded the Nobel Prize for literature, is a literary challenge and delight for the reader also with regards to the usage of references to time and their linguistic construction. Her literary work comprises short stories and one novel, which can more accurately be described as a short story cycle. She takes interest in everyday, small-town life and the human relationships in it, all described in concise, down-to-earth language. The settings in most of her stories are limited communities in a typically Canadian context. This paper deals with her short story "Dance of the Happy Shades" from the collection of the same name (1968), and focuses on a stylistic analysis of time expressions, tense shifts and adverbials of time. Munro has been praised for constructing moods of familiarity, home and small-town safety. The paper attempts to show that she achieves this not solely through the plot and themes, but also with the meticulous care with which she uses time expressions, time adverbials and tense shifts.

Keywords: Alice Munro, **"**Dance of the Happy Shades", stylistics, adverbials of time, time expressions, tense shifts

Časovni prislovi, izražanje časa in menjavanje slovničnih časov v zgodbi Alice Munro "Dance of the Happy Shades"

IZVLEČEK

Pisanje Alice Munro, prve Kanadčanke, ki je prejela Nobelovo nagrado za književnost, predstavlja literarni izziv in užitek za bralca tudi v smislu rabe časovnih referenc in njihovih jezikovnih konstrukcij. Literarni opus Alice Munro sestavljajo kratke zgodbe in roman oz. cikel kratkih zgodb. Avtorica se v njih osredotoča na vsakdanje življenje v majhnem mestu in tamkajšnje človeške odnose, vse to pa opisuje v prizemljenem, na videz jedrnatem jeziku. Večina njenih zgodb se odvija v majhnih, tipično kanadskih skupnostih. Pričujoči prispevek obravnava kratko zgodbo »Dance of the Happy Shades« iz zbirke z istim naslovom (1968) in v njej slogovno analizira časovne prislove, izražanje časa in menjavanje slovničnih časov. Alice Munro slovi po tem, da zna ustvariti občutek domačnosti in varnosti, ki sta značilni za majhno skupnost. Prispevek pokaže, da tega ne doseže zgolj skozi dogodke in teme, ampak tudi z načinom izražanja časa in uporabe časovnih prislovov ter menjavanjem slovničnih časov.

Ključne besede: Alice Munro, »Dance of the Happy Shades«, stilistika, časovni prislovi, izražanje časa, menjave slovničnih časov

1 Introduction

A fascination with time, the various ways of expressing it as well as consciously elaborating on this fascination are frequently present in literary texts. Authors often refer to its unavoidable passing, like Andrew Marvell in his poem "To His Coy Mistress": "But at my back I always hear/Time's wingèd chariot hurrying near" (Marvell 1681), or wittily express alienation, like Tennessee Williams in Tom's utterance from the final scene of *The Glass Menagerie*: "I didn't go to the moon, I went much further – for time is the longest distance between places" (Williams 1999, 1379). The dangers of interfering with time, even in a supernatural way, are reflected in the words of Albus Dumbledore, the famous headmaster of Hogwarts from the *Harry Potter* series: "Mysterious thing, Time. Powerful, and when meddled with, dangerous" (Cuarón 2004). Time is a complex structure to present and use creatively in narration and thus requires considerable mastery of language and storytelling, yet in Munro's writing it seems natural and seamless in the way it supports the flow of events and helps to lead the reader's attention to certain moments in the stories' present. Her narration keeps the reader in coherence with the timeline, while subtly manipulating time. She has a way of presenting time with linguistic means and creating a gateway for the reader into the story, making them feel as if the events are happening as the reader proceeds through the narrative. She achieves that by shifting tenses from past to present, creating the distinct step into the *now* of the story. She also links Simple Past and Present Perfect in a strategic way that corresponds to the classic grammatical use of perfect tenses, yet applied in her manner to weave a particular atmospheric effect of generational cosiness. In "Dance of the Happy Shades", she describes how mothers and daughters take part in the same rituals in the same places and situations. The ritual of going to the same hairdresser, the same piano teacher or the same dentist for generations automatically spells the familiarity that is the focus of this paper, since it conceives a time frame without specifically mentioning dates or using explicit linguistic categories expressing time. These are only some of the most salient stylistic devices Munro uses when exploring time and which will be analysed in this paper on the example of the story "Dance of the Happy Shades". Munro also orchestrates a whole lifetime passing and changing in the brief duration of the story, while still according it greater significance than just the sum of passing minutes, as observed by Inas Hassan: "Each of Munro's stories is an attempt to survey the lives of girls and women in particular in an expanded way, presenting a whole life, not just the epiphany of the moment which is the key characteristic of the short story" (2020, 1216).

