decides to organize her co-workers in the upbeat ending of the story. "At the Shirtwaist Factory" recounts a similar theme: women stitchers eating lunch at the factory spend their time reading novels and dream books or listening to a co-worker explain Marxism, rather than using their collective strength to achieve change. The story's impatient heroine delivers an object lesson to her colleagues when she persuades the novel-reader to come with her to a manager's office where she demands the employment of a second "checker" to speed up the punching of the time cards; on behalf of her 250 sister workers, the heroine stands up to the manager and wins, thus conveying the message that female helplessness and romantic notions of male chivalry are no substitute for straightforward, business-like negotiations.

As the editor notes, these stories do not lend themselves to any one clear-cut interpretation; some stress women's secondary status in the labour market and most do not dispute the importance of marriage and family for women workers. A few portray women as active in shaping their own destinies, particularly through labour organization. All the stories convey some sense of the tensions between waged work and femininity and offer readers a chance to reflect on their own life situations. As historical fiction these stories do not always clearly reflect the realities of the labour market for women in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, nor were they meant to. They were written to convey various ideological messages to readers and reflect their authors' visions of the social relations between the classes and between the sexes. As a reader, I would have liked more reflection from the editor on the authors themselves; few stress women's secondary status in the labour market and most do not dispute the importance of marriage and family for women workers. A few portray women as active in shaping their own destinies, particularly through labour organization. All the stories convey some sense of the tensions between waged work and femininity and offer readers a chance to reflect on their own life situations. As historical fiction these stories do not always clearly reflect the realities of the labour market for women in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, nor were they meant to. They were written to convey various ideological messages to readers and reflect their authors' visions of the social relations between the classes and between the sexes. 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Childhood was a garden without end or
dimensional world. In the world where
“Childhood was a garden without end or
limit,” a child’s fantasy is shaped by folk-
calculated behaviour, and other cultural
protagonists’ aspirations, moral values,
banalities which are responsible for their
prescribed conventionalities, which al-
of the well known, socially accepted and
the foreign reader, is not so much the
though presented against the background
of Soviet society, touch us all and make us
interesting in Tolstaya’s stories, even to
ponder about similar issues in our own
society.

THE PROGRESS OF LOVE
Alice Munro. Canada: Penguin Books,
1987.

Mariam Shaumian

Having been born and raised in Moscow
makes it difficult to appreciate the com-
plexity of life in other places, in this case
Canada. Brief travels are of little help. At
school I began to study the English lan-
guage. This gave me a chance to gain at
least some acquaintance with English-
language literature and cinema, including
some of the things they never translated
into Russian. Undoubtedly this was —
and is — a valuable source for learning
something about life abroad.

At first, I was much more fond of de-
tective-romantic themes, such as the
novels of James Hadley Chase, and films
of the same kind. However, as time went
on, I became more interested in writers
like John Updike, Irwin Shaw, F. Scott
Fitzgerald, E.L. Doctorow, Belle
Kaufman, and so on. Some I read in
Russian, others in the original. While
reading, consciously or unconsciously, I
was always looking for comparisons with
our Soviet life, something in common.

On the other hand, the contrasts always
struck me immediately. Here I would like
to stop and discuss the book I have most
recently read, Alice Munro’s The Prog-
ress of Love.

I must confess that I am more familiar
with this genre in Soviet literature. This
style — short stories, social drama, vi-
nettes of life, written by a woman with
her own definite and intimate viewpoint
on many things — is these days becoming
more and more popular in the USSR.

To my mind the majority of questions
being raised by women today are more-
or-less similar, whether they are being
posed by Soviet or Canadian women.
However, if I may put it this way, Soviet
women haven’t yet “grown up” to many
of your problems.

This is very closely connected with our
difficult and acute economic situation in
the Soviet Union. From this comes the
problems which most concern us: the
shortages of food, vegetables and fruits,
huge line-ups, deficiencies in medical care,
lack of children’s institutions, the inade-
quacy of our consumer services, and many
others. I don’t suppose women in Canada
worry about: where to buy? How to get?
What to put on? What to do laundry and
dishes with?

I imagine, you have a different order of
questions: How to make ends meet? How
to save your nerves?

However, I would like to return to Alice
Munro, an author I’ve just gotten to know
but who has deeply excited my interest.
After all, my husband is Canadian, and I
am certainly not indifferent to how women
live in Canada. Who knows, probably this
is my own future.

Alice Munro, I notice, often writes for
and about single women. For her, most of
all, this means divorced women, their
thoughts, their feelings, their concerns,
lifestyle and so on. The main themes
revolve around relationships between
divorced couples, with their children, and
others. From my point of view, the author
is very sensitive and delicate, capable of
looking into peoples’ souls, divining their
complex emotions, their joys, heartaches,
their attachments and antipathies, the
whole complicated range of human feel-
ings.

Her treatment of family questions is of
considerable interest to me because in my
country today these problems seem equally
acute. The divorce rate is constantly ris-
ing. More and more mothers are left to
raise children — sometimes more than one
— completely on their own. My
impression is that most Canadian family
incomes — including those of single
mothers — are higher than in our country.
In many respects, I think, this is due to a
much higher standard of life in general,
although I am aware that many Canadi-
ans, including mothers and children, live
below the poverty line. We also have such
problems in our country. At the most
recent Congress of Peoples Deputies of
the USSR, this question was raised — the
problems of the lowest-income groups of
our society. For example, many retired
people, particularly those living in rural
districts, receive between 32-40 roubles
per month, a sum which is almost impos-
sible to live on. (The Congress decided to
raise this amount to 70 roubles, better, but
also difficult to manage with). For the first
year of a child’s life, a mother who is not
working receives just 35 roubles per month
from the state, regardless of whether she
has other sources of income. All those
questions undoubtedly require significant
correction.

Judging by what I’ve heard and read
about Canada, you have managed to ar-
range medical services more effectively
than we have, particularly for children.
All this lightens the burden for mothers.
Besides this, in the case of divorce, the
obligations of the man under the law
towards his former wife and, particularly,
children, seem higher and more clearly
determined than in our country. Accord-
ing to our law, the husband’s salary is
garnisheed at a rate of 25 percent, but
salaries are often so low that this comes to
very little.

While reading Alice Munro, I also noted
that relations between parents and grown