CHAPTER - I

LANDSCAPE AND LITERATURE:

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1.1 Introduction

The name of Alice Munro is associated with Thomas Hardy, William Faulkner, Arnold Bennett, and Walter Scott. These writers are noted for their regions such as Wessex, Yoknapatawpha County, Five Towns, and Waverly. Munro is from Huron County, in south-western Ontario. Margaret Atwood in her “introduction” to Carried Away: A Selection of Stories (2006), observes: “Through Munro’s fiction, Sowesto’s Huron County has joined Faulkner’s Yoknapatawpha County as a slice of land made legendary by the excellence of the writer who has celebrated it”,---(xii). Munro, in her portrayal of life in Huron County, wrote regional stories. Munro has expressed in several of her interviews the unhappiness over the word regionalism. Lisa Dickler Awano wanted to know whether Munro is a “regional writer”. Munro responds to her:

I don’t mind at all if being a regional writer means being someone like Eudora Welty. To me, the region is important just because I feel it so vividly, but I don’t think I’m writing experiences that are limited to that region. I think if I had grown up somewhere else on the continent, I would be using that as my setting, and
perhaps certain things about the characters would be different. In ‘Family Furnishings’, which is a story that goes back to my childhood and adolescence, certain things that impinge upon that girl are peculiar to the community she lives in. But the story is not. When I read, for instance, Edna O’Brien’s stories of her youth in Ireland, I feel a tremendous connection. I don’t really think the main thing about a story, ever, is to bring a region to life. I think it’s just to bring what you know of life to life. And people have regions everywhere-some regions may not be seen as regions. For instance, another important Canadian writer, Mordecal Richler, who recently died, wrote mainly about Jewish life in Montreal, which is a village. I mean, he was writing about a kind of village, and I think we all have villages.

(Awano: Interview, 4-5)

The term “regionalism” is defined as:

Fidelity to a particular geographical area; the representation of its habits, speech, manners, history, folklore, or beliefs. A test of regionalism is that the action and personages of such a work cannot be moved, without major loss or distortion, to any other
Munro’s interview and the definition of regionalism clearly show that Munro is quite reluctant to accept that she is a regional writer. Another term used for the writing of Munro is “local colour”. Local colour writing is defined as:

Writing that exploits the speech, dress, mannerisms, habits of thought, and topography peculiar to a certain region, primarily for the portrayal of the life of a geographical setting. Local colour writing was marked by dialect, eccentric characters, and sentimentalized pathos or whimsical humour. (William Harmon 300)

It is noted that most of Munro’s stories are local colour stories. They bear the flavour and colour of British Columbia, Toronto and other parts of Ontario. But she is closely identified with rural south western Ontario. Whatever be the place where she locates her characters and episodes, she recreates the place and people by a complete detailing of all that the sense might register. She follows the technique of photographic realism, which the American short story writer Eudora Welty has successfully practiced. She describes circumstances in straightforward realistic
language. The following extract from “The Peace of Utrecht” illustrates this:

I led my children to the big bedroom at the back of the house, where, Maddy and I used to sleep. It has thin, almost worn-out white curtains at the windows and a square of linoleum on the floor; there is a double bed, a washstand which Maddy and I used as a desk when we were in high school, and a cardboard wardrobe with little mirrors on the inside of the doors.----. (DHS: 198)

Another of her striking characteristic is the plethora of objectives that she uses in her fiction. For example, “I remember after I went away receiving from Maddy several amusing, distracted, quietly overwrought letters describing these sessions with the dress maker” (DHS:200).

These two examples of the many that reveal the local colour. The local colour emphasizes verisimilitude of detail without being much concerned about truth to the larger aspects of life.

Munro wrote about a lot of places, especially the place where she was born, and has lived for much of her life. Her fourth publication, *The Beggar Maid: Stories of Flo & Rose*
(1978) exhibits an unmistakable touch of local colour. *The Beggar Maid* exudes regionality because Munro is presenting to us the rural Southern Ontario where she grew up. In an interview with Graeme Gibson she has remarked:

--- I grew up in a rural community, a very traditional community. --- The concern of everyone else I knew was dealing with life on a very practical level. --- (246)

The story traces the development of Rose, the protagonist, from childhood to middle age, through individualizing local touches.

In her interview with Eleanor Wachtel, Munro speaks her unwillingness in regard to the word, “regional writer”:

--- I do not like to be described as a regional writer. I’m annoyed sometimes when people think I write about a sort of idyllic life or a sort of pastorale, because I’m seen as someone who writes about small towns in the country. It almost seems to be by accident that I write about those people, because I know their houses, and I know certain things about their lives. But I don’t think of them as particular by different from people you might find elsewhere in the world. It’s just something I do without thinking about it. Nearby everybody I write about lives in a place where
I have once lived. --- (‘Alice Munro: a life in writing’: Queen’s Quarterly, 22-June-2005)

The label “regionalist” is being questioned by most of the interviewers. But, according to her, every writer has his region and every writer has his landscape. Morley Callaghan wrote about Toronto. Mordechai Richer wrote about Montreal. Munro published more than a dozen books across four decades. She has remained fiercely loyal to an archetypal Ontario community and a timeless rural country. While answering to the question of Jeanne McCulloch and Mona Simpson in regard to the setting of Ontario, Munro categorically speaks about the significance of the landscape:

Now that I’ve been here I would choose to. It was Gerry’s mother’s house, and he was living there to take care of her. And my father and my stepmother lived in the region too; we felt that there was a limited period of time when we would be at the service of these old people, and then we would move on. Then, of course, for various reasons, that didn’t happen; they’ve been gone a long time, and we’re still here. One of the reasons to stay now is that the landscape is so important to both of us. It’s a great thing that we have in common. And thanks to
Gerry, I appreciate it in such a different way. I couldn’t possess any other landscape or country or lake or town in this way. And I realize that now, so I’ll never leave. (The Paris Review: “Alice Munro, The Art of Fiction No. 137”)

In her interview with Laurie Kruk, Munro states that people have their worries or concerns according to the landscape. In her story “Winter’s Dog”, we are given the picture of some relative, driving their vehicle through the winter season and going to meet the dying relative. They face certain worries or concerns. While speaking on their concerns, Munro makes clear the role of landscape:

I don’t think that those worries or concerns are any better, or any worse, than the worries and concerns of people who live in the Southwest, like Arizona, and New Mexico. But they are specific to a certain landscape. I think landscape just has an awful lot to do with all literature. I think Wuthering Heights couldn’t have been written coming from any other landscape ---. (Laurie Kruk: interview, 2)

Landscape comprises the visible features of an area of land, including the physical elements of landforms, water bodies such
as rivers, lakes and the sea, living elements of land cover including indigenous vegetation, human elements including land uses, buildings and structures, and transitory elements such as lighting and weather conditions. Combining both their physical origins and the cultural overlay of human presence, landscapes reflect the living synthesis of people and place vital to local and national identity. Landscapes, their character and quality, help to define the self-image of a region, its sense of place that differentiates it from other regions. It is the dynamic backdrop to people’s lives.

The Earth has a vast range of landscapes including the icy landscapes of Polar regions, mountainous landscapes, vast and arid desert landscapes, islands and coastal landscapes, densely forested or wooded landscapes including past boreal forests and tropical rainforests, and agricultural landscapes of temperate and tropical regions.

Landscape may be further reviewed under cultural landscape, landscape ecology, landscape planning, landscape assessment and landscape design. Richard Hartshorne differentiated landscape from region, which he considers is larger and more flexible in size. He eliminated sky on the basis that the atmosphere is simply the medium through which the Earth’s
surface is viewed and also excluded underground mine workings, the soil beneath vegetation and rainfall. However, he concluded moveable objects noting that a view of Broadway without traffic would be incomplete. He ignored the inclusion of oceans in landscape. He opposed perception of landscapes by other than sight, e.g. sounds and odours, on the grounds that these do not contribute to a unified concept. In regard to the concept of natural and cultural landscapes that Carl Sauer among others differentiated the natural landscape ceased to exist when man appeared on the scene. While admitting the term primeval landscape could refer to pre-human landscapes, he considered the present natural landscape is a theoretical concept, which never did exist.

Having seen the terms regionalism, local colour and landscape, let us see another term “Nature” which is also synonymous with landscape. As Raymond Williams has said that Nature may be “the most complex word in the language, but it remains the necessary subject of landscape. The essay “Wilderness and the Canadian Mind: Treatment of Nature in Canadian Literature” (9 Aug. 2010) throws a flood of light on the term nature, its implication in Canadian literature, the critical opinions of Northrop Frye, MacDonald, Margaret Atwood,
Marcia Kline and a few more, and the depiction of nature in literature. The debate on nature began with the publication of Frye’s thesis “garrison mentality” in 1943. The year 1970 saw a number of books published, dealing negative attitude towards nature. A more recent article by Mary Lu MacDonald has tried to counter this prevailing notion, and attempts to argue that there was, before 1850, an “essentially positive view of the Canadian landscape” (MacDonald 48). It was Margaret Atwood who asserts that Nature in Canadian literature is “often dead and unanswering or actively hostile to man.” Canadian writers, according to Atwood do not trust Nature. They are always suspecting some dirty tricks (Atwood 49). The source of this distrust is that nature is often accused of having betrayed expectations, it was supposed to be different. Marcia Kline echoes the similar opinion in regard to nature in her book *Beyond the Land Itself* (2004). According to her, American writers who show a positive attitude towards nature and Canadian ones who see nature as “part of a world that is terrifying, hostile to human values and human endeavour, and inferior to civilization” (Kline 25). This difference, according to Kline, is due to the way Canadians not only maintained a connection to England following the American revolution but also tended to set themselves in opposition to this revolutionary or
“republican” attitude. A host of writers like Susanna Moodie, Catherine Parr Traill, Samuel Strickland, Anne Langton, Elizabeth Simcoe, Anna Jameson, and Daisy Phillips wrote of their experiences in the Canadian wilderness. With the passage of time, it is noticed that women writers described the natural environment of the Canadian wilderness in positive terms. These women writers, say Atwood, were exposed to English writers like Edmund Burke and William Wordsworth. The result of the exposure was that these women consistently described the natural environment of the Canadian wilderness in positive terms. According to these writers, Nature was “good” and cities were “evil”. If Wordsworth was right and Nature was a kind Mother or Nurse who would guide man if would only listen to her, then Canada ought to have been “the Great Good Place” (Atwood 50).