This paper addresses the fictional creation of a sense of time, primarily with the use of time adverbials and other expressions of time in the selected story from her first collection. The choice of text was based on its conformist narrative usage of time in Munro's early writing, which indicates her fascination with simple, everyday occurrences, rituals and social gatherings from an early stage in her publishing, and which seems to have remained in Munro's writing throughout her career. In compliance with this stylistic principle, "simple, everyday" time is ingrained in her early writing and thus in this story.

2 "Dance of the Happy Shades" and Munro's Writing Style

"Dance of the Happy Shades" was published in Munro's first short story collection of the same name by Ryerson Press in 1968 (Shearer 2015, 195) and won the 1968 Governor

General's Award for English Fiction. The story revolves around an annual recital organised by a seemingly naive piano teacher whose passage through life is represented through the changes occurring from year to year at the recital. Her shrinking housing, downsized from the previous location, the health deterioration of her sister and the snacks that remain unfashionably the same illustrate the subtle way in which Munro spins time into her narrative web to make the reader subconsciously aware of it. A significant juxtaposition in the story is created in the scene of the performing children when a special-needs pupil delivers the best performance of all the participating children.[1] To Miss Marsalles, such unexpected talent is the simple reward of a lifetime of service to art and not a discordant terminal marker in the temporal flow of her life. As Munro's narrator constructs it, however, the unusual event punctuates fictive temporal flow, casting a retrospective glance back over the decades of change that have been mediated by adverbials and verb tenses.

Dance of the Happy Shades (the collection and its title story) forms part of the greater Canadian opus of short stories that spans centuries. As Michelle Gadpaille (1989, 11–12) states in her overview of the Canadian short story, it goes back to Thomas McCulloch and Thomas Chandler Haliburton in the 19th century, then over the comic touch of Stephen Leacock and all the way to turn-of-the century writers like Isabella Valancy Crawford and Susie Frances Harrison, and then to 20th-century masters like Mavis Gallant, Margaret Atwood and Alice Munro.

Both Canadian geography and colonial culture have been evoked to explain the nation's rich and prolific production in short fiction; theories by authors like W. H. New (1986, 8) suggest that the popularity of the short story in Canada results from a marginalized colonial culture and a marginalised genre. It is, however, clear that this genre has long moved to the central place in Canadian literature and has acquired a status that many contemporary writers have consolidated. One of the most visible authors, apart from Munro, is Margaret Atwood, who became "a voice of Canada" with "her ability to serve up quips, her outright humour, and her genius at interweaving the past and the present, even as she explores modern Canadian myths" (Onič et al. 2020, 38). The genre itself seems to have been influenced by the way foreign observers see the world through their culture. Gerald Lynch (2001) points out that short fiction enables Canadian writers to work with subversive irony in a form that is not the dominant genre in the overwhelming culture to the south or in the colonial homeland of Great Britain. In "Dance of the Happy Shades" the short story demonstrates its capacity to express both the rootedness in community, their culture and their rituals flowing through time and a broader Canadian cultural framework.

Munro, as one of the most salient writers of the Canadian short story, displays these roots in culture, particularly in the culture and thoughts of ordinary people. "Labelled a 'post-modernist' author, or a writer of 'magic realism', Alice Munro has been praised for her vivid and lifelike descriptions of ordinary people and settings in her fiction" (Powell 2008, 12), and as Bosman (2013, 121) further suggests, her work has been described as revolutionizing the architecture of short stories, especially in its tendency to move forward and backward in time. Munro

[1] For a discussion of this story's treatment of Down Syndrome and dementia, see Marlene Goldman. 2016. "Re-imagining Dementia in the Fourth Age: The Ironic Fictions of Alice Munro," *Sociology of Health & Illness* 39 (2): 285–302.

has been the recipient of many literary prizes such as the 2013 Nobel Prize in Literature, the 2009 Man Booker International Prize for her lifetime body of work, three Canada's Governor General's Awards for fiction, the Writers' Trust of Canada's 1996 Marian Engel Award, and the 2004 Rogers Writers' Trust Fiction Prize for *Runaway*. As highlighted in this paper, her writing style is recognised as presenting an illusion of the comfortable and familiar.

