CHAPTER SIX

ART AS ARTIFACT

Artists must be sacrificed to their art. Like bees, they must put their lives into the sting they give.

Emerson.

An analysis of the art of the short stories of Katherine Anne Porter and Alice Munro, throws much light on the numerous implications of its vision, which, otherwise, might go unnoticed and unheeded.

Though the works of Porter and Munro do not mirror each other, they tend to resemble, in a sense, the spokes of the same wheel, originating from a common source or single perception, here, eminently feminine/feminist yet separate and distinct from each other in respect of several elements that go into the making of their literary art.

Through an analysis of individual works of art, an attempt has been made here to recognize the factors which could offer a clue to the connection between specific works to the authors concerned in particular, and to literature in general.
The short stories of Porter and Munro offer several motifs, the scrutiny of which can reveal the major thematic contours of the art of each, in the light of the works of the other.

According to Trousson:

motif is a term for designating a setting or large concept denoting either a certain attitude - e.g. rebellion - or a basic impersonal situation in which the actors are not yet individualized. For example the situation of a man between two women, of the strife between two friends or between a father and his son, of the abandoned woman, etc. (qtd. in Weisstein 138)

Emancipation of women, initiation rites, developing awareness of lack of gender justice, self-assertion through violence by women, triangular situational motif, weak men marrying dominant women and women getting jilted at men's hand, are some of the motifs common in the fictional works of Porter and Munro.
Further, according to Frenzel, the word 'motif' designates a smaller thematic [stofflich] unit, which does not yet encompass an entire plot or story line but in itself constitutes an element pertaining to content and situation. (qtd. in Weisstein 138)

Several women writers in America and Canada engaged themselves in the struggle for greater and more meaningful gender justice, by asserting their rights during the twentieth century, deliberately casting off stereotyped, subservient roles foisted on them by a predominantly patriarchal society.

In a vital sense, both Katherine Anne Porter and Alice Munro are concerned with the emancipation of women. The motif of self-assertion on the part of the women protagonists can be seen in the stories of Porter and Munro, in keeping with the dictum of Judith Kegan Gardiner who finds a common cause for women in literary art: "what unifies women's writing is the psychology of oppression, the psychology of women living under patriarchy" (121).

Beyond any shade of doubt, certain motifs which are gender-specific are taken up by both Porter and
Munro. For instance, the motif of initiation rites for girls is employed in the short story "Circus" by Porter and "Red Dress-1946" by Munro.

"Circus" presents Miranda's first awareness of the female body, when two boys peer up at her from under their gallery seats, warranting Dicey, her nannie, to caution the naive Miranda: "Stop throwing yo legs around that way" (CS 344), indirectly advising her to shield herself from possible overtures/threats from boys. The description of the reaction of Miranda shows the awareness of the 'other' world that dawns on the adolescent girl all on a sudden, and indicates the gulf that divides her world from that of the adults.

Miranda screams in her sleep that night and cries for comfort from the adults at home. For, the chasm that lies between her world and that of the adults is abysmal:

Dicey came, her cross, sleepy eyes half-closed, her big dark mouth pouted, thumping the floor with her thick bare feet. "I swear," she said, in a violent hoarse whisper. "What the matter with you? You need a good spankin, I swear! Wakin everybody up like this [. . .]". Miranda was completely subjugated
by the fears [. . .]. Ordinarily she did not care how cross she made the harassed adults around her. Now if Dicey must be cross, she still did not really care, if only Dicey might not turn out the lights and leave her to the fathomless terrors of the darkness where sleep could overtake her once more. (CS 347)

Nance's comments on the meaning of the story bring out the implicit meaning and the depth of the significance of the story:

The explicit theme of 'The Circus' is Miranda's initiation into the new dimension of experience and her failure to cope with it satisfactorily because of her inability to distinguish illusion from reality. Her slight brush with the mystery of sex in the form of boys looking up through bleachers is also beyond her understanding at that early age. The result of her day at the Circus is fear, which in itself is both ordeal and mystery - an initiation process and also a permanent inseparable fact of her life. (87)

The motif of 'initiation' rite is also used in Munro's short story, "Red Dress - 1946". It is about
the experience of a thirteen-year-old girl's first dance, when "The girl, with a stiff new brassiere, red velvet dress, elaborately curled hair, deodorant and cologne, is forced to leave the safe boundaries of childhood" (DHS 151) to become a sexually alluring object. Not totally out of her own volition, she steps outside as an 'objective' choice of boys, and on the dance floor, is surprised to meet Mary Fortune, an athlete who does not get chosen by any boy. The protagonist, however, elects to be chosen by a boy who asks her to dance with her, and considers that as a step towards her independence. When she returns home she initially feels 'socially adjusted', but later, gets oppressed by a sense of female duty she has failed to perform, as her mother is disappointed in her peculiar lack of enterprise and consequent lack of excitement, possible in the world of young men, in normal circumstances:

I went around the house to the back door, thinking, I have been to a dance and a boy has walked me home and kissed me. It was all true. My life was possible [...]. But when I saw the waiting kitchen, and my mother in her faded, fuzzy Paisley Kimono, with her sleepy but doggedly expectant face, I understood what a mysterious and oppressive
obligation I had, to be happy, and how I had almost failed it, and would be likely to fail it every time, and she would not know. (DHS 160)

Mordecai Marcus discusses the views of Adrian H. Jaffe and Virgil Scott in "What is An Initiation Story?": "Initiation occurs when a character, in the course of the story, learns something that he did not know before, and [. . .] what he learns is already known to, shared by, the larger group of the world" (221-28).

The short story, "The Grave", presents a motif of another kind, namely, initiation into mysteries of adult life, in circumstances that connect birth with death, when Paul and Miranda go to an abandoned family cemetery. Paul starts up a rabbit, kills it with one shot, and skins it expertly as Miranda watches him admiringly.

As Paul lifts "the oddly bloated belly", "look," he said in a low amazed voice, "It was going to have young ones" (CS 366).

Miranda gets the shock of her life by what she sees of the rabbit embryos in the slaughtered rabbit:

[. . .] dark gray, their sleek wet down lying in minute even ripples, like a baby's head
just washed, their unbelievably small delicate ears folded close, their little blind faces almost featureless [. . .] . Miranda "wanted most deeply to see and to know. Having seen, she felt at once as if she had known all along" (CS 366).

The nausea that strikes Miranda totally as a surprise, stems from her feminine sensibility. As a young woman, she has grown closer to the delicate meaning and mystery of life and fertility and her own body gets associated with the process of creation in the little girl's imaginative mind, as she sees the tiny creatures just ripped off from their own mother's womb.

Munro's short story "Heirs of the Living Body", dwells on Del's initiation into the 'adult' world of death. In attending Uncle Craig's funeral, Del experiences a sudden moment of critical intensity and bites her cousin Mary Agnes on impulse. "A fairly simple meaning declares itself in the scene at uncle Craig's funeral in which Del bites Mary Agnes and is said to have blood on her mouth" (Lives 55).

In spite of the intensity of her feelings of shame and impulsive lack of self-control, Del knows that the family would judge her harshly and ostracize her, and
feels already suffocated: "felt held close, stifled, as if it was not air that I had to move and talk through in this world but something thick as **cotton**" (Lives 57).

This scene is linked with another in the same story, where the death of a cow provides an occasion to develop an awareness of life and death in the protagonist. Del feels an inordinate fascination over the dead animal:

Being dead, [the dead cow] invited desecration. I wanted to poke it, trample it, pee on it, anything to punish it, to show what contempt I had for its being dead. Beat it up, break it up, spit on it, tear it, throw it away! But still it had power, lying with a gleaming strange map on its back, its straining neck, the smooth eye. I had never looked at a cow alive and thought what I thought now: Why should there be a cow? [. . .].

I paid attention to its shape as I would sometimes pay attention to the shape of real continents or islands on real maps, as if the shape itself were a revelation beyond words, and I would be able to make sense of it, if I tried hard enough, and had time. (Lives 44-45)
After witnessing this death Del feels somehow closer to the mysteries of life and death and longs for the parting of the veil.

The motif of awareness of lack of gender justice and consequent rebellion in the world of reality is seen in Porter's "Old Mortality" and Munro's "Boys and Girls".

In "Old Mortality" Miranda resolves to become a professional jockey:

She had lately decided to be a jockey when she grew up. Her father had said one day that she was going to be a little thing all her life, she would never be tall, and this meant, of course, that she would never be a beauty like Aunt Amy, or Cousin Isabel. Her hope of being a beauty died hard, until the notion of being a jockey came suddenly and filled her thoughts, quietly, blissfully, at night before she slept, and too often in the day time when she should have been studying, she planned her career as a jockey. (CS 196)

Nevertheless, one day, when Miranda's father watches her riding, he scolds her:
"You ought to be ashamed of yourself," said father, after watching her gallop full tilt down the lane at the farm, on Trixie, the mustang mare. "I can see the sun, moon and stars between you and the saddle every jump" (CS 196).

Though Miranda is not discouraged in the beginning, soon she grows more and more apprehensive and admits to herself: "I've decided I'm not going to be a jockey, after all" (CS 205). Miranda's father is extremely happy at her new resolution:

Father cheered up and twinkled at her knowingly, as if that didn't surprise him in the least. "Well, well," said he, "so you aren't going to be a jockey! That's very sensible of you. I think she ought to be a lion-tamer, don't you, Maria? That's a nice, womanly profession" (CS 205).