Munro, in her several interviews, tries to express her views on nature. Lisa Dickler Awano wanted to know her interest in Wordsworth’s philosophy of nature. Munro tells her:

Nature? oh, yes, tremendously. ---I think, but I had a great feeling about nature in my late teens – the countryside I grew up in – a sort of mystical feeling---. (Awano 17)
The next question of Awano is whether William Wordsworth’s philosophy has a contemporary meaning for her. Munro responds to her:

It has. Yes. And of course, now I’m not alone in feeling this way. It was a feeling that I really guarded when I was a young girl, because people would have laughed at me, I thought. And now, it’s quite common for people to have this feeling and this concern. Whether it will help or not. I don’t know. (Awano 17)

To the question of Geoffrey Hancock in regard to the depiction of trees in her story “Wood”, Munro says:

I love those trees. I just had to put them all in. ---. It was more important. It was terribly important to that story to list those trees. (Hancock 218)

Munro speaks her deep and passionate feelings for different aspects of nature. But she is more interested in landscape, as she says:

---. I love the landscape, not as “scenery” but as something intimately known. Also the weather, the villages and towns, not in their picturesque aspects but in all phases. Human experiences though do not seem to me
to differ, expect in fairly superficial ways, no matter what the customs and surroundings. (Awano 3)

“Environment” is another problematic term. The term is nearer to regionalism or the local colour. Oxford Dictionary defines the term “environment” as “the surroundings or conditions in which a person, animal or plant lives or operates” (227). In recent decades, the term environment has gained wide usage. Jay Appleton distinguished environment from landscape by referring to the latter as “the environment” perceived. An advantage which the term environment has over landscape is that environment can refer more readily to urban scenes although the term urban landscape is also in common usage. As the term environment embraces the total physical, biological, cultural and aesthetic components of an area, it is generally regarded as too broad and encompassing a term for landscape.

Munro does not seem to accept the umbrella terms – the “regionalism”, “the local colour” and “environment”. In her interviews with Geoffrey Hancock, Harold Harwood, Tim J. R. Struthers, Lisa Dickler Awano, and a host of others, Munro regards landscape as the raw material with which to study human perceptions and human information processing. Munro prefers the particular meaning of landscape to general meaning of landscape.
The general meaning of landscape refers to the Earth’s surface; the particular meaning refers to what the observer observes. The latter combines the physical and the psychological: “any landscape is composed not only of what lies before our eyes, but what lies within our heads” (D.W. Meinig 8).

With this perspective at the back of mind, let us see the different aspects of landscape – its implication, etymology, definitions, and types of landscapes.

1.2 What is a landscape?

On the surface level, landscape seems to be one of those words that contains, or it includes, many things: such as trees, birds, grass, stone, water, vegetation on the ground, range of hills, fields with boundaries, water bodies such as rivers, lakes and the sea, land uses, buildings and structures, lighting and weather conditions, a vast range of landscapes including the icy landscapes of polar regions, mountainous landscapes, vast and desert landscapes, islands and coastal landscapes, densely forested or wooded landscapes, agricultural landscapes of temperate and tropical regions, cultural landscape, landscape planning, landscape assessment and landscape design. But, on the deeper level, the term landscape has a wider and a deeper meaning. But
before noting its traditional definition and its etymology, let us trace its brief history.

1.3 Word History

Landscape, first recorded in 1598, was borrowed as a painter’s term from Dutch during the 16th century, when Dutch artists were pioneering the landscape genre. The Dutch word landscape had earlier meant simply “region, tract of land” but had acquired the artistic sense, which it brought over into English, of “a picture depicting scenery on land”. Interestingly, 34 years pass after the first recorded use of landscape in English before the word is used of a view or vista of natural scenery. This delay suggests that people were first introduced to landscapes in paintings and then saw landscapes in real literary sense. Later, a number of scholars used the term landscape in different ways. Carl Sauer first used the term in geography in 1925, stressing the concept of the landscape as the expression of interaction between humans and their environment. B.L. Rhoads and C.E. Thorn’s definition (1996) is of the geomorphological landscape: “the totality of surface landforms” (340).

Landscape comprises the visible features of an area of land, including the physical elements of landforms, water bodies such as rivers, lakes and the sea, living elements of land
cover including indigenous vegetation, human elements including land uses, buildings and structures, and transitory elements such as lighting and weather conditions.

Combining both their physical origins and the cultural overlay of human presence, often created over millennia, landscapes reflect the living synthesis of people and place vital to local and national identity. Landscapes, their character and quality, help define the self-image of a region, its sense of place that differentiates it from other regions. It is the dynamic backdrop to people’s lives.

The Earth has a vast range of landscapes including the icy landscapes of Polar Regions, mountainous landscapes, vast arid desert landscapes, islands and coastal landscapes, densely forested or wooded landscapes including past boreal forests and tropical rainforests, and agricultural landscapes of temperate and tropical regions.