Throughout Munro's stories, intangible impulses between the protagonist and some other element – other characters, the past, a code of morality or behaviour – shift between the rational and the irrational, between the familiar comfortable world and uncertainty and illusion − to create a tension which gives Munro's writing its haunting and disturbing quality (Pfaus 1984, 23).

Munro has herself pointed to the fact that she enjoys meddling with time in her narration, allowing time and its expressions in her stories a way to create her own unmistakeable style:

> In commenting on her writing technique, Munro explains that she never adopts a chronological or linear development. Munro's stories are not meant to be read in the traditional way from beginning to end. Though traditional short stories are conventionally characterized by unity of time and place, the contrary is found in Munro's collections. (Hassan 2020, 1216)

The connection of the familiar and the comfortable with time in Munro's writing is evident from the observations of both literary critics and readers. Considering her passion for manipulating time, it makes sense to consider time in literature as a concept. In his overview paper on concepts of time and literary criticism, Carsten Elbro (1986, 99–100) categorizes views on time into three general views: the idealist, the realist and the relational one. In this paper, time in Munro's writing is viewed as relational: "time is a result of the interaction between man and his surroundings" (Elbro 1986, 100), and it will be demonstrated that the repeated actions and observations of the characters create the steady flow of time in the story.

3 Representation of Time in "Dance of the Happy Shades"

Munro's characters in "Dance of the Happy Shades" are ordinary people, who perceive time by observing the ordinary moments around them. They live from annual recital to annual recital of the local piano teacher, where they get to see time pass in minuscule changes to the environment and the people they see each year. The rootedness in the culture and repetition of ordinary events create a sense of familiarity and an impression of being stuck in a moment in time. Munro's use of time expressions, adverbs of time and tense shifts co-create her signature feel of familiarity in the constant and repetitive rhythm of life perceived by simple people in Canadian towns and suburbs, as well as by the reader. The stylistic analysis will first focus on analysis of the adverbs of time.

3.1 Adverbs of Time

General definitions of adverbs usually determine them as words which further describe or define other words such as verbs, adjectives and other adverbs (Richards, Platt, and Platt

1992, 2) or define circumstances of things happening, such as time, place, manner and frequency, as well as sentence adverbs (Eastwood 1999, 270–1). This chapter primarily focuses on adverbs of time and frequency and closely examines their function and impact. Looking at the theory of time adverb classification will help to illustrate which categories are used in Munro's story and in what way.

Adverbs of time and frequency express when and how often something happens, or when it is happening, for example, *often*, *now*, *never*, *daily*, or *occasionally*. (Swan 2005, xix). *Now*, which has a specific role in this story, is a general adverb of time. According to Quirk et al. (1985, 542–43), adverbs of frequency describe a span of time; in other words, they respond to *wh*-questions like *how many times*, *how often*, etc. The classification of adverbs of frequency is sub-divided into definite and indefinite frequency. The former group contains adjuncts which name explicitly the times by which the frequency is measured, while the latter contains adjuncts which do not name explicitly the time by which frequency is measured. Definite frequency can be sub-divided into period frequency (*hourly*, *daily*, *nightly*, *weekly*, *monthly*, *quarterly*, *annually*, etc.), occasion frequency (*once*, *twice*, *thrice*), usual occurrences (*usually*, *commonly*, *customarily*, *normally*, etc.), continuous universal frequency (*always*, *constantly*, *continuously*, etc.), high frequency (*frequently*, *often*, *regularly*, *repeatedly*), low frequency (*infrequently*, *irregularly*, *occasionally*, etc.) or adverbs that denote rare occurrences (*seldom*, *rarely*, *scarcely*) (Quirk et al. 1985).