A similar motif occurs also in Munro's short story, "Boys and Girls", where a young girl is getting conditioned by society to accept her role as a girl - "a girl, a 'joke on me'" (DHS 119). The child, when she grows up is no longer allowed to help her fox-farmer-father outdoors, but is forced to do household work.
The climax of the story consists in the girl freeing a horse about to be shot, and, by so doing, demonstrates that she is "only a girl" (DHS 127). In "Old Mortality" and "Boys and Girls" the underlying motif is the feminine sensibility asserting itself in the form of incipient or open rebellion against established patriarchal mores.

Triangular situational motif occurs both in Porter's and Munro's stories, with two women often pining for one man. In Porter's "Virgin Violeta" a triangle conflict comes into being among two young women, Violeta and Blanca, and a young man, Carlos.

Violeta is aware of her unattractive clothes and jealous of her, more elegantly dressed and more experienced sister, Blanca. While Blanca goes on reading lines of poetry written by Carlos, Violeta grows increasingly restless with silent, repressed pain: "This torment of love which is in my heart / I know that I suffer it, but / I do not know why" (CS 22). These lines seem to echo Violeta's own feelings and emotions, as her heart is tossed about, owing to her all-consuming passion for Carlos.

Violeta imagines that somehow she is the sought-after prize, who will be eventually claimed by Carlos: "She would appear on the balcony above, wearing a blue
dress, and everyone would ask who that enchanting girl could be. And Carlos, Carlos!" (CS 25).

All her dreams of romance dissolve, with a caustic admonition from Carlos himself in the end, and Violeta attains a realization of the world of reality around her, with a jolt.

Once, on receiving a kiss from Carlos she feels a sense of shame, rather than any thrill. Feeling that they are both "allies in some shameful secret" (CS 29), even when he admonishes her, "shame on you Violeta" (CS 29), she feels dejected thinking that she is not attractive enough to arouse his desire. She voices her fear to him in private:

"Nonsense!" said Carlos. "Come with me this minute. What did you expect when you came out here alone with me?"

He turned and started away. She was shamefully, incredibly in the wrong.

[...] It was all bitterly real and unbelievable, like a nightmare that went on and on and no one heard you calling to be waked up. She followed, trying to hold up her head. (CS 30)
When Carlos is leaving for Paris, he kisses Blanca first and then turns to kiss Violeta, and, the latter screams and sobs uncontrollably. Violeta does not want to read Carlos' poetry that summer and quarrels, on more or less equal terms, with her sister Blanca. When Violeta's turn comes to return to the convent she declares that there is "nothing to be learned there" (CS 32).

In Munro's stories, men are more attracted towards women who are progressive. Munro's "Something I've Been Meaning to Tell You", shows how Et has always remained a mere shadow to her sister, "the statue-girl" (SIB 12) in Arthur's mind:

Arthur had not liked her taking up dress-making because he thought she was too smart for it. All the hardwork she had done in History had given him an exaggerated idea of her brains. "Besides," she told him, "it takes more brains to cut and fit, if you do it right, than to teach people about the war of 1812. Because once you learn that, it's learned and isn't going to change you. Whereas every article of clothing you make is an entirely new proposition" (SIB 14).
All the same, Arthur seems to be more fascinated by his wife's sister, Et, because she is more independent and creative than his wife Char. On the other hand, Char who is in conflict, does not know whether to be a traditional woman at home, active and creative but maintaining her distance, or to remain a puppet in the hands of an ambitious man.

The motif of marriages of weak men with dominant women can be seen in "The Cracked Looking-Glass" by Porter and "Who Do You Think You Are?", by Munro. Rosaleen finds her marriage is unsatisfactory and her trip to Boston is, to her, a flight from oppression. Dennis, her old husband too gradually grows more and more aware of Rosaleen's discontentment.

However, Rosaleen's main problem stems from her own failure to distinguish between appearance and reality. Neither can she accept her marriage in toto or flee totally from it. The imagery of the 'cracked looking-glass' is symbolic, as it represents her dream - distorted view of herself and the world, as a whole.

Unconsciously, Rosaleen seeks to find an escape through her fantasies, tales and her innocent friendships with young men. It is thus her escapism that eggs her on to travel to Boston too. But once she
reaches Boston, she meets with a series of unexpected disillusionments.

In Boston, the world of reality suddenly dawns on Rosaleen. To start with, the Irish boy takes her for a sex-starved woman, which makes her feel deeply hurt, and the world collapses all around her. Meditating on her initial failure in love, she suggests to herself a comforting proposition saying "life is a dream" (CS 132), and begins to suspect that all appearances, including dreams, may be deceptive, and, at last, reconciles herself to the reality of her marriage: "She knew in her heart what she was and Dennis knew, and that was enough" (CS 132).

James W. Johnson sums up its meaning as follows:

Rosaleen is constantly distressed about the cracked mirror, which blurs her face so unrecognizably, but her imperfect and unsatisfactory marriage as mirrored in her cracked imagination cannot be replaced, and so the cracked looking glass remains hanging in the kitchen, after Rosaleen has fully pondered the consequences of its doing so. (607)
In the story "Who Do You Think You Are?", Rose thinks that mere marriage and financial security can make her the happiest person in life. Her intense desire for romantic love makes her rush into marriage with Patrick:

It was not the amount of money but the amount of love he offered that she could not ignore; [...] She had always thought that this would happen, that somebody would look at her and love her totally and helplessly. At the same time she had thought that nobody would want her at all, and up until now, nobody had [...] She would look at herself in the glass and think: wife, sweet heart [...] It was a miracle [...] (Who 103-4)

Soon Rose starts regretting her marriage with Patrick: " [...] it was a mistake. It was not what she had dreamed of; it was not what she wanted" (Who 104). She has perhaps obtained financial security but only at the expense of real happiness.

The marriage ends in divorce. Patrick appears now self-sufficient and contented, while Rose seems dependent and incapable of coping with loneliness. She moves from one relationship to the other and still remains
unfulfilled like Rosaleen in "The Cracked Looking Glass". Nothing seems to fill the void.

In the story, "Cracked Looking Glass", Rosaleen returns to her husband after her disappointment with other men, but in "Who Do You Think You Are?", Rose identifies herself with her childhood friend Ralph Gillespie, and feels contented with his friendship: "What could she say about her and Ralph Gillespie, except that she felt his life, close, closer than the lives of men she'd loved, one slot over from her own?" (Who 276-77).

The motif of woman's quest for self-sufficiency can be seen in Porter's "The Last Leaf" and Munro's "Simon's Luck". "The Last Leaf" is a portrayal of old Nannie, who is bent on leading a life of independence. As regards Nannie, the oppression she had felt, had been in the form of hard work, which, at last, almost literally breaks her back, though the children do say, "we love you Nannie" (CS 348). Nannie has now reached the rare eminence, at which she can be indifferent to love. So the children are genuinely surprised at her sudden assertion of independence. They find it almost funny, and, are certainly very puzzled to see how Nannie tried not to be too happy the day she left.
The man to whom Nannie had been "married off" at the age of seventeen was Uncle Jimbilly. They had had thirteen children, and after this, the two had drifted apart. After Nannie moves into her own cabin, Uncle Jimbilly expresses his inclination to stay with her, and she promptly turns him away, saying:

"I don' aim to pass my las' days waiting on no man," she added, "I've served my time, I've done my do, and dat's all." So uncle Jimbilly crept back up the hill and into his smoke-house attic, and never went near her again [...] . (CS 351)

The motif of woman's quest for self-sufficiency is also seen in Munro's "Simon's Luck". In the beginning, Rose leads a lonely and desperate life: "Rose gets lonely in new places; she wishes she had invitation" (Who 205).

She longs to find fulfilment in her lover:

[...] what could be more desperate than a woman of Rose's age, sitting up all night in her dark kitchen waiting for her lover? And this was a situation she had created, she had done it all herself, it seemed she never learned any lesson at all. She had turned
Simon into the peg on which her hopes were hung and she could never manage now to turn him back into himself. (Who 224)

Towards the close of the story we find Rose who ends up as a successful actress quite contented with herself; more comfortable at a party of academics and intellectuals - "She can fit in anywhere" (Who 152) - than she was at a similar party in Vancouver.

Women being jilted by men, constitutes the common motif in Porter's "The Jilting of Granny Weather all" and Munro's "Post Card".

"The Jilting of Granny Weatherall" concerns the life of Ellen Weatherall. George, her first fiance, does not turn up for the wedding, and, is never heard of again. Later, she marries John with whom she has a brief but happy life, bearing him five children.

During the last days of her life, Old Granny Weatherall, almost eighty, moves back and forth from the present to the past, conjuring up all her old fears and dreams. For sixty years she had been trying to get over her bitter disappointment over George not turning up for his wedding with her.
However, later, she views even the jilting as a blessing in disguise, since it paved the way for her meeting her future husband. On one occasion, she imagines herself telling her daughter to find George somehow, only to let him know that she has forgotten him.

I want him to know I had my husband just the same and my children and my house like any other woman. A good house too and a good husband that I loved and five children out of him. Better than I hoped for even. Tell him I was given back everything he took away and more. (CS 86)

The crux of the story is that Granny Weatherall's repressed anguish over her lover's betrayal, gets the better of her till the very bitter end: "Oh, no, oh, God, no, there was something else besides the house and the man and the children. Oh, surely they were not all? What was it? Something not given back [. . .]" (CS 86).

