

Cambridge University Press & Assessment
978-1-107-47202-0 — The Cambridge Companion to Alice Munro
Edited by David Staines
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO ALICE MUNRO

This *Companion* is a thorough introduction to the writings of the Nobel Prize winner Alice Munro. Uniting the talents of distinguished creative writers and noted academics, David Staines has put together a comprehensive, exploratory account of Munro's biography, her position as a feminist, her evocation of life in small-town Ontario, her non-fictional writings as well as her short stories, and her artistic achievement. Considering a wide range of topics – including Munro's style, life writing, her personal development, and her use of Greek myths, Celtic ballads, Norse sagas, and popular songs – this volume will appeal to keen readers of Munro's fiction as well as students and scholars of literature and Canadian and gender studies.

David Staines is Professor of English at the University of Ottawa. A scholar of medieval culture and literature, as well as Canadian culture and literature, he has authored or edited more than fifteen books, including *The Canadian Imagination: Dimensions of a Literary Culture*, *Tennyson's Camelot: the Idylls of the King and its Medieval Sources*, and *The Letters of Stephen Leacock*.

Cambridge University Press & Assessment
978-1-107-47202-0 — The Cambridge Companion to Alice Munro
Edited by David Staines
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

THE CAMBRIDGE
COMPANION TO
ALICE MUNRO

EDITED BY
DAVID STAINES



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press & Assessment
 978-1-107-47202-0 — The Cambridge Companion to Alice Munro
 Edited by David Staines
 Frontmatter
[More Information](#)



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 8EA, United Kingdom
 One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
 477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
 314-321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi – 110025, India
 103 Penang Road, #05-06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment,
 a department of the University of Cambridge.

We share the University's mission to contribute to society through the pursuit of
 education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org
 Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107472020

© Cambridge University Press & Assessment 2016
 Chapter 6, 'Lives of Girls and Women: a portrait of the artist as a young woman' by
 Margaret Atwood © O. W. Toad Ltd 2016

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions
 of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take
 place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press & Assessment.

First published 2016

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication data

Names: Staines, David, 1946– editor.

Title: The Cambridge companion to Alice Munro / edited by David Staines.

Description: Cambridge ; New York : Cambridge University Press, 2016. |

Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2015038209 | ISBN 9781107093270 (Hardback) |

ISBN 9781107472020 (Paperback)

Subjects: LCSH: Munro, Alice, 1931—Criticism and interpretation.

Classification: LCC PR9199.3.M8 Z576 2016 | DDC 813/.54—dc23 LC record available at
<http://lcn.loc.gov/2015038209>

ISBN 978-1-107-09327-0 Hardback

ISBN 978-1-107-47202-0 Paperback

Cambridge University Press & Assessment has no responsibility for the persistence
 or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this
 publication and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will
 remain, accurate or appropriate.

CONTENTS

<i>Notes on contributors</i>	<i>page</i> vii
<i>Note on editions used</i>	ix
<i>Chronology</i>	x
Introduction	1
DAVID STAINES	
1 From Wingham to Clinton: Alice Munro in her Canadian context	7
DAVID STAINES	
2 Where do you think you are? Place in the short stories of Alice Munro	26
MERILYN SIMONDS	
3 The style of Alice Munro	45
DOUGLAS GLOVER	
4 ‘Oranges <i>and</i> apples’: Alice Munro’s undogmatic feminism	60
MARIA LÖSCHNIGG	
5 Alice Munro and her life writing	79
CORAL ANN HOWELLS	
6 <i>Lives of Girls and Women</i> : a portrait of the artist as a young woman	96
MARGARET ATWOOD	
7 Re-reading <i>The Moons of Jupiter</i>	116
W.H. NEW	

CONTENTS

8	Alice Munro and personal development	136
	ROBERT MCGILL	
9	The female bard: retrieving Greek myths, Celtic ballads, Norse sagas, and popular songs	154
	HÉLIANE VENTURA	
10	The mother as material	178
	ELIZABETH HAY	
	<i>Bibliography</i>	193
	<i>Index</i>	197

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

MARGARET ATWOOD is the author of more than forty volumes of children's literature, fiction and non-fiction, and poetry. Her novels include *The Edible Woman*, *The Handmaid's Tale*, the Giller Prize-winning *Alias Grace*, *Blind Assassin*, which won the Booker Prize in 2000, and her most recent, *The Heart Goes Last*. Her most recent volume of poetry, *The Door*, was published in 2007. *In Other Worlds: SF and the Human Imagination*, a collection of non-fiction essays, appeared in 2011. She is a Companion of the Order of Canada.