Landscapes may be further reviewed under cultural landscape, landscape ecology, landscape planning, landscape assessment and landscape design.

It is argued that landscape is not the property of a single discipline. Its cultural implications are broad, in effect,
landscape operates at the confluence of geography, politics, society and the environment.

1.4 Etymology: Landscape

It is believed that the terms *landskift*, *landscipe* or *landscaef* entered Britain some time after the 15th century. These terms referred to a system of human-made spaces in the landscapes such as fields with boundaries though not necessarily defined by fences or walls. It also referred to a natural unit, a region or tract of land such as a river valley or range of hills as occupied by a tribe or later, ruled by a feudal lord. The term is similar in meaning to the German *landschaft* referring to administrative unit or region. The term fell into disuse and by the time of the *Doomsday Book* in the 11th century, the word did not appear in any translation from the Latin.

“Landscap” is originally from Dutch language when Dutch painters refer to paintings of inland natural or rural scenery. In the year 1598, the word landscape was recorded, and was borrowed from Dutch during the 16th century, when Dutch artists were on the verge of becoming masters of the landscape art genre. The Dutch word landscape had earlier meant simply region, tract of land but had acquired the artistic sense, which it brought over into English, of a picture depicting scenery on land.
With subsequent years, it is seen that the term landscape underwent a number of changes. From 1577 with Harrison’s *Description of Britain* onwards, a new awareness of the aesthetic nature of landscape emerged as a new kind of topographical writing flourished. Originally the term was translated landskip which the *Oxford English Dictionary* refers to as the corrupt form of the word, gradually to be replaced by landscape. The English word is not recorded as used for physical landscapes before 1725. Hartshorne differentiated the term from region which he considers is larger and more flexible in size. Carl Sauer noted that the concept of landscape began to change. According to him, the natural landscape ceased to exist when man appeared on the scene.

During the 1920s and 1930s, attempts were made to construct methodologies that made landscape the essential if not exclusive task of geography. The role of geography was to systematically examine the “phenomenology of landscape.” Sauer viewed landscapes broadly as areas comprising distinct associations of forms, both physical and natural and regarded landscape study as tracing the development of natural landscapes into cultural landscapes.
By the 1940s, the concept of a natural landscape became increasingly questioned with knowledge of human impact on the environment. Daniels and Cosgrove defined landscape, not in physical terms but as an outward expression of human perception. A landscape is a cultural image, a pictorial way of representing structuring, or symbolizing surroundings. Meinig combined the physical and the psychological: “any landscape is composed not only of what lies before our eyes but what lies within our heads” (Meinig, 8).

In recent decades, the term environment has gained wide usage. Jay Appleton distinguished environment from landscape. As the term environment embraces the total physical, biological, cultural and aesthetic components of an area, it is generally regarded as too broad and encompassing a term for landscape.

The terms scene, scenic and scenery are inadequate descriptions of landscape. Scene refers to a certain portion of a play, so a scene can describe a portion of a landscape. Scenery refers to the general appearance of a place particularly a picturesque view. While it can be used interchangeably with landscape, it does not convey the same depth of meaning. The term landscape is associated with aesthetics. Landscapes have
often been the subject of inquiry within the broad framework of aesthetics in the quest for an understanding of beauty.

It was Otto Schluter, the geographer, who formally used “cultural landscape” as an academic term in the early 20th century. In 1908, Schluter argued that by defining geography as a Landschaftskunde (landscape science) this would give geography a logical subject matter shared by no other discipline. He defined two forms of landscape: the Urlandschaft (transl. original landscape) or landscape that existed before major human induced changes and the Kultur landschaft (transl. cultural landscape) a landscape created by human culture. It was Carl O. Sauer who developed the idea of cultural landscapes. His classic definition of a cultural landscape reads as follows: “The cultural landscape is fashioned from a natural landscape by a cultural group. Culture is the agent, the natural are the medium, the cultural landscape is the result” (Sauer 10). Sauer and Schulter were probably the most influential in promoting and developing the idea of cultural landscapes. Since Schulter’s first formal use of the term, and Sauer’s effective promotion of the idea, the concept of cultural landscapes has been variously used, applied, debated, developed and refined within academia.
In contemporary scholarship, landscapes transcend the physical to include both what is “shape by the mind of the beholder as well as socio-historical forces” (Sierra Leone: 207,143).

1.5 The Definitions: Landscape

The umbrella terms such as “landscape”, “environment”, and “nature” are inevitably problematic. Landscape is a polysemic term which, according to Lawrence Buell, derives from early modern Dutch “landscap” painting (142). Landscape is inevitably an ambiguous concept; the term itself is a slippery one who’s meaning slides between the actual and the virtual, the real and the represented. It means both the physical fact of inland scenery, and the representations of that scenery. Even this distinction between reality and representation comes into question in relation to landscape. S. Daniels and D. Cosgrove see landscape as always an inevitably a kind of representation executed in a variety of materials and on many surfaces, be they paint on canvas or earth, stone, water, and vegetation on the ground. To them “[a] landscape park is more palpable but no more real, nor less imaginary, than a landscape painting or poem (Daniels 1988, 1). Representations of landscape
in visual or verbal forms, then, are in fact representations of something that is already a representation, because