The protagonist calls for a stoic inner strength to help her endure her disappointment, in the name of womanly dignity:

Wounded vanity, Ellen, said a sharp voice in the top of her mind. Don't let your wounded vanity get the upper hand of you. Plenty of
girls get jilted. You were jilted, weren't you? Then stand up to it. (CS 84)

After one particular uncomfortable recall of her jilting, Weatherall resolves to keep herself in the dark, literally from the light from the window; symbolically, the level that offers her insights of her memories:

Her eyelids wavered and she let in streamers of blue-gray light like tissue paper over her eyes. She must get up and pull the shades down or she'd never sleep. She was in bed again and the shades were not down. How could that happen? Better turn over, hide from the light, sleeping in the light gave you nightmares. (CS 84-85)

Munro's "Post Card" is about Helen who narrates how she was jilted through the unexpected marriage of her lover, Clare Mac Quarrie. On learning about her lover's marriage, she resorts to some kind of emotional release, by a noisy protest of honking her car horn from outside the newlywed's home. While Helen stands shocked with an acute sense of her own loss, the gesture of honking is presented somehow, as a show of female triumph in the narrative.
Porter and Munro, being realistic novelists, do not fail to portray the jilting of the men by their own women. Porter's "Martyr" and Munro's "Oranges and Apples", are instances in point.

"Martyr" is about an ineffectual, passive male weeping over a lost female. It is a story of unrequited love, where Ruben the protagonist, martyrs himself for the sake of a woman he idealizes.

The story opens in the following manner:

Ruben, the most illustrious painter in Mexico, was deeply in love with his model Isabel, who was in turn romantically attached to a rival artist whose name is of no importance. (CS 33)

Ruben who is enraptured by the beauty of Isabel, continually portrays her as an angel, and renders her features and behaviour as "angelic". He says often "There is no other woman like that woman" (CS 34).

Ruben, often, forgets even to eat during the long days, being given to sketching Isabel's perfection. He loves Isabel so much that people think Ruben may kill on sight any man, who may dare to attempt to rob him of Isabel. At last, when Isabel finally leaves him in
favour of the artist she really is in love with, he requites himself well, by announcing that she has taken his life with her. Then he begins, literally, to eat himself to death.

Isabel’s farewell note to Ruben says, "I am going away with someone who will [. . .] make a mural with fifty figures of me in it, instead of only twenty" (CS 34).

The description of Ruben’s response to the farewell note left behind by Isabel in the story, is moving indeed. Reading her letter Ruben says, "I tell you, my poor little angel Isabel is a murderer, for she has broken my heart" (CS 36). His friend, Ramon tries to console him saying, he knows quite well "how women can spoil a man’s work for him" (CS 35). The woman who left him was a "shameless cheat-by-night" (CS 35), in his opinion.

At last, Ruben dies in a restaurant called "The Little Monkeys" (CS 37). The owner of the restaurant tells Ramon, Ruben’s biographer, that Ruben’s last words had been, "Tell them I am a martyr to love. I perish in a cause worthy of the sacrifice. I die of, a broken heart!’ [. . .] Isabelita my executioner!" (CS 37).
Munro's "Oranges and Apples" is about how Murray gets jilted by his wife Barbara. In the words of Murray himself,

One day I came home unexpectedly [. . .] . Is there ever a story of a man who comes home unexpectedly and finds a delightful surprise?

He came home unexpectedly, and he found - not Victor and Barbara in bed together. Victor was not in the house at all - nobody was in the house. (FOY 125)

The climax of the story centres around the scene, where both Murray and Victor use binocular glasses to watch Barbara sunbathing. Looking "at Victor through the binoculars", Murray sees "a face like his own", and then he sees "himself - a man with binoculars watching a man with binoculars watching a woman" (FOY 126-27).

Convinced that Barbara is inviting Victor to make love to her, Murray thinks, "I understood that my life had changed" (FOY 127). But, ironically, this change, charged with "a terrible elation, is equivocal" (FOY 129).

Later, after giving an opportunity for Barbara and Victor to make love, Murray, Hamlet-like insists on an ocular proof. He searches for Barbara's inner garments
when she returns and plainly evades his question, "Didn't he want you?", which elicits a cryptic response: "We are never going to talk about it" (FOY 135).

Murray seems trapped between the choices of oranges and apples, forced to choose between imagining "his wife humiliated by Victor's rejection or unfaithful" [sic] (FOY 123). Years later, when Murray recalls the incident, he tells Barbara, "Don't disappoint me again" (FOY 135).

Dominance by women contributes the motif in Porter's "Rope" and Munro's "Friend of My Youth". In "Rope", the wife wants a decent, orderly life, but the couple lack money. Like others, she cannot express her dissatisfaction plainly and directly and hence, expresses her grudge in an indirect manner. Symbolically, the rope is simply a bone of contention in the study. When her husband buys a rope instead of coffee, she objects to his gross indifference to her:

She wrenched away, crying out for him to take his rope and go to hell, she had simply given him up: and ran [. . .]. He went out around the house and into the lane; he suddenly realized he had a blister on his heel and his shirt felt as if it was on fire. Things broke so suddenly you didn't know where you were.
She could work herself into a fury about simply nothing. She was terrible, damn it; not an ounce of reason. You might as well talk to a sieve as that woman when she got going. (CS 47)

In Munro's "Friend of My Youth", Flora is engaged to Robert of Scottish origin, and Ellie, her younger sister, who is unusually close to Flora, accompanies her whenever she goes for long walks with Robert. Subsequently, Ellie's intimacy with Robert results in pregnancy and Robert is forced to marry her to ward off any scandal in the family.

Subsequently, Ellie becomes a physical and mental wreck as a result of a series of disastrous miscarriages. Flora labours hard on the farm and comforts her sister with a rare sense of devotion. Significantly, Robert's domination is never questioned.

Nevertheless, woman's increasing ascendancy is subtly suggested, through the episode where Audrey Atkinson, the aggressive nurse, comes to take care of the dying Ellie, causing a sensation in the village, through her domineering behaviour.

Immediately after her wedding with Robert, Audrey Atkinson is invited for a conventional dance, given in
the school house for the newly married couple, where according to the local tradition "a purse of money" (FOY 17) is presented to the couple. Audrey Atkinson’s conduct in the party is rather unusual:

She danced with everyman present except the groom, who sat scrunched into one of the school desks along the wall. She danced with everyman present - they all claimed they had to do it, it was the custom - and then she dragged Robert out to receive the money and to thank everybody for their best wishes. To the ladies in the cloak room she even hinted that she was feeling unwell for the usual newlywed reason. "Some of the women thought that [. . .] she was insulting them" [. . .] nobody challenged her, nobody was rude to her - may be because it was plain that she could summon a rudeness of her own to knock anybody flat. (FOY 18)

Audrey Atkinson loses no time to take control of the household, upstaging everyone around including Robert. There is even a cold touch of ruthlessness in her manner. On Ellie’s death, she not only elevates herself to the role of Robert’s wife, but also subjects Flora to a further humiliation:
Now Audrey Atkinson comes into her full power - she demands the whole house. She wants those partitions knocked out that Robert put up with Flora's help when he married Ellie.

She will provide Flora with a room, she will take care of her. (Audrey Atkinson does not wish to be seen as a monster, and perhaps she really isn't one). So one day Robert carries Flora - for the first and last time he carries her in his arms - to the room that his wife Audrey has prepared for her. (FOY 21)

The narrator seems to perceive in Atkinson a symbol of the emancipated woman, utterly unhampered by patriarchal injunctions.

What Porter and Munro share in common as artists, is not only their assertive feministic stance, which constitutes the core of their gyno-centric art, but more importantly, the sharp-focussed, sensitive singularities, daringly dwelt on, in the erotic sphere.

Metaphors and symbols play a prominent role in the narrative fictions of Porter and Munro. For instance, Porter's "Flowering Judas" is replete with symbols operating at several levels. According to M.H.Abrams:

A symbol, in the broadest sense of the term, is anything which signifies something else
[...] symbol is applied only to a word or set of words that signifies an object or event which itself signifies something else; that is the words refer to something which suggests a range of reference beyond itself. (168)

Laura, the central character in "Flowering Judas" an American school teacher, living in Mexico, is a lapsed Catholic who still retains certain sacred attitudes and habits of mind instilled by her religious training. Nevertheless, for all the romantic piety she has conscientiously cultivated as a Catholic, she is deeply resolved to join a band of hardcore socialist revolutionaries for sheer lack of outlet for the inner energy surging within herself.

The story makes a compelling work of art, because of the virtuosity of its multi-layered symbolism. Laura's rejection of life is symbolized by the nun-like severity of her mode of dressing: "She is tired of her hairpins and the feel of her long tight sleeves" (CS 90) and

[...] has encased herself in a set of principles derived from her early training, leaving no details of gesture or of personal taste untouched, and for this reason she will not wear lace made on machines [...]. (CS 92)
Laura works for the most powerful leader of the local revolutionaries, Braggioni and is assigned the task of carrying messages between the leader and his adherents in prison. Being the personification of all the forces of corruption that subvert the revolutionary movement from within, Laura in her austere clothing presents a sharp contrast to Braggioni whose very demeanour bespeaks his vanity, sensuality and basic insensitivity:

He bulges marvelously in his expensive garments. Over his lavender collar, crushed upon a purple necktie, held by a diamond hoop: over his ammunition belt of tooled leather worked in silver, buckled cruelly around his gasping middle: over the tops of his glossy yellow shoes Braggioni swells with ominous ripeness, his mauve silk hose stretched taut, his ankles bound with the stout leather thongs of his shoes. (CS 92-93)

The reader learns only towards the close of the story, of the existence of Eugenio and of Laura’s suppressed feeling of love towards him. Laura’s failure to disclose her love for Eugenio, which might have provided him with a goal to live for, robs her of any possible happiness in human relationship and leaves her that much more severely alienated.
In the beautiful impressionistic dream which follows, cast in the over-all symbolism of Judas' betrayal of Christ and of the Judas tree myth, she sees Eugenio, who calls her a "poor prisoner" at one point, inviting her to elope with him to a "new country". Wonder-struck but fearless, Laura refuses to follow him unless he takes her hand. Only in a dream can she express freely her need for him, and subscribe to Eugenio's involvement with her own revolutionary hopes. Her "No" to him is a refusal, though this time it strictly refers to the dark mystery, which has remained vaguely hidden behind all her other fears. Her present demand for Eugenio's hand, thus, is highly affirmative and, paradoxically, means a strong "Yes". But it is all too late now. Eugenio eludes her and calls her "Murderer", when, at last, she is plainly and helplessly drawn to him.