Martin and White (2005, 54) also point out an interesting connection between adverbs of frequency and modality. They explain that modality is subdivided into modalization and modulation, and modalization is further divided into probability and usuality, which is further connected to judgements of normality. The following quote illustrates the connection of usuality and judgements of normality:

> Similarly, modalities of usuality can be related to judgements of normality: He's naughty. He's often naughty. It's usual for him to be naughty. It's normal for him to be naughty. It's normal, average, fashionable, peculiar, odd, etc. [judgement: normality]. (Martin and White 2005, 54)

This finding illustrates how adverbs of frequency can aid the feelings of what we deem normal, abnormal, usual and familiar; how these can influence the mood of a story will be illustrated further, since "Dance of the Happy Shades" depends for its effect on the illusion of predictable normality interrupted by the uncannily abnormal.

Adverbs of time fulfil these functions in Munro's story, i.e., they create the feel of time frequency, time passage, general time location and feelings of normality, as in the case of *now*. In the story, we can observe adverbs of period frequency (*yearly* and *year after year*, an idiom serving as an adverb of period frequency), occasional frequency (*once*), unusual occurrences (*unusually*) and continuous universal frequency (*always, forever*). Of Quirk's seven categories of adverbs of frequency, Munro uses four, which is a relatively high number of categories. They create an interplay in presentation of the repetitiveness that creates a cosy, familiar feeling with adverbs of higher frequency as in this passage:

> It was the same room, exactly the same room, in which they had performed themselves; a room whose dim impersonal style (the flossy bunch of peonies and spirea dropping petals on the piano was Miss Marsalles' own touch and not entirely happy) was at the same time uncomfortable and reassuring. Here they found themselves *year after year* … (Munro 1989, 154; my emphasis)

This passage illustrates how the sameness and repetitiveness in the surroundings play on the reader's temporal sense to create an atmosphere of the familiar and cosy. Each generation grows up in the same environment and has the same mundane experiences from a slightly different angle, as a child or, in turn, as a parent. Those are repetitive cycles with which almost every reader can identify and experience as familiar and cosy. The familiarity effect that I am suggesting has much in common with the theory of transactive memory as posited by Michelle Gadpaille: "By deploying rhetorically loaded words such as *afterwards* or *whatever*, Munro's narrator coopts us into sharing a space that includes a memory or experience that we do not literally possess" (Gadpaille 2016, 6). The adverbials highlighted in "Dance of the Happy Shades" perform a similar co-optation function by ascribing shared *time* as well as space. The following excerpt offers another example of continuous universal frequency:

> After the piano-playing came a little ceremony which *always* caused some embarrassment. (Munro 1989, 154; my emphasis)

Here we see the same effect at play: the ceremony of Miss Marsalles giving out gift-wrapped books to the children who have performed, an awkward ceremony held after each piano recital, and which causes the same emotions for several generations, and that too is something every reader can recognise as familiar.

Some adverbs point out the rare occasions when something unusual occurs and do that as a contrastive emphasis of the repetitiveness itself:

> Miss Marsalles' idealistic view of children, her tender- or simple-mindedness in that regard, made her almost useless as a teacher; she was unable to criticize except in the most delicate and apologetic way and her praises were unforgivably dishonest; it took an *unusually* conscientious pupil to come through with anything like a creditable performance. (Munro 1989, 153; my emphasis)

The time adverb *unusually* is the direct opposite of Quirk's usual occurrences category, which contains *usually* as a time frequency indicator of how often something happens; the contrasting case of the time adverbial *unusually* in the passage above indicates the rarity of an occurrence. Miss Marsalles is so predictable and repetitive in her instruction and feedback to her students, that it would merit an unusual child, thus an unusual occurrence in time to change anything. The exception to the rule highlights the familiar ritual the piano teacher goes through with all the generations she teaches, and knowing what feedback may come from a teacher creates a lulling familiarity, whereas a completely different one would destroy the cosy atmosphere and show how unusual change would be in the time suspension of Miss Marsalles and her life.