--- Landscape is itself a physical and multisensory medium --- in which cultural meanings and values are encoded, whether they are put there by the physical transformation of a place in landscape gardening and architecture, or found in a place formed, as we say, by nature --- Landscape is already artifice in the moment of its beholding, long before it becomes the subject of pictorial representation. (Mitchell 1994, 14)

As such a medium, landscape includes both scenery and environment but it is considerably more than either of them. For Estelle Jussim and Elizabeth Lindquist Cock, landscapes constructed as the phenomenological world does not exist, and landscape can only be symbolic, “both as a construct of the ‘real’ world and as an artefact communicating ideologies about it”. As such, they argue, “landscapes are so saturated with assigned meanings that it is probably impossible to exhaust them” (Jussim and Lindquist – Cock 1985, XIV). The metaphors of landscape further confuse the issue, so that we can speak of “landscapes of the mind” and even “cultural landscaping”. The idea that a written text or a photographic image is a cultural construct is readily
accepted, but the notion that this definition also applies to
landscape is a relatively new one. Yet the vast differences in
attitudes to landscape over the centuries seem to suggest that
landscape and our understanding and use of it are as subject to
cultural change as writing or photography. Walt Whiteman wrote
that:

Nature consists not only in itself objectively, but at least
just as much in its subjective reflection from the person,
spirit, age, looking at it, in the midst of it, and absorbing
it: [it] faithfully sends back the characteristic beliefs of
the time or individual ---(Gilman 1914)
The same can be said of landscape, which is necessarily “defined
by our vision and interpreted by our minds” (Meinig 1979, 2) and
operates in its widest sense as a shorthand term for the ways in
which we interpret the external world as it appears to us. As such,
W.J.T. Mitchell suggests that we think of it “as a process by
which social and subjective identities are formed” (Mitchell 1944,
1). Arturo Carlo Quintavalle has also emphasized the need to
study the relationship between landscape and ideology
(Quintavalle 1993, 9).

English language dictionary definitions give it, “as a
portion of territory the eye can comprehend in a single view.”
Jim Duncan in the *Dictionary of Human Geography* says it is
“the appearance of an area, the assemblage of objects used to produce that appearance [or] the area itself” (429). Jay Appleton, the geographer, defines landscape as, “Landscape is not synonymous with environment, it is the environment perceived, especially visually perceived” (48). D.W. Meinig offers a similar definition of landscape: “Landscape is defined by our vision and interpreted by our minds” (3). Meinig further adds “--- any landscape is composed not only of what lies before our eyes but what lies within our heads” (4). While the word perceptual is not used by Meinig, it is clear from his use of the words ‘vision’ and ‘interpreted’ that he understands landscape to be a perceptual phenomenon.

The notion that landscape is a perceptual phenomenon is reflected in the definition adopted by the European Landscape Convention (Article 1, Definitions), developed by the Council of Europe:

Landscape is defined as a zone or area as a perceived by local people or visitors, whose visual features and characters are the result of the action of natural and/or cultural (that is, human) factors. This definition reflects the idea that landscapes evolve through time, as a result of being acted upon by natural forces and human beings. It also underlines that a landscape forms a whole, whose
natural and cultural components are taken together, not separately. (Article 1: Definitions, 2012)

While some of these definitions have been addressed in the *Best Practice Guidelines*, some of the definitions provide an ambiguous, and leave scope for interpretation. For example, landscape is defined in the following terms: “Landscape is the cumulative expression of natural and cultural features, patterns and processes in a geographical area, including human perceptions and associations” (NZIL A Education Foundation 2010, 6). From an understanding of landscape that holds that landscape is entirely a perceptual phenomenon, one might question what the cumulative expression of natural and cultural features, patterns and processes might include other than what is perceived. Expression and perception are in effect two sides of the same coin – that which is expressed by the landscape is that which is also perceived by the participant in that landscape. There may be more in the environment, but there is nothing more in landscape beyond that which is known through the human perception of that which is expressed.

Having seen a good number of definitions and implications of the term landscape, it is good to realize that there cannot be only one definition, as “a definition is always relative to the context and purpose of the inquiry, which in turn will
determine which traits we select for the initial two steps of the
definition”(1989 : 15-17).

Traditionally defined as a portion of territory that can
be viewed at one time from one place, the term landscape has
long been tied to the inescapably solid, tangible, and material in
the form of land. And yet in its distinction from the root term
“land”, landscape is also inextricably linked to the realm of
perception and what one (or many) can see or imagine. Thus the
etymology of the word landscape as “a picture representing a
view of natural inland scenery” reveals the way it exists
intrinsically not only as a representation but also a visual and
subjective appropriation of land and space. As a representation,
landscape can only be the object of one’s gaze, thus, giving
agency to the proprietor of the gaze. Hence, in identifying its
potential to transform a part of terrestrial space into a place of
historical life for people. Homi Bhabha, the pioneer of post-
colonial theory, has acknowledged the power of landscape to
embody the vision of the emergence of a nation. Bhabha writes
that:

The recurrent metaphor of landscape as the inscape of
national identity emphasizes the quality of light, the
question of social visibility, the power of the eye to
naturalize the rhetoric of national affiliation and its
forms of collective expression. (Homi Bhabha: 1994, 143)

Edouard Glissant (L’Intention Poétique: 1997, 238), Sharon Zukin (Landscape of Power: From Detroit to Disney World: 1993, 16), Filip De Boeck, Marie-Francoise Plissart and Koen Van Synghel (“Kinshasa, The Imaginary City”: 205, 57), Reda Bensmate (Experimental Nations: Or, the Invention of the Maghreb: 2003, 6), Donald Moore, Anand Pandian and Jake Kosck (Race, Nature and the Politics of Difference: 2003, 11), and a number of others focus on different approaches to landscape. Edonard Glissant encourages the individual “to passionately live the landscape, to know what within us it signifies” (238). Sharon Zukin affirms that, “the concept of landscape has recently emerged from a long period of reification to become a potent tool of cultural analysis. It connotes a contentious, compromised product of society. It also embodies a point of view” (16). In Zukin’s study, which focuses on urban landscape, it is clear that the appropriation and transformation of landscape represents a re-ordering and contestation of visual, cultural, and political territories. Filip De Boeck, Marie–Francoise Plissart and Koen Van Synghel take this approach to landscape one step further by insisting that invisible and imaginary landscapes deserve equal critical attention. Taking objection to the approach of Filip De Boeck, Reda Bensmaia warns us, this type of post-colonial
reading reduces literary works into “mere signifiers of other signifiers, with total disregard for what makes them literary works in and of themselves”(6). Edward Said, another pioneer of post-colonial theory, believes that cultural productions are grounded in identifiable geographical landscapes. While analyzing the works of Antonio Gramsci, Edward Said, in his article, “History, Literature and Geography” posits that “all ideas, all texts, all writings are embedded in actual geographical situations that make them possible” (Sierra Leone: 2007, 1). Said’s views draw from the premise that literature enjoys an intimate relationship with its environment of birth; speaking to, or about it. This relationship is all the more crucial in Africa where landscapes are thoroughly imbued with social significance. D. R. Fraser Taylor says to this effect that in Africa, “the historical background, social customs, religious ideas, political aspirations and a variety of other factors aspects of the environment are as significant as soils, climate and natural vegetation”(Sierra Leone: 2007,1). Nguigi Wa Thiongo corroborates this when he says that “what forms the African sensibility, [cannot] be divorced from the landscape and the historical experience” (133 - 4).

The views of Fraser Taylor and Ngugi above find expression in the works of Syl Cheney-Coker, a post-colonial African poet. The short stories of Munro are based on a territorial and imaginative vision of a landscape which is unique in Canada.
In it, the landscape is an active presence, a player in human affairs.

1.6 The significance of the locale

Landscape is as fundamental to literature as setting is to theatre. The setting constitutes the time and the place. The time refers to the early part of the twentieth century, say, since the birth of Munro on 10th July, 1931. The place refers to western Ontario, a farming country, where Munro was born and spent her early years. The landscape that we notice in her short stories confines to the place where Munro spent much of her life. The locale plays a vital role. Many critics, writers and the poets have noted the significance of the locale. Oxford Dictionary defines the locale as “a place where something happens” (2011, 398). In his brief introduction to *The Atlas of Literature* (1996), Malcolm Bradbury quotes the American writer, Edura Welty: “The truth is, fiction depends for its life on place” (121). Margaret Atwood, emphasizing the significance of location, writes:

I don’t think you transcend region, any more than a plant transcends earth--- To me an effective writer is one who can make what he or she is writing about understandable and moving to someone who has never been there. All good writing has that kind of transcendence. It doesn’t mean being something called ‘international’; there is no such thing. (143)
Margaret Laurence echoes the similar opinion when she speaks of the settings of her novels. Her novel moves between locations in Manitoba and Vancouver. Wallace Stevens, the great American poet, writes on the place: “It seems to me an interesting idea: that is to say the idea that we live in the description of a place and not in the place itself, and in every vital sense we do” (Sarah (Sally) Hill: 1996, 1). Descriptions and depictions of place are an important part of Canada’s literary and art history. Writing, photography and landscapes have interrelationships. Munro is similar to photographer, as she captures the flora and fauna of nature and the life of man and woman. The photographer as an artist needs to record and reproduce reality as closely as possible. This aspect is witnessed in the writing of Munro. Stories that illustrate these are the town and people descriptions in Munro’s *Lives of Girls and Women* and *Who Do You Think You Are?*. Discussing photography, Del in *LGW* writes about the photographer in her story:

> People saw that in his pictures they had aged twenty or thirty years. Middle-aged people saw in their own features the terrible, growing, inescapable likeness of their dead parents; young fresh girls and men showed what gaunt or dulled or stupid faces they would have when they were fifty. (*LGW* 205)
The photographer is able to reveal the emotions and the feelings of the personality by a careful and artistic use of the camera. Munro, too, in her works displays such artistic ability.