The celebrated dream sequence with which the story draws to a close, constitutes the core or 'centre' of the story, replete with sacramental symbolism:

The tolling of the midnight bell is a signal, but what does it mean? Get up, Laura, and follow me: Come out of your sleep, out of your bed, out of this strange house. What are you doing in this house? Without a word, without fear she rose and reached for Eugenio's hand,
but he eluded her with a sharp, sly smile and drifted away. This is not all, you shall see—Murderer, he said, follow me, I will show you a new country, but it is far away and we must hurry. No, said Laura, not unless you take my hand, no; and she clung first to the stair rail, and then to the topmost branch of the Judas tree that bent down slowly and set her upon the earth, and then to the rocky ledge of a cliff, and then to the jagged wave of a sea that was not water but a desert of crumbling stone. Where are you taking me, she asked in wonder but without fear. To death, and it is a long way off, and we must hurry, said Eugenio. No, said Laura, not unless you take my hand. Then eat these flowers, poor prisoner, said Eugenio in a voice of pity, take and eat: and from the Judas tree he stripped the warm bleeding flowers, and held them to her lips. She saw that his hand was fleshless, a cluster of small white petrified branches, and his eye sockets were without light, but she ate the flowers greedily for they satisfied both hunger and thirst. Murderer! said Eugenio, and Cannibal!. This is my body and my blood [. . .]. (CS 101-02)
In a vicarious sense, Laura's 'betrayal' of her own emotions, identifies her with the Judas' tree, associated with the arch-betrayer in the Bible. Similarly, the paradoxes of life-in-death and death-in-life are vividly brought out through not only the rich symbolic imagery of the sacraments, but 'bleeding flowers'. In the words of Volynsky, "Symbolism is the fusion of the phenomenal and divine worlds in artistic representation" (qtd. in Charles Chadwick 58).

The dream crystallizes, in oxymoronic terms, the doubts and fears which Laura harbours deep within herself, revealing at the end, how her romantic and excessively timid love has killed her lover and leaves her doubly alone.

The story "Hacienda" is also symbolic as Hacienda is permeated with the smell of the pulque, a nasty smell suggestive of human products. It implicitly suggests that life in Mexico is undermined by the oppression of the Indians, who thoughtlessly seek refuge in superstitions and narcotics. Pulque has, thus, certain disgusting associations and is described in the story as "corpse-white":

"Fresh pulque!" they urged mournfully, holding up their clay jars filled with thick gray-
white liquor. "Fresh maguey worms!" they cried in despair above the clamor of the turning wheels, waving like nosegays the leaf bags, slimy and lumpy with the worms they had gathered one at a time from the cactus whose heart bleeds the honey water for the pulque. (CS 138)

Various dramatic episodes of love and betrayal are enacted by the Indians, amidst the over-powering putrid smell that comes from the pulqueria and hangs heavily over everything, symbolizing the spiritual rot and decay at all levels of society. Thus, the image of Hacienda, at least indirectly, drives home the fact that although the revolution is accomplished in Mexico, nothing really has changed.

The title of the story "Virgin Violeta", suggests both irony and symbolism. Violeta, the fifteen-year old Mexican girl who has been hitherto carefully sheltered by the sisters at the convent, feels tormented by her love for Carlos, her sister’s suitor.

Much of Blanca’s value lies in her mysterious remoteness. This is suggested by the painting of 'Pious' interview between the Most Holy Virgin Queen of Heaven and Her faithful servant St. Ignatious Loyola’ Carlos gazes at, in the story:
The virgin, with enameled face set in a detached simper, forehead bald of eyebrows, extended one hand remotely over the tonsured head of the saint, who groveled in a wooden posture of ecstasy. Very ugly and old fashioned, thought Violeta, but a perfectly proper picture; there was nothing to stare at. But Carlos kept squinting his eyelids at it mysteriously, and never moved his eyes from it save to glance at Blanca. (CS 23)

Like the "enameled" Virgin Mary, Blanca is chaste, pure, cold and remote, as far as Carlos is concerned.

In contrast, Violeta has not yet learned to manipulate or camouflage her emotions. Distressed by the thick-soled brown sandals and blue clothes she must wear, she longs to dress in bright blue dresses, wear red poppies in her hair and to dance gaily down the carpet of life, in utter disregard of any restraint. In fact, the huge carpet she sees unrolled before her becomes symbolic of a ceremonial wedding carpet:

Life was going to unroll itself like a long, gay carpet for her to walk upon. She saw herself wearing a long veil, and it would trail and flutter over this carpet as she came
out of church. There would be six flower girls and two pages, the way there had been at cousin Sancha’s wedding. (CS 24)

Violeta cannot wait for her life to begin. Next year she would be free, at last, to read poetry and stories about love, without having to hide them in her copy books. She even entertains same fantasies which are forbiddingly mischievous:

There was one about the ghosts of nuns returning to the old square before their ruined convent, dancing in the moon light with the shades of lovers forbidden them in life, treading with bared feet on broken glass as a penance for their loves.

[. . .] She was certain she would be like those nuns someday. She would dance for joy over shards of broken glass.

[. . .] and she would dance with fascinating young men like those who rode by on Sunday mornings, making their horses prance in the bright, shallow street on their way to the paseo in Chapultepec Park. (CS 24-25)

Ironically, at the convent Violeta is groomed in "modesty, chastity, silence, obedience". Like a "young
wild animal", (CS 23) she must obey authority who, set extremely difficult standards for her. Her inner feeling of oppression is presented in symbolic terms in Porter’s story:

Violeta gave a sharp sigh and sat up straight. She wanted to stretch her arms up and yawn, not because she was sleepy but because something inside her felt as if it were enclosed in a cage too small for it, and she could not breathe. Like those poor parrots in the markets, stuffed into tiny wicker cages so that they bulged through the withes, gasping and panting, waiting for someone to come and rescue them. (CS 26)

She feels the formal farewell kiss she receives from Carlos is utterly inadequate, ludicrously lacking in passion:

A kiss meant nothing at all, and Carlos had walked away as if he had forgotten her. It was all mixed up with the white rivers of moonlight and the smell of warm fruit and a cold dampness on her lips that made a tiny smacking sound. (CS 30)
The title of Porter's story "The Grave" is also symbolic, for in addition to death, it also suggests the subconscious, the 'lower' part of the psyche, where Miranda constantly buries and unburies her secrets and fears. Ironically, viewed in the context of the death of the pregnant rabbit, the grave also turns out to be a womb, suggesting another kind of beginning.

Miranda and Paul find "silver and gold" in these graves, in the form of a dove-shaped coffin screw head and a gold wedding band, carved with intricate flowers and leaves, symbolic of fertility. The silver dove which Miranda finds, is also symbolic of peace and naivety.

In his study of modern narcissism, Richard Bennett traces the significance underlying interpretation of outward appearance:

One of the social origins of the idea of decoding signs can be traced to a century ago, in the interpretation of appearances which came to be made in the 19th century. City appearance is a cover for the real individual hidden within. (qtd. in Wagner 1986, 2)

The central symbol of the story, "The Cracked Looking Glass," functions as a device for Rosaleen to
reflect upon her real condition as well as her incipient narcissism; with "a crack across the middle" (103), it is divided, as is her perception of herself. Rosaleen has been accustomed to look into the mirror and confirm to herself that she is "the fairest of all". Now in her middle age, with a seventy five-year-old husband who no longer makes love to her, she feels compelled, at last, to accept her real condition. The fair young maiden is no longer reflected in the looking glass and, thus, at times, she fails to see herself in it. When she does see an image, her face is, significantly, "like a monster's" (CS 122). The mutable symbol of the mirror, thus, highlights the imperfection of human love and the need for accepting love as it is; in real terms, malleable and inconstant.

The fact that Rosaleen forgets to purchase another looking-glass during her journey, implicitly suggests her acceptance of continued marital relationship. The glass as Dennis remarks, is "a good enough glass" (CS 134); even so, with the marriage: it is 'good enough'.

The title of the story "The Journey" is also symbolic, for it depicts the journey of two old women through life, dwelling on their trials and tribulations. Finally, towards the end of their lives, they emerge from the journey, at peace with the world that they have created.
"The Witness" is a symbolic, in the sense, Uncle Jimbilly the protagonist, has witnessed the cruelties suffered by slaves before the Civil War and appears in the story as a witness for the past, a period before the period of his three children. The title of the story "The Last Leaf" is symbolic too. Nannie is the last 'leaf' on the tree of her own generation personifying a continuing tradition, which will end with her death, leaving this particular tree bare, unprotected and open to assault of the elements, ushering in a new order.