Another adverb of time that has significance in Munro's story is *now*. It notably occurs in the first two paragraphs:

> Poor Carrie is having her tonsils out. In the end all she can say is: Oh, but won't all that be too much trouble, *now*? *Now* being weighted with several troublesome meanings; you may take your choice. (Munro 1998, 152; my emphasis)

In this instance, the adverb is used in the context of a banal everyday occurrence of a standard, minor surgical procedure and evokes the question of convenience in the adverb *now*, followed by an unmistakable meta-comment on the meaning of time in the adverbial use, inviting the reader to create their own interpretation. Here Munro exhibits one of her marriages between familiar and odd, mundane and weird, which mark her writing style. Even though having one's tonsils removed would not have been unusual at that time, the fact that it is highlighted as inconvenient in the story underlines the cosy, routine unfolding of life in the story. For such a mundane occurrence to be a disturbance now or at any given time, the temporal progression must be uneventful overall. The adverb *now* also continues to haunt the story's opening paragraph:

> *Now* that Miss Marsalles has moved from the brick and frame bungalow on Bank Street, where the last three parties have been rather squashed, to an even smaller place – if she has described it correctly – on Bala Street. (Bala Street, where is that?) Or: *now* that Miss Marsalles' older sister is in bed, following a stroke; *now* that Miss Marsalles herself – as my mother says, we must face these things – is simply getting too old. (Munro 1998, 152; my emphasis)

The extension to the phrase *now that* indicates the well-developed construction of time passing through change. *Now that* indicates that it was not like this before.[2] Two more examples of this juxtaposition of *then* and *now* and the temporal shift appear in this passage:

> Piano lessons are not so important *now* as they *once* were; everybody knows that. (Munro 1998, 153; my emphasis)

In these two passages, the author ventures into a stylistic antithesis of *then* and *now* that points out minuscule changes we might notice only in a cosy, familiar environment where everything is so well-known that only there do they become salient. Antithesis, etymologically suggesting opposition, "a stylistic pair figure in the text used for expressive-visual, humorous, ironic, evaluative and other purposes" (Ruzibaeva 2019, 149), illustrates how a stylistic feature serves both ironic and evaluative purposes; Munro has foregrounded a mundane shift in local habits conjuring temporal depth into the cosy, small-town narrative mood. The following example adds another layer of awareness of the present:

> The door is standing open. Miss Marsalles is wedged between the door, the coatrack and the stairs; there is barely room to get past her into the living room, and it would

[2] The phrase *now that* also has a causal meaning as stated in the *Cambridge Online Dictionary* (n.d.): "now (that) *conjunction* US /ˈnaʊ (ðət)/ You use now that to give an explanation of a new situation: *Now that I live only a few blocks from work, I walk to work and enjoy it.*"

> be impossible, the way things are *now*, for anyone to get from the living room upstairs. (Munro 1998, 155; my emphasis)

The antithesis here shows the difference between how Miss Marsalles used to live and the current living conditions, but it also indicates that now, in the present, the spatial arrangement has social significance, as the phrasing issues an invitation to visualize the cramped space. The combination of the adverb with mundane life shifts, such as moving house, getting older or getting ill creates an unmistakeable Munrovian atmosphere, where the reader joins the narrator in their position on the story's timeline.

In Munro's usage, those small rituals build a constant rhythm to evoke a feeling of "I know this, this is familiar" and add to the mosaic of her style. The juxtaposition of constancy and flux comes to a ruthless halt in the closing paragraph of the story, where attendance at Miss Marsalles' parties must now cease "quite certainly forever" (Munro 1998, 160), where *forever* becomes the cruellest adverb. In general, the adverbs used in the story display the interplay of ritual and disturbance of ritual to create the atmosphere characteristic of Munro's writing. The next literary device Munro uses to show repetition and familiarity involves a selection of phrases expressing time. These are analysed in the following section.

