

## RELATIONSHIPS AND MORAL CONFLICT IN MANRO'S TRAIN

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### **Abstract**

Alice Munro is primarily known for her short stories and has published many collections over the years. She was born on 10 July 1931 in Wingham, which is in the Canadian province of Ontario. She also won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2013. "TRAIN" is also one of her short stories from Dear Life (2012) collection. In Train, a young Soldier, his name is Jackson, returning to his fiancée from the Second World War, jumps off the train before his stop ignoring the fiancée waiting for him and starts a new life where he lands. He saw a woman out milking a cow, she is Belle. Jackson pities Belle and thinks that he can work for her for a few months and then continue on his way. After numerous years Jackson and Belle have settled down in Mennonites. I consider the association between them is purely platonic. Munro's stories are often set in small town environment where there is a struggle for socially adequate affairs and ethical conflicts. This paper is an attempt to explore the theme of relations and moral conflicts in her Short story Train.

**Keywords:** platonic, association, moral conflicts, struggle, adequate

### **Introduction:**

Alice Munro is primarily known for her short stories and has published many collections over the years. She was born on 10th of July, 1931 in Wingham, which is in the Canadian province of Ontario. Her mother was a teacher, and her father was a fox farmer. Munro started writing stories in her teens, but published her first book-length work in 1968, the story collection Dance of the happy shades.

Munro is acclaimed for her finely tuned storytelling, which is characterized by clarity and psychological realism. 'TRAIN' is also one of her short stories from Dear life (2012) collection. In 2013 she became the first Canadian to win the Nobel Prize for

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literature and only 13th woman to win prestigious prize.

In Train, a young soldier, returning from the war, jumps off the train before his stop. He picks up his bag and starts walking back in the direction he has just covered on the train. He is trying to avoid something or someone, but no coherent reason is given. He is still in confusion because he has fallen asleep and awakens, so he jumps off from Train. Running away, going backwards is one of the themes of this story.

On his way along from railway track, he saw Belle calling her Jersey, Margaret rose for giving milk Jersey jump one way, then another. Belle is afraid of him attacking her Jersey who had her horns still on. Belle says: "Jersey won't hurt you, you just don't move."( Page:49, HARPER'S MAGAZINE / APRIL 2012) Then she notices him with a bag and said if he waits, she will get milk and breakfast. Belle is a short sturdy woman with straight hair, gray mixed in with what is fair and childish bangs. She is ten or fifteen years older than Jackson. Her father was hit by a train and her mother also died leaving Belle alone in the world.

When Jackson arrives, the farm is in decline. In exchange of food, he promises to complete some repairs and then be on his way. The years continue to pass, Jackson never goes back home. Even though there is no relationship between Jackson and Belle, people just assume they are brother and sister.

Suddenly, Belle gets sick. She has a lump and she is booked now for an operation in Toronto. Jackson convinces her to go to Toronto for treatment. He takes her to Toronto and joins her in a hospital. The nurse takes him to sign something before he left. At first he hesitates to write his relation with Belle then he writes "Friend" (Page: 52 HARPER'S MAGAZINE / APRIL 2012)

Under medication, Belle shares some secrets about her past that Jackson wishes he'd never heard. He can't handle the intimacy and abandons the farm with just as little fanfare as he joined it. Two days after the lump's removal Belle is sitting up in a different room and she is eager to greet Jackson, but she seems to be in an inner state of shock. She asks him so many questions like is he getting enough sleep, whether he has found place where he likes to eat etc; but she could not concentrate on his replies. Jackson takes leave from the hospital by telling Belle "See you tomorrow".

Jackson again wished for termination, what he's found are new surroundings and its here his past rears up. Jackson decides to take a walk and a break from the hospital air. He starts walking on the streets which are full of illegally parked trucks and noisy desperate sounding Chinese. He walks until he sees an obstacle at Bonnie Dundee

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building. Some people are complaining about the delay and asking loudly if it is even legal to park an ambulance on the side walk and the man who is carried out bound to the stretcher, is not dead. Jackson is eagerly waiting to know about the man. The owner of the building comes back and says the man is died and arrangements have to be made. He asks Jackson to solve the problem if he can temporarily. Jackson accepts his request.

A few days before the owner of the building has given house to a young couple named Candace and Quincy. But they skipped out in the middle of the night without settling their rent. He feels himself for his bad choice. One day an old woman comes there in search of her daughter Candace. She is from British Columbia. She says her name is Ileane. The owner asks her to sit on a chair and drops some change into the machine to get a 7-up to drink. Then he says that Candace has left within a month, it could be three weeks ago. Then there is no forwarding address. Then the old woman left the place.

Jackson is listening all and comes out of hiding from the corner. He recognizes her as Ileane Bishop who is his girl friend from high school. He remembers his past days. Ileane Bishop was a minister's daughter, although there were no bishops in her father's united church. She arrived with her family when she is in grade nine and for five years, because of the custom of alphabetical seating, she sits behind Jackson Adams. She borrowed erasers and pen nibs and geometry tools from him. Nothing much was presumed beyond that except that they had certain jokes.

Ileane is not a shy girl but she is clever and aloof and not particularly popular and that seemed to suit him. After a few days, the oldest girls in the school are up there who has been learning Latin, biology and European history and they were now learning to type. One of them is Ileane Bishop. She came out along with all the others to see the disturbance. She is surprised to see Jackson and Bill Watts again. They were in army uniforms and look twice the size they had been, their powerful boots making a ferocious noise as they galloped around.

Jackson and Ileane didn't go to the movies. They didn't go to the dance hall. They went for walks, in any weather and often after dark. Sometimes they went into a restaurant and drank coffee, but did not try to be friendly to any body. What was the matter with them? Were they falling in love?

Then they wrote letters to each other. On their last evening they have sit up late in the parsonage and then they went upstairs very quietly and he went to bed in the spare room. Her coming to him must have been by mutual agreement because he was not surprised. It was a disaster. But by the way she behaved, she didn't seem to know. There was no way he can stop her trying or explain. They parted finally as if all had gone well. In

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a short while the letters began, loving as could be.

After that Jackson has seen her at Bonnie Dundee building. From her words he knows that she is married and have children. The next day whatever ease he had about the woman passing from his life was gone. She knew this place, she might come back. These things could be locked up, it only took some determination. Then he wrote an account for the owner of every apartment and when and what upkeep was due. He emptied his bank account and packed the few things belonging to him and late in the evening he got on the train and next morning he got off in Kapuskasing where he could smell the mills and is encouraged by the cooler air.

Though Jackson has no relationship with Belle and the owner of Bonnie Dundee, he helps them. He spends many years with Belle till he became old. He does not know how many years were passed away. The relationship between them is brother and sister. Like brother he takes care on Belle. He looks after her even she is in hospital. He feels some conflict when he sees Ileana.

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