The title of the story, "The Source", is symbolic, as it directly refers to the Grandmother who gives sustenance to her entire family, managing the farm and the household with equal ease, as she is paradoxically the real source of the strength and weaknesses of her entire family.

Even a cursory survey of Porter's fictional art, thus, will bear out the fact that it is eminently metaphorical, thanks to her prolific use of symbols in her stories. The following words of Roy Wagner, concerning symbolism throw much light on the irrevocable interrelationship between culture and art:

There are two ways in which names, as symbols, can be considered. We can consider them as "codings", or points of reference, merely
representing the things named, or we can consider them in terms of the relation between the symbol and the thing symbolized. In the first instance, naming becomes a matter of contrasts and grouping among the names themselves: a microcosm of symbols is deployed to represent the macrocosm.

It is clear that both modes of viewing symbols, as coding and as analogy, have a certain potential, and that the construction of an explanatory microcosm called "structure", realizes only part of the potential. The other part involves a mode of construction that includes symbol and symbolized within the same expression, and implies, among other things, that the symbolized is no less a part of culture than the symbol. (85-86)

The story, "Jilting of Granny Weatherall", tells of Granny’s life from the time she gets jilted at the altar at the age of twenty, up to the time of her death at the age of eighty, when she feels she has been even jilted by Jesus Christ. Her name is symbolic - she has weathered all the crises in her life, suggesting her capacity to endure, to persevere and to come safely through the storms in her life.
Granny’s wedding day - the day she gets jilted by George, begins with a fresh breeze blowing, and it is a "green day with no threats in it" (CS 84). Soon granny realizes that her bridegroom will not arrive:

There was the day, the day, but a whirl of dark smoke rose and covered it, crept up and over into the bright field where everything was planted so carefully in orderly rows. That was hell, she knew hell when she saw it. (CS 84)

In the following passage the grays and whites symbolizing fear, betrayal, frustration or approaching death are juxtaposed with the 'blues' and 'greens' symbolizing life or hope:

Her eyes opened very wide and the room stood out like a picture she had seen somewhere. Dark colors with the shadows rising towards the ceiling in long angles. The tall black dresses gleamed with nothing on it but John's picture, enlarged from a little one, with John's eyes very black when they should have been blue. (CS 87)

In Ship of Fools Katherine Anne Porter attempts to portray the human condition as she sees it. As the ship nears its destination, towards the close of the
novel, the effects of the preceding events begin to tell on the passengers. A bacchanalian fiesta put up by a group of Spanish dancers in honour of the captain, brings out all the hidden fears, guilts and repressions of the participants, followed by remorse and readjustment in relationships.

In the opening scene, significant images from the square of Veracruz impart their own peculiar tone suggesting rivalries and fears of cats, monkeys, and dogs. Passengers in the ship journey, not only towards Bremerhaven but to the end of their lives, enriched by several views of life on the way. The comments made by the Times Literary Supplement on Porter's passengers are fickle in the extreme:

the pack of hysterics, alcoholics, thieves, hypocrites, and sex-starved weaklings assembled on the good ship Vera [who] stand for no longer truth. The claim of universality lies only in the outward symbolism. (qtd. in Givner 1987, 295-96)

The above comment essentially is wanting in sophistication, literary empathy and an awareness of the depth of Porter's symbolic art.

For instance, there is an ironic presentation of a newly married Mexican couple in The Ship of Fools who
shun all association with their fellow-passengers and assume the post-lapsarian look of "Eden just after the Fall": "That little interval between the Fall and driving out by that jealous vengeful old God" (SF 92).

Throughout the work Porter insists on the twinship of Ric and Rac, obliquely implying the universal duality of good and evil, and connected polarity of the opposites, virtually making it the heart of her statement about human sexual relations, with "'their fierce little faces' exactly alike except for the mysterious stigma of sex" (SF 112). They are "of one mind and spirit, and lived twined together in a state of intense undeclared war with [. . .] the whole world" (SF 71). Dr. Schumann is dismayed at the twins' "blind, unwinking malignance" (SF 112), convinced that their "evil is in the egg of their souls" (SF 198).

The characters reveal their functions in their dance, only towards the close of the work, with "Pancho bouncing like a rubber ball, Pastora turning on an axis like an animated flag pole" (SF 44). Even the dance is more than a mere entertainment for they have arranged to humble and victimize some others through their take-over of the captain's table, symbolizing a temporary ascendancy of chaos over order.
The story, "The Found Boat", by Munro, also begins with the discovery by Eva and her friend Carol of an abandoned wooden boat washed up during the flooding of Wawanash river. When Clayton shoots water at her, Eva crouches down in front of him in the water, covering her body, and swims away from the group, an oblique suggestion to the sense of shame Eve feels, after her fall at Eden. Further, Eva slinks down into the water only to cover her own nakedness, and creeping out of the river, hides with Carol in the bushes until the boys begin rowing the boat upstream back to town. Alice Munro has conceded that "Things are symbolic but their symbolism is infinitely complex and never completely discovered" (qtd. in Martin 131).

In "Dance of the Happy Shades", food figures clearly as an artistic presentation of the self. The tiny sandwiches cut on pink and blue crape paper by Miss. Marsalles and the warm punch she makes, are suggestive of her childish disposition. Such details add to the aesthetic appeal of the work, besides lending to it a feminine touch.

Munro's short story "Red Dress - 1946" is patterned, primarily, on the juxtaposition of primary colours, red and blue. The elementary psyche of the young heroine quickens and develops with the narrative,
with colours gradually accruing a symbolic value with 'red' standing for passion, and 'blue' for a regal or aristocratic fineness.

This story dwells on Lonnie's getting icy hands before an exam, and wearing a pale blue crape dress to the dance with the narrator herself trying to escape from an imminent proposal to dance by symbolically trying to catch a cold, turning herself blue: "I pictured my chest and throat turning blue, the cold, greyed blue of veins under the skin" (DHS 151).

Munro attacks also the masculine concept of linear time in her fiction. In Lives, uncle Craig the historian keeps past records in a linear shape, in precise chronological sequence of annals and history. Suddenly, when his historical annals of Wawanash country are water-soiled, Del Jordan does not try to save them. Instead, she symbolically discards them with a "brutal, unblemished satisfaction" (Lives 5).

Birds also serve as symbols of free flights, implicitly underlining aspirations of female independence. In this work, Rose issues a warning to Flo of being trapped into sexual bondage: "Flo said to watch out for white slavers" (Who 73).
In "A Queer Streak", Violet wading into water is symbolic of an excursion into her own barren female body and into maternity, a potential death trap where she might become the "waste ground":

Violet would slip down the edge of the barnyard to the waste ground, then cautiously enter it. She would stand hidden by the red-stemmed alder and nameless thorn bushes (it always seemed to be some damp, desolate time of year when she did this - late fall or early spring), [...]. (Progress 208-09)

In this story, car is used as symbol of masculine control and authority. Violet is rescued by an anonymous male driver Wyck when she runs her car off the road. An initial reaction to the possibility of the arrival of a car is filled with apprehension as it would be, on the approach of a 'male' pursuer. As regards herself, Violet shares so much in common with the eco-world of fauna and flora:

But when she did hear a car coming, she knew she didn't want to be found. She couldn't bear to be. She ran from the road into the woods, into the bush, - and she was caught. She was caught then by berry bushes, little hawthorns. Held fast. (Progress 234)
Often, Munro creates her own alter egos through her protagonists, characters who reflect her own situation. Thus, in "Open Secrets", Maureen’s secret watching of the Slaters does more than reveal their secret. Unlike the distorting glass of her front door, the glass of the window through which she watches the Slaters is mirror-like, and symbolic.

According to Patricia Tobin in "A Queer Streak", Munro uses the fictional character of the deranged woman "as the symbolic representation of the female author’s anger against the rigidities of patriarchal tradition" (9). The anger of the woman is represented by the female child, Dawn Rose, gone mad in the story, refusing to be feminine, and aggressively attacking patriarchy through an obscene note:

You ought to be thrown down the toilet hole head first. You bowlegged stupid rotten pig. You ought to have your things cut off with a razor blade. You are a liar, too. All those fights you said you won are a lie. (Progress 220)

Jane Gallop says "Dawn Rose’s letter also suggests the figure of the artist as a mad woman, who prevails in
the history of women's writing and who struggles 'to escape male houses and male texts' " (qtd. in Irvine 65).

In the story "Lives of Girls and Women" birds figure as symbols of artistic and intellectual aspirations. According to Stewart,

in the typical female kunstlerroman birds are broken, crippled, strangled or hung as a sign of the difficulty the woman artist has in reconciling her ambition with her sense of femininity. (180)

Del realizes that she has "been sabotaged by love" (Lives 245). The image of the artist's soul as a bird and the mating call of the lover as a lure to a predator's snare, precedes the artist's rueful cry: "Had you, with these the same, but brought a mind!" (Lives 245).

Munro is perhaps the more honest of the two artists compared here, symbolism being 'her' primary forte. Munro's objects are, frequently, richly feminine - even bordering on the feminist - and poetically and colourfully decorative. The Moon in "The Moon in the Orange Street Skating Rink", is purely a domestic symbol of what women are and what the senior Edgar will become for his wife Callie, a fixture or doll at her
affectionate disposal. In fact, she is connected with the doll, imaginatively designed in the dough dolls manipulated by a woman on television, itself being a symbol of femininity. In short, it is the decorative object that women are required to be. The titles of her short stories like "The Stone in the Field," "Dulse," and "The Moons of Jupiter" are also symbolic.