3.2 Repetitiveness and Familiarity

Repetitiveness is a common phenomenon in spoken and written discourse, while repetition schemes are particularly frequent elements in literary texts. In the latter, recurring patterns can be observed on the micro- as well as the macro-structural level of the discourse. In the latter, these patterns emerge in the plot features, while at the level of text, the patterns of repetition are a significant stylistic feature as noted by many stylisticians (Leech and Short 2007, 63–64, 164; Simpson 2004, 50; Burke 2014, 25). It has been frequently researched in concrete literary discourse, where it materializes in a variety of functions, such as contributing to the creation of gothic effects, projecting trapped emotion, creating menacing atmosphere, enhancing violence, or preserving rhetorical effects in translation, etc. (Zupan 2006; Kusovac and Pralas 2016; Onič and Prajnč Kacijan 2019; Mohar, Orthaber, and Onič 2020; Plemenitaš 2020; Gadpaille and Zupan 2020, 18). Several of these studies also find that the effects of repetitive stylistic patterns are often affected by the translation process and the perception and interpretative potential of the target text is different, mostly narrower, than that of the original.

In "Dance of the Happy Shades", there are a micro level and a macro level of repetition that coexist and produce a synergy to highlight the life routine, creating the impression of familiarity and peace. The micro level comprises repetition in words and phrases, and the macro level creates repetition on the level of plot and semantic word usage. These levels of repetition evoke the constant passage of years in the lives and events in the story. The first stylistic feature involving repetition at the micro level is anadiplosis and can be observed in a passage already analysed for its adverbials:

> Oh, but won't all that be too much trouble, *now*? *Now* being weighted with several troublesome meanings; you may take your choice. (Munro 1998, 152; my emphasis)

It is interesting that in this passage we find the anadiplosis specifically with the time adverb *now*. That indicates repetition not just on a micro level, but also a connection to the macro level of repetition, both creating the mood of the familiar as they place us in the *now* of the story. The next feature creating repetition on the micro level is the use of anaphora:

> *Now* that Miss Marsalles has moved from the brick and frame bungalow on Bank Street, where the last three parties have been rather squashed, to an even smaller place – if she has described it correctly – on Bala Street. (Bala Street, where is that?) Or: *now* that Miss Marsalles' older sister is in bed, following a stroke; *now* that Miss Marsalles herself – as my mother says, we must face these things – is simply getting too old. (Munro 1998, 152; my emphasis)

> But on the whole the affair in those days *had* solidity, *it had* tradition, in its own serenely out-of-date way *it had* style. (Munro 1998, 153; my emphasis)

An anaphora with variation, is reinforced by parallelism in these two passages:

> And she asks how her June party could ever be too much trouble, *at any* time, *in any* place? (Munro 1998, 152; my emphasis)

> But then *driving* home, *driving* out of the hot red-brick streets and out of the city and leaving Miss Marsalles and her *no longer* possible parties behind, … (Munro 1998, 160; my emphasis)

The anaphora examples are intricately used with time expressions and words such as *now, at any time*, and *no longer*, showing the same effect of interweaving the micro and macro levels of repetition. The next element on the micro level are two examples of epiphora or epistrophe:

> It was *the same room*, exactly *the same room*, in which they had performed themselves; a room whose dim impersonal style (the flossy bunch of peonies and spirea dropping petals on the piano was Miss Marsalles' own touch and not entirely happy) was at the same time uncomfortable and reassuring. (Munro 1998, 152; my emphasis)

> And all that this girl does – but this is something you would not think could ever be done – is to play it so that this can be *felt*, all this can be *felt*, even in Miss Marsalles' living-room on Bala Street on a preposterous afternoon. (Munro 1998, 159; my emphasis)

Both instances of epiphora reinforce the rhythmic repetition, creating an even pace of words and a sense of familiarity that momentarily fends off the intrusion of the "preposterous" event of musical prodigy. Another micro level repetition is the following epizeuxis:

> The mothers sit, caught with a look of protest on their faces, a more profound anxiety than before, as if reminded of something that *they had forgotten they had forgotten*; the white-haired girl sits ungracefully at the piano with her head hanging down, and the music is carried through the open door and the windows to the cindery summer street. (Munro 1998, 159; my emphasis)

These micro level repetitions help create the intimate style, and as seen above, some also correlate directly to the macro level in the types of words repeated. The next few instances will illustrate the macro level of repetition in the story.