Munro also shares similar concern about photography. In an interview, she comments: “I like looking at people’s lives over a number of years, without continuity. Like catching them in snapshots---.” She further emphasizes:

I don’t see that people develop and arrive somewhere. I just see people living in flashes. From time to time. And this is something you do become aware of as you go into middle age---. Mostly in my stories I like to look at what people don’t understand.(Interview, Hancock, 8-90)

In Munro’s description of the setting, Lorraine Mary York informs us how Munro communicates it in such a way that it is as if the reader is looking at a photograph. Although York is not the first to mention that Munro’s work does this, she explains it in a way that draws on the commentary of Munro herself, and of the evidence within Munro’s short stories. She looks at the stories of Munro as each having a specific type of photographic style whether it is: realist, super-realist or visionary and examines compared to actual pictures and their photographer.

As Hardy confines to Wessex and Faulkner confines to Yoknapatawpha County, Munro chooses Huron County where she was born and brought up for the background of her stories.
Ontario is the large province of Canada that stretches from the Ottawa River to the western end of the Lake Superior. This is a huge and varied space, but south-western Ontario is a distinct part of it. It was named Sowesto by the painter Greg Curnoe, a name that has struck. Curnoe’s view was that Sowesto was an area of considerable interest, but also of considerable psychic murkiness and oddity, a view shared by many. Robertson Davies, also from Sowesto, used to say, “I know the dark folk-ways of my people” (Margaret Atwood: 206, X). Alice Munro knows them, too.

Lake Huron lies at the western edge of Sowesto, Lake Erie to the south. The country is mostly flat farmland, cut by several wide, winding rivers prone to flooding, and on the rivers – because of the available boat transport, and the power provided by water – driven mills – a number of smaller and larger towns grew up in the nineteenth century. Each has its red-brick town hall, each its post-office building and its handful of churches of various denominations, each its main street and its residential section of gracious homes, and its other residential section on the wrong side of the tracks. Each has its families with long memories and stashes of bones in the closets.

Sowesto contains the site of the famous Donnelly Massacre of the nineteenth century, when a large family was slaughtered and their home burnt as a result of political
resentments carried over from Ireland. Lush nature, repressed emotions, respectable fronts, hidden sexual excesses, outbreaks of violence, lurid crimes, long-held grudges, strange rumours – none are ever far away in Munro’s Sowesto, partly because all have been provided by the real life of the region itself.

A number of writers have come from Sowesto. Munro hails from small-town south-western Ontario. Huron County is Munro’s Wessex. The inhabitants of Huron County are essentially human, and hence, have their kinship with all humanity. In this sense, Huron County is everywhere. Munro writes stories that have the density – moral, emotional, sometimes historical concepts. Munro describes her stories as houses with places to wander around, in and out waiting to be discovered. She also says that every time a reader returns to it they discover something new. In her interview, she says:

A story is not like a road to follow, I said, it’s more like a house. You go inside and stay there for a while, wandering back and forth and settling where you like and discovering how the room and corridors relate to each other, how the world outside is altered by being viewed from these windows. And you, the visitor, the reader are altered as well by being in this enclosed space, whether it is ample and easy or full of crooked turns, or sparsely or opulently furnished. You can go back again
and again, and the house, the story always contains more than you saw the last time. (Miller, Judith Maclean: *The Antigonish review* 115)

Munro takes social issues in her stories. The social issues may refer to the current society of Canada, but they also fit into the modern life of human beings, anywhere outside the country. Though she takes Ontario as her setting, yet her social issues do not seem to confine to the setting only. Her social issues are universal. Her words seem like a gossip, according to Howells, what she narrates is an ordinary story that may happen for every single woman anywhere on the Earth. If she talks of Canada, it does not have a privilege to other places. Even the setting of place may be claimed to be universal in her stories, as Ontario does not play a role in the story. Munro talks of girls or women who encounter challenges and struggle within a patriarchal society, but never tells us a story unique for Canadians. What she depicts may happen in the society outside. The story she narrates, though mostly happens in Canada’s landscape, can be repeated anywhere around the world. Even the reaction of protagonist is not unique to present a particularly Canadian lifestyle.

1.7 Types of Landscapes

Landscape Genres are vague categories. Vagueness stems partly from Landscape, as a cultural artifact is a word that admits a multiplicity of meanings. Since culture is not static, the
term is constantly acquiring new meanings according to the prevalent world views of the disciplines concerned and their reception by the public at large; new meanings do not necessarily render older ones obsolete and multiple meanings may co-exist for extended periods. Since meaning determines the extension of the corresponding conceptual class, at any particular time then there is a lack of consensus regarding the borderline cases of the class denoted by the word landscape. Pretty much the same may be said about words like Myth, Power, History, Classic, etc. which as predicates acting on the noun landscape, conform landscape genres such as Mythical, Contested, Historical or Classical.

Barry Lopez in “Landscape and Narrative” isolates two types of landscape in literature – the external and the interior. The external landscape is the one we see – not only the line and colour of the land and its shading at different times of the day, but also its plants and animals in season, its weather, its geology, the record of its climate and evolution. The interior landscape is a “kind of projection within the person of a part of the exterior landscape (Sierra Leone: 2007, 1).