Commenting on the function of symbols in literature, Welleck and Warren are of the view that subjects which are pressed into comparison are, in fact themselves entitled to total attention, from the readers:

Algebraic and logical 'symbols' are conventional, agreed upon signs; but religious symbols are based on some intrinsic relation between 'sign' and thing 'signified', metonymic or metaphoric: the cross, the Lamb, the Good Shepherd. In literary theory, it seems desirable that the word should be used in this sense: as an object which refers to another object but which demands attention also in its own right, as a presentation. (188-89)

What makes the art of Porter and Munro more compelling than most is the deliberate employment of
technical intricacy in respect of the structures in which their symbols are embedded.

Another salient feature that marks the narratives of Porter and Munro, is irony.

As Walker rightly points out:

Irony acts as the best tool for women writers while talking about the condition of women, contesting a patriarchal dominant order. It creates an ideal situation for ironic expression.

Because women - like members of racial and ethnic minorities - have largely been external to [the white male] circle of power, their humorous writing evinces a different relationship with the culture, one in which the status quo, however ludicrous, exerts a force to be coped with, rather than representing one of a number of interchangeable realities. (11)

For instance, a heavy dramatic irony marked by stock phrases, is used in Porter's "A Day's Work". And she has used Romantic irony in the story, "The Martyr".

Dujardin defines 'interior monologue' as:
a device for the 'direct introduction of the reader into the interior life of the character, without any interventions in the way of explanation or commentary on the part of the author' [...] and as the expression of the most intimate thoughts, those which lie nearest the unconscious [...] . (qtd. in Welleck 224-25)

In Porter’s stories, interior monologue is a vehicle for ironic truth and in the story, "That Tree", the narrator reveals things about himself that he himself does not recognize.

W.H. New sees the sense of irony as the sense of being caught between two worlds:

Though dualities abound in the ironist's world, the stances he may take range from parody and innuendo through sarcasm and self-disparagement to absurdity and nihilism [...] . At its best, the ironic stance provokes a serious deliberation into the problems that led to dualities in the first place. (1970, 3)

Alice Munro also employs irony in her stories but it is usually accompanied by sarcasm. She seems to have
been particularly drawn to ironic endings. This can be seen in the stories "Thanks for the Ride" and "The Turkey Season".

Irony, as Hutcheon phrases it, is "the trope that incarnates doubleness" and hence, can be "a popular rhetorical strategy for working within existing discourses and contesting them at the same time" (1991, 49).

The unnamed narrator in the story "That Tree" wishes to live life with "no respectability, no responsibility, no money to speak of [. . . ]" (CS 66). He is treated with irony. He wishes to project a bohemian image and indulges in the worst excesses of a romantic nature, "[. . .] he believed he loved best, the idle free romantic life of a poet - that day Miriam kicked him out was the luckiest day of his life" (CS 66).

Underneath, however, lie the more practical impulses of the blood - the necessity for name, money, possessions, solid work. He spends three years suppressing these impulses before unwittingly acknowledging their power over by him, by marrying a wife who, he thinks, will be the incarnation of respectable middle class values. After four years of marriage, he finds his alter ego personified in
his wife Miriam: " [. . .] here he had been overtaken at last and beaten into resignation that had nothing to do with his mind or heart. It was as if his bloodstream had betrayed him" (CS 77).

According to M.H. Abrams

Dramatic irony involves a situation in a play or a narrative in which the audience shares with the author knowledge of which a character is ignorant: the character acts in a way grossly inappropriate to the actual circumstances or expects the opposite of what fate holds in store, or says something that anticipates the actual outcome, but not at all in the way that he means it. (82)

He decides to live Miriam's way of life, even to the point of remarrying her. However, the fact that the reader knows the journalist to be a divided man, emphasizes his ironic insistence on his self-knowledge. The image of him "admonishing himself before a mirror", infallibly, shows the doubleness of the man.

The story "Theft" opens on the morning when the protagonist, just come from her bath, misses her purse. Immediately her thoughts jump back, with the purse as the connecting link, to the moment on the previous
evening when she looked to see if she had train fare to get home, after a date with Camilo. From there, the scene continues almost uninterrupted through two meetings with men friends, until she reaches her apartment.

The external plot is extremely simple: by chance, she rides home with one man from a date with another; pays a short visit to a third; reaches her apartment, reads a letter from a former lover, and goes to bed; misses her purse the next morning, finds that the janitress has stolen it, and after a hard talk with the thief gets it back. Talk of money leads the protagonist to focus on her empty purse, and she asks Bill for the money he owes her. Not only can he not pay the fifty dollars he owes her, but he hasn’t the pride to honour his debt. He asks her to "have another drink and forget about it" (CS 363). She finds herself responding, despite the fact that she had meant to be firm about the debt, "'Let it go, then,' she found herself saying almost in spite of herself" (CS 63).

Returning to her own apartment, she "lets it go" again, this time saying a deliberate farewell to a lover by purposefully burning his letter "in the coal grate" (CS 63).
According to Allan Rodway "Irony is not merely a matter of seeing a "true" meaning beneath a "false", but of seeing a double exposure [ . . . ] on one plate" (113).

The irony provided by the following passage from Porter’s "Theft", is peculiarly effective as it is subtle as well as self-evident:

My niece is young and needs pretty things, we ought to give the young ones a chance. She’s got young men after her may be will want to marry her. She oughta have nice things. She needs them bad right now. You’re a grown woman [ . . . ].

It wasn’t really yours in the first place [ . . . ]. "You mustn’t talk as if I had stolen it from you" (CS 65).

The janitress’s reply and final thrust hits a deeper mark than she knows: "It’s not from me, its from her you’re stealing it" (CS 65). Significantly, in the context of her epiphany, the protagonist recognizes that "her" is not just the janitress’s niece, but her own other ‘self’. Thus, the protagonist arrives at sanity and truth at the very end: that "I was right not to be afraid of any thief but myself, who will end by leaving me nothing" (CS 65).
"The Martyr" is a comic tale of unrequited love, positioning a serious moral: each man martyrs himself for the things he loves - in Ruben's case an idealized woman primarily; tamales and pepper gravy, secondarily.

It portrays, ironically, an artist who gives himself to self-pity after his model leaves him for another artist. Ruben, a great artist of Mexico completes drawing after drawing of his mistress Isabel, only to find her being taken away from him by another lover of hers, who has sold a painting because it is by sheer coincidence the right color for a wall. Ruben becomes a martyr to love - can think and talk of nothing except the simple-minded girl.

According to M.H.Abrams "the author builds up artistic illusion, only to break it down by revealing that he, as artist, is the arbitrary creator and manipulator of his characters and their actions" (83). In the light of such a definition, the irony contained in "The Martyr" may be defined as 'romantic'.

It is clear from the outset that Ruben will lose in a contest with Isabel. Isabel's pet name for Ruben, "Churro", is, as the narrator is careful to tell us, "a sort of sweet cake, and is, besides, a popular pet name among the Mexicans for small dogs" (CS 33). Indeed,
Ruben is treated like a dog. And the more he is humiliated by Isabel, the more he adores her.

The shallow nature of his affection and the ludicrousness of his posture, are caught beautifully in the comical/farcical image of Ruben that the narrator employs, after the painter has read Isabel's farewell note:

When Ruben read this, he felt like a man drowning. His breath would not come, and he thrashed his arms about a great deal. Then he drank a large bottle of tequila, without lemon or salt to take the edge off, and lay down on the floor with his head in a palette of freshly mixed paint and wept vehemently. (CS 34)

Ramon tells the proprietor that the last words should be very eloquent, "for they will add splendor to the biography, nay, to the very history of art itself, if they are eloquent" (CS 37). Ironically, the proprietor, who may or may not have heard the final words he quotes, emphasizes that the great artist had been inordinately fond of the tamales served in his restaurant: "they were 'his final indulgence' " (CS 37). Thus "The Martyr" closes with a note of irony, with the reader, at last, having the last laugh:
That shall be mentioned in its place, never fear, my good friend, 'cried Ramon, his voice crumbling with generous emotion, with the name of your cafe, even. It shall be a shrine for artists when this story is known. Trust me faithfully to preserve for the future every smallest detail in the life and character of this great genius. Each episode has its own sacred, its precious and peculiar interest. Yes, truly, I shall mention the tamales. (CS 38)

Porter's "The Downward Path to Wisdom" opens with another of her characteristic ironic contradictions: instead of an ascent to wisdom, Stephen travels downward in his journey from innocence to experience, from blissful ignorance to painful knowledge. As Hutcheon puts it, "contradiction, diversion, doubleness - these are the contesting elements that irony lets in by the front door" (1991, 97).

Stephen's life is narrated in this story in a tone that subtly establishes the dualities submerged in it. His father gives him as a boy peanuts and then scolds him for eating them. His uncle David gifts him balloons but turns against him, when Stephen takes others along with him to play with them.
On his father's remarks, Stephen's mother feels tender towards him, and she hugs him, "his neck and shoulders were quite boneless in her firm embrace" (CS 370). The word 'firm' here serves an ironic function as the mother's response to Stephen too, is neither consistent nor stable.

In short, the boy finds no security in the adults, he creates his own world of bliss, singing to himself, "a quiet, inside song", in fact, a comfortable rhythmic lullaby-like chant: "I hate Papa, I hate Mama, I hate Grandma, I hate uncle David, I hate old Janet, I hate Marjory, I hate Papa, I hate Mama [...]" (CS 387). Ironically, again, he falls asleep on his mother's lap at the end.