The piano recital party happens around the same time every year; every year the children learning piano are the same and different; they are taken to the recital by their mothers, who used to take piano lessons with the same teacher, in the same rooms, receiving the same gifts as their children, and this happens for many successive years. It is so repetitive that it seems to have become timeless; there is no mention of when and where it started, and there is no knowing when it will stop, apart from the inevitable death of the now elderly piano teacher, but there is no mention of that possibility in the story; it all continues from year to year, morphing into a passage from youth, to middle age, to old age.

The time expression "Here they found themselves *year after year*" (Munro 1998, 154; my emphasis) describes repetition and constant actions taken at the same time. This creates a feeling of safety within a small community, apparent in the following narrator's comment: "but who were drawn together by a rather implausible allegiance – not so much to Miss Marsalles as to the ceremonies of their childhood" (Munro 1998, 154), which presents a link to the past. The same rituals have been occurring since their childhood, in the same house, in the same community, in the same time frames; the mood of familiarity is constantly re-constructed, as every community of people has rituals that connect and changeless buildings that engulf.

An occurrence that stands out, yet creates an atmosphere of intimacy is the narrator's apparently offhand remark: "*Last year* a child had a nosebleed" (Munro 1998, 152; my emphasis). The sheer banality of the occurrence and the subsequent mild outrage immediately draw attention to the interwoven, rhythmical, usually undisturbed time frames of the events which can be "disrupted" by a simple nosebleed. The prosaic uneventfulness of those parties means that a nosebleed is a mildly shocking event. This scene depicts an almost generalized image of ordinary suburban existence.[3]

As shown in this section, time expressions combine with certain rhetorical figures to co-create the signature Munro feel of familiarity and of a routine that somehow includes the reader. In "Dance of the Happy Shades", we find the repetitive rhythm at both the micro level of language use and the macro level of the yearly recital, with the same mothers bringing their children, their children reliving the same recitals and receiving the same gifts. Although human beings do find solace in a certain amount of repetition, the insistent patterning in this story stifles us into the recognition that time can cycle or stand still for only so long and that the era of the recitals is over.

3.3 Grammatical Tense Shifts

Tense usage is a universally important and semantically powerful feature in the English language, and according to Fludernik, particularly so in literary narration:

[3] In contrast to Munro's usual small-town setting, "Dance of the Happy Shades" unfolds in Toronto, with the mention of its fashionable neighbourhood (Rosedale) and of other recognizable streets, to which the recital moves as Miss Marsalles' budget shrinks and her housing choices become restricted.

> Tense in narrative and non-narrative texts performs a variety of functions, not all of which are properly temporal or aspectual. In particular, tense relates to the passing of time (duration), sequentiality, chronology and the expression of subjectivity (frequently linked with aspect). In addition, tense is here argued to fulfil textual functions of foregrounding and backgrounding over and above plot-related foregrounding. (Fludernik 2003, 117)

Accordingly, tenses in narration do not just function for moving from one moment to the next but can also be used for foregrounding. That is a linguistic strategy for calling attention to specific linguistic and thematic features, and in "Dance of the Happy Shades" Munro does that with tense use. She draws attention to the present moment in the story by going from past tense narration to the present, pulling the reader into the story to share the atmosphere of familiarity and cosiness, as seen in this passage:

> But after the house in Rosedale was gone, after it had given way to the bungalow on Bank Street, these conversations about Miss Marsalles' means did not take place; this aspect of Miss Marsalles' life had passed into that region of painful subjects which it is crude and unmannerly to discuss.
>
> "I will die if it rains," my mother says. "I will die of depression at this affair if it rains." But the day of the party it does not rain and in fact the weather is very hot. It is a hot gritty summer day as we drive down into the city and get lost, looking for Bala Street. (Munro 1998, 155)

In this passage, Munro moves from describing the recital in previous years, to anticipating the upcoming recital, switching the narration from a variety of past tenses to present tense. This specific device is known as a verb-tense shift, which is defined by Moxley as follows:

> A verb-tense shift occurs when a writer changes tense within a single piece of writing. Tense is the term for what time frame verbs refer to. Standard American English has a number of tenses, each of which is a variation on past, present, or future. Any switching of tense within a sentence, paragraph, or longer piece of writing is a verb tense shift. (Moxley, n.d.)