Angus Fletcher, through his theory of the environment, observes that the social landscape figures as part of the total landscape in works of literature. Landscape, then, transcends geography to connote a spot where people have acted
out their lives; their identities, for as Leslie Marmon Silko has observed: “human identity is linked with all the elements of creation, landscape being an integral part of this whole” (Sierra Leone: 2007, 1).

Recently the definition of landscape has been enlarged even further to include any geographical area that has been modified or influenced by human activity. Thus, Native hunting grounds, industrial parks, urban subdivisions are now being studied as cultural landscapes. There are many types of landscapes, such as Mythical, Romantic, Inspirational, Poetical, Sacred, Pastoral, Historical, Classical, Conflict, Funeral, Physical and Emotional landscapes. The list of types of landscapes is endless. Within the scope of a dissertation, one cannot make a comprehensive study of every type of landscape.

In this dissertation, the researcher would like to take landscape to mean the description of the land or place, its role in the cultural, economic, and spiritual life of a given community and above all in the vision of the short story writer, Munro.

1.8 Southern Ontario Gothic

Webster’s Dictionary defines the term gothic as “of or in a literary genre characterized by an atmosphere of mystery and gloom, violence, bizarre characters and happenings, etc.” (306-307). The term is today often applied to works, such as Daphane du Maurier’s Rebecca, that lack the Gothic setting or the medieval
atmosphere but that attempt to create the same atmosphere of brooding and unknown terror as the true Gothic novel. It is also applied to a host of currently popular tales of “damsels in distress” in strange and terrifying locales. The novels of Scott, Charlotte Bronte and others contain materials and devices traceable to the Gothic novel. E. A. Poe, the American short story writer, exploited the term.

Southern Ontario Gothic is the subgenre of Canadian literature. The subgenre has certain similarities with the American Southern Gothic genre. This type of literature focuses on social conditions such as race, gender, religion and politics. The writers who practiced this genre are – Alice Munro, Margaret Atwood, Matt Cohen, Marian Engel, Timothy Findley, Scott Symons and a host of others. All of them “share a sense of distinct regional, even mythological place where horror, murder, and bodily violations are not uncommon” (Allan Hepburn, 2010). Southern Ontario Gothic is generally written in a strong realistic style, describing the typical small-town, protestant life of the region, and often includes themes of moral hypocrisy. Its characters act against humanity, logic, and morality, and there is often a character suffering from some form of mental illness.

Features of Gothic Literature:
Usually a heroine, the “damsel in distress”, searched for her true identity in a ruin or a confining architectural space like a dungeon.

1. Gothic literature deals with madness, demons, secrets, live burial, and fear.

2. Use of supernatural elements

3. The Gothic can be located in desperate domestic circumstances that produce insanity or criminal action.

   Within the Southern Ontario background there is often a failure of communication between family members or social groups which makes it prone to Gothic tales: “In the absence of communication, strange projections and psychological grotesqueries spring up and rapidly grow to unmanageable proportions. Malevolent fantasies are the source and sustenance of the Gothic tradition” (Hepburn & Hurley).

   Jennifer Andrews (“Native Canadian Gothic Refigured: Reading Eden Robinson’s *Monkey Beach*”) Margot Northey (*The Haunted Wilderness: The Gothic and Grotesque in Canadian Fiction*, 1976) have contributed to Gothic literature by showing the differences between traditional Gothic fiction and how the Gothic can be used in a contemporary context. Rosemary Jackson (*Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion*, 1981) provides a very useful theory of the Gothic as a subgenre of the fantastic. For
want of space, the researcher cannot make a comprehensive note of Jackson’s contribution.

Munro’s use of Gothicism lies in the fact that she writes in a realistic style about typical small-town protestant life, most often situated in Southern Ontario, in which she analyses and criticizes social condition especially concerned with gender boundaries. Her characters act against humanity, logic, and morality, sometimes even suffering from some form of mental illness. Especially the characters from “Dimension”, “Free Radicals” and “Child’s Play” act in such a way, being able to kill people that are very close to them, in two of the cases even family. In “Dimension”, Doree tells that “Some of the women she worked with could tell stories to make your hair curl” (1), which is exactly Munro’s trademark.

Munro fulfils certain typical devices proposed by Andrews, and Jackson. According to Andrews, the Gothic novels/stories have settings in remote places. Almost all stories are set in remote places. The protagonists are tormented or split up. “Dimensions” and “Child’s Play” are good examples in this regard. Fantasies and dreamscapes may be seen in “Too Much Happiness”, and “Wenlock Edge”. Urban life and rural life is contrasted in “Child’s Play”. In majority of the stories, it is the character’s inner strangeness that is the essential element for mystery. In “Wood”, for example, Roy’s excessive attraction to trees makes
the reader feel uncomfortable, while in reality nothing gruesome happens. Also in “Some Women”, there is Roxanne’s morbid attraction to the terminally ill Mr. Crozier.

According to Rosemary Jackson, the disruption of chronological time as a result of which past, present and future meld together and lose their historical sequence, thus tending towards an eternal present. Stories like “Too Much Happiness”, “Dimension”, “Fiction”, “Child’s Play” can be cited as good examples in this regard.

Since the majority of her characters are female, Munro’s gothic is essentially female gothic.