In "A Day's Work" there is irony in the description of Mr. Halloran in his drunken state whose world is getting upset and topsy turvy:

Mr. Halloran reached for the bottle but it skipped sideways, rolled out of reach like a creature, and exploded at his feet. When he stood up the chair fell backward from under him. He leaned on the table and it folded up under his hands like cardboard. (CS 401)
The story "He" is about the family of Whipples and their idiot son, 'He'. In the closing scene of the story, 'He' is removed from the home to the hospital and Mrs.Whipple recognizes in 'His' tears a sense of loss stemming from 'His' love for her. Recalling all the earlier abuses she has directed at 'Him', she feels that "she had loved Him as much as she possibly could [. . .] there was nothing she could do to make up for Him for his life. Oh! what a mortal pity He was ever born" (CS 58).

'He' is given a raw deal at the end and the treatment meted out to 'Him' is almost like that meant for an animal, with denial of his freedom, solitary confinement and corrective coercions under threat and drugs. 'He' is pushed into all these by the so-called humans, most of all, 'His' own mother.

Thus, the irony in the story is fundamental and seems designed, to arm the readers against the evil of vague sentimentality.

Munro's works also employ irony, but often her irony is accompanied by a note of sarcasm, which usually involves an explicit expression of a very different attitude or evaluation.
According to Kierkegaard,

Whoever has essential irony has it all day long; he is not ironical from time to time or in this or that direction but considers the totality of existence *sub specie ironiae* and is never ironical in order to be admired as an ironist. (qtd. in Muecke 13)

In the story, "Lives of Girls and Women", Del's mother's reply is highly ironic, when Fern Dogherty says that the sermon that morning was about peace and the United Nations and the priest too was in favour of peace: "I guess God is too then. What a relief. Only a short time ago He and Mr. McLaughlin were all for the war. They are a changeable pair" (Lives 100).

Nevertheless, W.R.Martin attributes irony in Munro, essentially, to an attitude of increasing acceptance of life's contradictions:

[. . .] in its final effect it is just, rising above all the snobberies of fashion; class and intellect; but if, in her moment of illumination, Munro achieves an acceptance of the ironies of life and death, it is because her narrators seem to accept the queerness - the strange, the mysterious - rather than
subject it to sustained intellectual analysis.
(qtd. in Martin 110)

Reinhold Niebuhr also has noted how, in a more specific context, the comic becomes ironic when a 'hidden relation is discovered in the incongruity' (8). This is the secret that addressee and addresser share, the knowing smile of realization that they have entered what Norman Bryson, in a totally different context, calls the "interindividual" territory of recognition. (131)

Munro's "Friend of My Youth" presents a mother’s recollections of significant events in her family’s past through Flora her daughter-narrator. Ironically, Flora’s growing awareness of the limits of her own narrative, is what frees her to recapture her real self in a more realistic light. The mother-narrator, herself a conscious deviser of her own fiction, has lost interest in the historical Flora. However, on becoming aware of the illusions fed hitherto by her own narrative skill, the daughter, at last, attains a power of self-analysis, coming face to face with reality: "I was always thinking of stories, and by this time I probably had a new one on my mind" (FOY 24).

Her long dead mother figuring in Flora’s narration and the real-life mother suddenly seem to merge
together. Though Flora cannot retrieve her mother's experience from the past, the very process of story-telling allows her a valuable insight into her mother's experiences. Ironically, in her recognition of the illusion of her own fictional counterpart, Flora arrives at the fictionality concerning her mother in her narrative. Thus, the paradox of the very process of story-telling, provides Flora with new perception of her mother and a deeper appreciation of their mother-daughter relationship.

The narrator of "An Ounce of Care", gives an account of a young woman, who looks back with ironic amusement, at the absurdities of her own girlhood, when she recalls an episode of romance in the company of Martin Collingwood:

[. . .] he took me out for the first time, and kissed me on the dark side of the porch - also, I ought to say, on the mouth; I am sure it was the first time anybody had ever kissed me effectively, and I know that I did not wash my face that night or the next morning, in order to keep the imprint of those kisses intact. (I showed the most painful banality in the conduct of this whole affair, as you will see). Two months, and a few amatory stages
later he dropped me. He had fallen for the
girl who played opposite him in the Christmas
production of Pride and Prejudice. (DHS 76)

Cut to the quick the narrator opts out of the
whole relationship, looking with greater awareness at
the way things generally happen, changing from being a
participant to an observer.

According to B.Pfaus there is little possibility
of reconciliation between two worlds in Munro:

All of Munro's short stories present the
reader with Munro's vision of two worlds which
she sees as having an essential and
irreconcilable tension between the two sets of
values inherent in each world; the chaotic
natural world [. . .] and [. . .] [the] social
garrison of conventionality. Straddling these
two worlds, and struggling to compromise them,
Munro and her heroines may ultimately find
nothing that gives absolute meaning to life in
either world, or resolution of situations
possible [. . .]. (7)

Lorraine Weir explains how employment of irony in
the works of women writers who are supposed to be
'weaker', endows their protagonists with a peculiar
potency of its own:
Irony in the hands of those who exercise genuine power is very different from the same device in the hands of those classified as powerless. Among those whose basic communication may frequently depend upon the skilled use and reception of ironic utterance - that is, among the powerless - irony will be all the more powerful. (qtd. in Gooneratne 65-66)

For instance, the short story "Thanks For the Ride", is packed with restrained but telling irony that exposes the emotional barrenness in individual lives. In this story Adelaide parades around with his "inexplicable aura of sexuality" (47) and Lois goes about disillusioned with the soul of an embittered harlot at the age of "almost seventeen" (DHS 54). The irony of the situation comes to light, only with the shock administered to a gang of adolescent boys by the sex-starved Lois, who is used to lying in a barn for casual sexual encounters: "She knew the country side; she had been there before" (DHS 56). However, the conclusion of the story is poignant as well as dramatic:

We heard the female voice calling after us, the loud, crude, female voice, abusive and forlorn:
"Thanks for the ride!"

It was not Adelaide calling; it was Lois. (DHS 58)

The awkwardness in the narration stems, not from the gender of the narrator, but from an ambiguity about his own attitude and maturity. Munro's depiction of the ambience of uncertainties governing the world of adolescence is brilliant, as she does not mince matters with regard to the imminent exposure of these youths to their loss of innocence in a corrupt world. According to Eleanor Cook "irony, satire, self mockery are all 'strategies for survival, and even for a kind of celebration' for Canadians" (220).

The narrator in "The Spanish Lady", feels "abandoned" and depressed as the treatment meted out to her by her own sister has been "cruel" (SIB 176-76). She sees, at last, isolation as a universal human experience. However, as irony would have it, this vision of isolation of an individual dawns on her in a railway station, which, significantly, happens to be a terminal, and she cannot communicate her epiphanic vision to the rest of the world: "This is a message; I really believe it is; but I don't see how I can deliver it" (SIB 153). Such an irony can be also viewed as irony of self-protection which, according to Glicksberg,
"is the irony that saves face", and is the "contemplation of life's absurdity without being defeated by it" (4).

"The Turkey Season" has a taut dramatic structure leading to a climax that brings together various threads of the story. However, the ending of the story reeks with sardonic irony: the turkey - gutters sing their coarse parody of "We Three Kings" and convert the dream of a white Christmas into a gory shambles to make a Christmas holiday:

"Let's sing," Lily said. "What'll we sing?"
"'We Three Kings'?' said Marjorie. "'We Three Turkey Gutters'?"
"'I'm Dreaming of a 'White Christmas'."
"Why dream? You got it!" (Moons 76).

There is a certain wry irony also about the story "Prue". The protagonist who is in his late forties, has an affair with Gordon, who is a "helpless, baffled soul, squirming around inside his doughty fortress" (Moons 132). The situation here is doubly ironical, for Gordon happens to be a "neurologist" (Moons 130).

Gordon claims, strangely enough, that he wants to marry Prue, after he has got over "being in love" (Moons 132). Perhaps, he feels drawn to Prue because she is
"unintense and civilized, and never makes any real demands or complaints" (Moons 129). Giving an account of her own plight, Prue says,

I think he was afraid I was going to laugh. He doesn't know why people laugh or throw their overnight bags at him, but he's noticed they do. He's such a proper person, really. The lovely dinner. Then she comes and throws her overnight bag. And it's quite reasonable to think of marrying me in a few years' time, when he gets over being in love. I think he first thought of telling me to sort of put my mind at rest. (Moons 132)

Throughout the story the short-clipped sentences of the reticent girl, generate a satiric humour, which conveys in a strikingly realistic manner, her real feelings. Patrick Murray defines irony as a literary device which, "pertains to characterization and the over-all view of truth expressed in any literary work" (69). Perhaps this can be said of the kind of irony in this story.

In Porter and Munro, the imagery employed is not only vivid but also associated with sensations, bearing an eloquent testimony to the efficacy of the authors as
artists. According to I.A. Richards, "What gives an image efficacy is less its vividness as an image than its character as a mental event peculiarly connected with sensation" (qtd. in Welleck 187).

For instance, bestial imagery is used by Porter and Munro, for delineating character and defining the role of individual characters and luminous imagery for driving home themes associated with epiphany and enlightenment and sartorial imagery for suggesting particular traits of characters.