By using this verb-tense shift, Munro creates an intimate shared past, a world where the reader is almost fully present. By establishing increments of mundane events playing out right in front of us in the present, she implicates the reader in the story; with the shift to the present, the narrator creates an illusion of *now* and invites readers to share it. A similar point is made by Hassan, who claims that Munro's texts "frequently contain instances of anachrony that signal some relationship between the past and the present" (2020, 1216):

> Munro utilizes various devices in order to create the feeling of life which is extended through time. One of such devices, which are frequently employed by Munro in her narrative universe, is the use of time shifts in favor of linear chronological order of events. In such a way, the author often either jumps backwards to fill in a past event or leaps forward surprising her reader with the changes caused by time. (Hassan 2020, 1216)

The "I will die if it rains" passage above illustrates Hassan's point that tense shifts serve to create a window for narrating the past within the story and at the same time highlight that jump to the present, the *now* of the upcoming party. This device pulls us further into the familiar rhythm and pace of suburban life. We tell stories while we live in the present, and this shift imposes bifocal vision on the reader, where a borrowed past morphs into a shared present.

Munro's use of the perfect tenses complies with their traditional grammatical use; however, it is the meticulous planning of their placement in the context of the seemingly conventional and expected discourse that foregrounds them and thus makes them stylistically interesting. This stylistic use corresponds to elements at the level of plot, since the talk among and about the multiple generations of mothers who used to attend Miss Marsalles' classes as their children do now highlights the time difference that divides the events in the story. The characters' own story discourse thus creates the linkage between past and present:

> Every June reveals some new and surely significant dropping-out. Mary Lambert's girl no longer takes; neither does Joan Crimble's. What does this mean? think my mother and Marg French, women who *have moved* to the suburbs and are plagued sometimes by a feeling that they *have fallen behind*, that their instincts for doing the right thing *have become confused*. (Munro 1998, 153)

In this passage, Present Perfect expresses a stage that is apparently far from perfect. These mothers worry about their social and moral positioning, expressed in two cases by verbs of motion (*move*, *fall*). In the final case there is the more anxiety-inducing verb *become.* The resulting moral confusion, already fed by the deteriorating condition of the Marsalles household, will be exacerbated by the artistry of the marginalised child.

4 Conclusion

In creating generational cosiness in her stories, Munro relies on a style that has become recognizable for its unique ability to convince the reader that they share common memories with the narrator (Gadpaille 2016, 3-6). Both readers and critics often see this in her plot development and the choice of her geographical setting (Martin 1987, 56), but here it is argued that this is also created through time expressions, tense shifts and time adverbials.

The analysis has shown that the strategic stylistic deployment of these features can create a mood of familiarity between the reader and events in a text. This early story indicates that Munro had successfully achieved this even in her first collection. The adverbials point to foregrounding of everyday occurrences and how they depict routine, constant and familiar time intervals, while tense shifts allow us to zoom in to the mundane events on repeated occasions.

We have also shown Munro successfully creating patterns of repetition throughout the story on a linguistic micro level and a semantic and plot-related macro level. She combines these to show the constant pace of repetitive cycles and to evoke a mood of familiarity, what I have chosen to call generational cosiness. The rhythmical repetition that characterizes music and

dance extends from the story's title through its adverbial fabric. It would not be Alice Munro, however, if she did not betray this cosiness with the eruption of the abnormal, the unexpected gift of the music offered by the special-needs pupil. For Miss Marsalles, this prodigy fits seamlessly into her time-resistant world view, merely the fulfilment of the prophecy for which every music teacher waits. For the uneasy mothers at the recital, however, this performance sets a marker in time – constructing a *now* in which they no longer wish to participate.

The paper illustrates how time and the representation of time are utilised in creating atmosphere and mood in "Dance of the Happy Shades", which is rarer than creating mood through, for example, imagery or adjectives. It also adds to the body of research exploring time as co-inclusive of the reader.

The connections drawn here between stylistic devices of time expression and familiarity could spark further inquiry into Munro's narratology in her other writing. It might help to frame questions about the formation of style and its narrative function in mediating narrator/reader positionality through expressions of time.

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