DOUGLAS GLOVER is the author of four novels, five short story collections, and three works of non-fiction, including *The Enamoured Knight*, a study of *Don Quixote* and novel form. He won the Governor General's Award for his novel *Elle* (2003) and he was a finalist for the International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award in 2005. His most recent book is the collection *Savage Love*. Editor of the annual *Best Canadian Stories* from 1996 until 2006, he currently teaches writing at the Vermont College of Fine Arts and edits the online literary magazine *Numéro Cinq*.

ELIZABETH HAY is the author of one collection of short fiction, *Small Change*, three books of creative non-fiction about her travels outside Canada, and five novels: *A Student of Weather*, *Garbo Laughs*, the Giller Prize-winning *Late Nights on Air*, *Alone in the Classroom*, and *His Whole Life*. Formerly a radio broadcaster, she spent a number of years in Mexico and New York City before returning to Canada.

CORAL ANN HOWELLS is Professor Emerita of English and Canadian Literature, University of Reading, and Senior Research Fellow, Institute of English Studies, University of London. She has published extensively on contemporary Canadian fiction, especially writing by women. Her many books include *Margaret Atwood*, *Alice Munro*, and *Contemporary Canadian Women's Fiction: Refiguring Identities*. She edited the *Cambridge Companion to Margaret Atwood* and co-edited, with Eva-Marie Kroller, the *Cambridge History of Canadian Literature*. She is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

MARIA LÖSCHNIGG is Professor of English, University of Graz, Austria. Her publications include *The Contemporary Canadian Short Story in English: Continuity and Change*; she also co-edited *Migration and Fiction: Narratives of Migration in Contemporary Canadian Literature* and co-wrote the first history of Canadian Literature in German, *Kurze Geschichte der kanadischen Literatur* (both with Martin Löschnigg). Her most recent work looks at postcolonial literature from an eco-critical point of view.

ROBERT MCGILL is Associate Professor of English, University of Toronto. He is the author of two novels, *The Mysteries* and *Once We Had a Country*, as well as a book of literary criticism, *The Treacherous Imagination: Intimacy, Ethics, and Autobiographical Fiction*. His articles on Alice Munro have appeared in *a/b: Auto/Biography*, *Canadian Literature*, *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, *Mosaic*, and *University of Toronto Quarterly*.

W. H. NEW is University Killam Professor Emeritus, University of British Columbia. A critic and editor, poet and children's writer, he is the author of *A History of Canadian Literature*, *Borderlands*, *Land Sliding*, and *Grandchild of Empire*, and editor of *Encyclopedia of Literature in Canada*, among other works. His studies of the short story include *Dreams of Speech and Violence* and *Reading Mansfield and Metaphors of Form*. Among his books for children is the prize-winning *The Year I Was Grounded*. His *New & Selected Poems* appeared in 2015. He is an Officer of the Order of Canada.

MERILYN SIMONDS is the author of sixteen books, including the novel *The Holding*, a *New York Times Book Review* Editors' choice, and the creative non-fiction *The Convict Lover*, a Governor General's Award finalist. Her recent releases are a collection of personal essays, *A New Leaf*, a travel memoir, *Breakfast at the Exit Café*, and *The Paradise Project*, flash fiction published in a hand-printed edition. In 2015 the National Arts Centre Orchestra premiered *Dear Life*, a symphony by Zosha di Castri based on Simonds's adaptation of the Alice Munro story.

DAVID STAINES is Professor of English, University of Ottawa. He divides his time between medieval culture and literature and Canadian culture and literature. Among the many books he has authored and/or edited are *The Canadian Imagination: Dimensions of a Literary Culture*, *Tennyson's Camelot: the Idylls of the King and its Medieval Sources*, *The Complete Romances of Chrétien de Troyes*, and *The Letters of Stephen Leacock*. He is a Member of the Order of Canada.

HÉLIANE VENTURA is Professor of Contemporary Literature in English at the University of Toulouse-Jean Jaurès, France. Her area of specialization is the contemporary short story in the Anglophone world with special emphasis on the rewriting of the canon, intermedial relationships, and the emergence of transatlantic literatures. She has published two monographs on Margaret Atwood and Alice Munro and written more than ninety articles published in Britain, Canada, and France, principally on female short story writers from Britain, Canada, and New Zealand as well as on Aboriginal writers.

NOTE ON EDITIONS USED

In quoting from Alice Munro's writings, contributors to this volume have used a variety of American, British, and Canadian editions. Details of editions used are included in the endnotes to each chapter.

CHRONOLOGY

- 1931 Alice Laidlaw [Munro] born 10 July in Wingham, Ontario, Canada, the first child of Robert Eric Laidlaw (1901–76) and Anne Clarke Chamney Laidlaw (1898–1959).
- 1936 Alice's only brother, William, born 13 March.
- 1937 Alice's only sister, Sheila, born 1 April.
- 1937–49 Attends Lower Town School, Wingham (1937–9), Wingham Public School (1939–44), and Wingham and District High School, graduating in 1949 at the top of her class and winning a two-year scholarship to the University of Western Ontario with the top marks in English of all incoming students.
- 1949–51 Attends the University of Western Ontario on a two-year scholarship, majoring first in journalism, then changing her major to English. While at university, she writes stories, her first one, 'The Dimensions of a Shadow', appearing in the April 1950 issue of *Folio*, the university's undergraduate literary magazine. Two more stories, 'Story for Sunday' and 'The Widower', appear in the December 1950 and April 1951 issues. Robert Weaver, who becomes a mentor and a support, buys one of her stories for radio broadcast on *Canadian Short Stories* on the Canadian Broadcasting Company. Marries James Munro in Wingham on 29 December.
- 1952 Moves with her husband to Vancouver, British Columbia, where he holds a position in the textile section of Eaton's department store and Alice works as a part-time assistant at the Kitsilano branch of the Vancouver Public Library. From the autumn of that year until June 1953 she works as a full-time assistant, then, after the birth of her first child, she is part-time again until her next pregnancy in 1955.
- 1953 Sheila Munro born 5 October. Alice Munro's first sold story is published in the Canadian magazine *Mayfair* (November). Over

CHRONOLOGY

- the following decade she contributes to other Canadian publications: *Canadian Forum*, *Queen's Quarterly*, *Chatelaine*, *Tamarack Review*, and *The Montrealer*.
- 1955 Catherine Munro born 28 July – died the same day.
- 1957 Jenny Munro born 4 June.
- 1958 Applies for a grant from the Canada Council; the application is rejected.
- 1959 Her mother, Anne, dies after suffering from severe Parkinson's disease for nearly twenty years.
- 1963 Moves with her family to Victoria, British Columbia, to found Munro's Books.
- 1966 Andrea Munro born 8 September.
- 1968 With the encouragement of Earle Toppings, an editor from Ryerson Press, *Dance of the Happy Shades* is published, winning the Governor General's Award for Fiction.
- 1969 Her father, Robert, marries Mary Etta Laidlaw, the widow of one of his cousins.
- 1971 *Lives of Girls and Women* is published, winning the first Canadian Booksellers Association/International Book Year Award and becoming an alternate selection for the Literary Guild's Book-of-the-Month Club in Canada and the United States.
- 1972 Named Outstanding Fiction Writer by the British Columbia Library Association.
- 1973 Separates from her husband. Teaches summer school at Notre Dame University in Nelson, British Columbia. Moves from Victoria to London, Ontario, from where she commutes by train one day a week to Toronto to teach for the fall term at York University. Receives a Canada Council Senior Arts Grant.
- 1974 *Something I've Been Meaning to Tell You* is published, winning the Province of Ontario Council for the Arts Award. Receives the Great Lakes Colleges Association Award for the American publication of *Dance of the Happy Shades*. Reunites with Gerald Fremlin, a retired geographer, whom she knew slightly in her undergraduate years. Appointed writer-in-residence at the University of Western Ontario (1974–5).
- 1975 Gerald Fremlin and Munro settle in Clinton, Ontario.
- 1976 Receives an honorary degree from the University of Western Ontario. Engages as her agent Virginia Barber, who becomes a close friend and sells 'Royal Beatings', the opening story of *Who*

CHRONOLOGY

- Do You Think You Are?*, to *The New Yorker*. Munro's divorce is finalized. Robert Laidlaw dies.
- 1977 National Magazine Foundation Gold Medal Award for 'Accident', collected later in *The Moons of Jupiter*. Signs a contract for right-of-first-refusal with *The New Yorker*. Screenplay, *1847: the Irish*, is filmed.
- 1978 Wins the Canada–Australia Literary Prize. *Who Do You Think You Are?* is published, winning the Governor General's Award for Fiction, and is shortlisted for Britain's Booker Prize. The Canadian Booksellers Association chooses it as Book of the Year; it is also selected for the Book-of-the-Month Club in Canada.
- 1979 Robert Laidlaw's novel, *The McGregors: a Novel of an Ontario Pioneer Family*, is published posthumously.
- 1980 Writer-in-residence at the University of British Columbia (January–April). Writer-in-residence at the University of Queensland (September–December).
- 1981 July trip to China with six other Canadian writers as guests of the Chinese Writers' Association.
- 1982 February trip to Norway and Sweden to promote the publication of the Norwegian translation of *Who Do You Think You Are? The Moons of Jupiter* is published.
- 1983 National Magazine Foundation Gold Medal Award for 'Mrs Cross and Mrs Kidd', collected in *The Moons of Jupiter*.
- 1986 Wins the inaugural Marian Engel Award. *The Progress of Love* is published, winning the Governor General's Award for Fiction.
- 1988 One of the three-member Editorial Board of McClelland & Stewart's New Canadian Library.
- 1990 Spends three months in Scotland. *Friend of My Youth* is published, winning the Province of Ontario Trillium Award for Fiction. It is a finalist for the Governor General's Award and shortlisted for the Irish Times–Aer Lingus Fiction Prize. Winner of the Canada Council Molson Prize for 'outstanding lifetime contributions to the cultural and intellectual life of Canada'.
- 1994 Receives the Order of Ontario. *Open Secrets* is published, winning the W. H. Smith Award for 'the best book of the year'. Jury member for the first Giller Prize for Fiction and serves as a member of the Giller Foundation.
- 1995 Spends six months in Ireland.

CHRONOLOGY

- 1996 *Selected Stories* is published.
- 1997 Wins the PEN/Malamud Award for Excellence in Short Fiction.
- 1998 *The Love of a Good Woman* is published, winning the Giller Prize for Fiction, the Province of Ontario Trillium Award for Fiction, and the National Book Critics Circle Award.
- 2001 Wins Rea Award for Lifetime Achievement and O. Henry Award for Continuing Achievement in Short Fiction. *Hateship, Friendship, Loveship, Courtship, Marriage* is published.
- 2003 *No Love Lost* is published.
- 2004 *Runaway* is published, winning the Rogers Writers' Trust Fiction Prize.
- 2005 Terasen Lifetime Achievement Award for an Outstanding Literary Career in British Columbia.
- 2006 *The View from Castle Rock: Stories* is published. *Alice Munro's Best* (with an introduction by Margaret Atwood) is published.
- 2008 Wins the Flaiano Prize in Italy.
- 2009 *Too Much Happiness* is published. Munro wins the Man Booker International Prize 'for a body of work that has contributed to an achievement in fiction on the world stage'.
- 2012 *Dear Life* is published.
- 2013 *Dear Life* wins the Province of Ontario Trillium Award for Fiction. Gerald Fremlin dies. Munro wins the Nobel Prize for Literature, heralding her as 'the master of the contemporary short story'.