The imagery used by Porter and Munro enables the reader to get nearer to the authors themselves as suggested by Caroline F.E. Spurgeon, while she discusses imagery in Shakespeare:

It enables us to get nearer to Shakespeare himself, to his mind, his tastes, his experiences and his deeper thought [. . .]. It throws light from a fresh angle Shakespeare's imaginative and pictorial vision, upon his own ideas about his own plays and the characters in them [. . .]. (10)

In both Porter and Munro, light imagery signifies security, love and love of life itself. In Porter's "Grave", children go into the cemetery to discover their
treasures and to learn about life, on "One burning day" (CS 362). In the same work, Miranda has a flashback in Mexico, of a day covered in "blazing sunshine" (CS 368) - recalling a particularly happy occasion from the past. Once Miranda sees her brother, "standing again in the blazing sunshine, again twelve years old, a pleased sober smile in his eyes, turning the silver dove over and over in his hands" (CS 367-368).

Images of light and darkness are contrasted in Porter's "The Jilting of Granny Weatherall". When Granny Weatherall realizes that the bridegroom will not be arriving "a whirl of dark smoke rose and covered it" (CS 84). In the following episode, the switching off of the light by Granny as she nears her own death is clearly metaphorical:

The blue light from Cornelia's lampshade drew into a tiny point in the center of her brain, it flickered and winked like an eye, quietly it fluttered and dwindled. (CS 89)

C. Day Lewis defines "image" as follows:
An epithet, a metaphor, a simile may create an image; or an image may be presented to us in a phrase or passage [. . .] conveying to our imagination something more than the accurate reflection of an external reality. (18)
Here, the grand mother feels jilted by her lover who does not turn up on the wedding day. The story closes with the line: "She stretched herself with a deep breath and blew out the light" (CS 89) - suggesting that she willed herself to die.

In Porter's "Pale Horse, Pale Rider", light stands for Miranda’s fluctuating hope/despair for survival, as she lies in a hospital bed, suffering from influenza:

Now if real daylight such as I remember having seen in this world would only come again, but it is always twilight or just before morning, a promise of day that is never kept. What has become of the sun? That was the longest and loneliest night and yet it will not end and let the day come. Shall I ever see light again? (CS 313)

In "Flowering Judas", as Eugenio offers Miranda warm bleeding flowers from the Judas tree, she sees that his hand is "fleshless, a cluster of small white petrified branches, and his eye sockets were without light" (CS 102). Again, when Eugenio offers Miranda the flowers from the Judas tree she feels his eye sockets are without light but in Lives, just before the funeral of her uncle Craig, at Jenkins Bond, Del Jordan wades
through water and encounters a dead cow and its attractive eye:

The eye was wide open, dark, a smooth slightless bulge, with a sheen like silk and reddish gleam in it, a reflection of light. An orange stuffed in a black silk stocking. (Lives 37)

In "Jilting of Granny Weatherall" "a dark smoky cloud" is employed as symbolic of the hapless marital life of the 'Granny' and in "An Ounce of Cure" by Munro "a mild black night" stands for bleak, disappointment of the narrator. Thus, in Porter imagery forms an integral part of her art suggestive of a wide range of human emotions.

Munro in her art, handles human emotional sensitivity to the evanescence of time, through imagery of light. Interestingly, imagery of 'fruit' is frequently employed by Porter and Munro in human contexts. In Porter's "Pale Horse, Pale Rider", Adam, in Miranda's eyes, looks clear and fresh "like a fine healthy apple" (CS 280). And in his tailor-made, new uniform he is "all olive and tan and tawney, hay-colored and sand-colored from hair to boots" (CS 278). Further, she observes that his eyes are "pale tan with orange flecks in them" (CS 280).
On the other hand, Helen, in Munro's story, "Executioners" uses the image of fruit to express her disgust and hatred for Howard Tray when she is humiliated by his sexual taunts: "I would have liked his head torn from his body, flesh pulpy and dipping like watermelon, limbs wrenched away; axes, saws, knives and hammers applied to him" (SIB 120).

The contrast in the employment of 'fruit' imagery in Porter and Munro, highlights the fact that the former's is a kind of imaginative art that essentially stems from a rural or pastoral landscape where the humans lead lives which are close to Nature and seasons and witness the wholesome organic growth in Nature, while those who live a rat-race kind of existence in modern, urbanized cities are more prone to witness unsold fruits and vegetables dumped merely as garbage at the ends of streets.

Sartorial imagery in Porter and Munro is often indicative of the nature of the various character traits. For instance, in Porter's "Hacienda", Uspensky, the Russian director, wears a "monkey-suit of striped overalls"; "his face is like that of an enlightened monkey" and has a "monkey attitude towards life" [. . .] (CS 153), while the comic character, Don Julia of Hacienda in the same work,
wears a black satin Pijamas, adorned with rainbow-coloured bands of silk, loose sleeves falling over her babyish hands with pointed scarlet, looking like a character Fingerens in a Hollywood comedy. (CS 154)

In the chapter "The Flats Road" in Lives of Girls and Women, informal nature and the unconventional behaviour of uncle Benny whom Del idolizes is presented with an elaborate description of manner of his dressing.

[. . .] wore the same clothes everyday of his life, everywhere you saw him - rubber boots, overalls, no shirt, no suit jacket, rusty black and buttoned, showing a V of tough red skin with a tender edge of white. A felt hat on his head had kept its narrow ribbon and two little feathers, which were entirely darkened with sweat. (Lives 1)

'Cage imagery' is employed by Porter, to suggest conditions of slavery and despair. Violeta in "Virgin Violeta", feels "like a parrot stuffed in a cage", while at home, "gasping panting, waiting for someone to rescue". Church for her is "a terrible, huge cage, but it seemed too small" (CS 26). Again, in Porter's story, "That Tree", the journalist-protagonist feels that he
would be "freeing a bird from a cage" (CS 74) when he
marries Miriam.

Describing Mrs. Sheriff in "Lives of Girls and
Women", Munro says: "Mrs. Sheriff, gave me a white angry
look, perhaps not angry, just magnificently startled, it
was as if I had sat down beside an eagle on its perch"
(Lives 106).

Bestial imagery is used by Porter and Munro for
caracter delineation and defining roles. In Porter's
"The Martyr", Isabel affectionately calls her husband
"Churro", a popular pet name among the Mexicans for
small dogs. Several women protagonists in Porter, show
anxiety for possession and control - direct or indirect,
where their men are involved.

In contrast, Munro lives in a relatively more
disjointed kind of existence in a metropolitan,
materialistic society, where women do not exhibit such
an obsessive anxiety over the possession of their male
partners. Living in a relatively more permissive
society, Munro's women are less obsessed with their
relationship with men and are pronouncenedly judgemental.

Munro uses the term "bitch" suggestive of her
permissive women. For instance, Alice accuses Eddie, the
fifteen-year old farm girl for having an intimate
relationship with her fiance in Munro’s story, "How I Met My Husband":

Loose little bitch. Tears ran down her face "Loose little bitch", aren’t you? I knew as soon as I saw you. Men despair girls like you. He just made use of you and went off, you know that don’t you? Girls like you are just nothing, just public conveniences just filthy little rags [. . .] Filthy [. . .] Filthy little rag!. (SIB 3)

There are some interesting instances of 'intertextuality' in the cases of Porter and Munro. Judie Norman defines 'Intertextuality' as, "the transposition of one or several systems of signs into another" (2), and adds "intertextuality may incorporate all sorts of social phenomena, from nursery rhymes to fairy tales, films and the staging of public events" (3).

In Porter’s "The Jilting of Granny Weatherall" Granny tells how she feels jilted by God whenever she asks Him for a sign, and she continues to feel cheated like the foolish virgin, a direct reference to this parable in Matt 25:1-13.
The imagery of the "Flowering Judas" whose flowers subsequently get consumed in Porter's story, occurs in T.S.Eliot's "Gerontion":

In the juvescence of the year
    came Christ the tiger

It depraved May, dogwood and
    chestnut, flowering judas,

To be eaten, to be divided, to be drunk
    Among whispers.

Interestingly enough, both in Porter and Eliot 'Judas' is associated with the ritual of the holy sacrament, followed immediately by an episode of ruthless betrayal. In Porter's story Braggioni betrays both Laura and the cause of Mexican Revolution. And in the case of Laura and Eugenio, the former assumes the mantle of the betrayer in as much as she refuses to recognize Eugenio's love for her, as she does her own deep-seated passion for Eugenio.

Munro's story, " Forgiveness in Families", bears a theme similar to that of the parable of the prodigal son. The puzzle and the paradox of the parable is palpable in Munro's story too, narrated in the words of a dutiful sister, who finds her mother's tolerance and readiness to forgive her scapegrace son, Cam, somewhat
incomprehensible. However, as the mother says at the beginning of the story, "The Lord loves a lunatic" (SIB 93).

Though not a self-conscious borrower, Alice Munro does not rule out the possibility of accidental occurrences of inter-textuality in her own writings, especially in the sphere relating to the over-all ambience in a work:

I'm not very often aware of influences, but I'm sure they are happening all the time [. . .]. I'm probably using things that other people have used first without ever realizing I'm doing it [. . .] we pick up a tone that seems appropriate to a certain kind of material, and we try out that tone. (qtd. in Struthers 1983, 17)

J.R. Struthers has argued "Lives of Girls and Women is among other things a sort of feminine counterpart of Joyce's A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man" (1975, 34).

Analysing Munro's art, Elaine Showalter has observed that it has tended to 'piece' or 'fragment' the notions of the earlier, patriarchal, world view and has
reintegrated the fragments thus obtained, in a radically new, liberated, healthy order in literature:

[. . .] for the past 20 years, several women authors have used "quilting" and "piecing" as an image of a feminist post modern: an intertextuality that emphasizes fragmentation and narrative proliferation. As a metaphor for narrative, quilting/piecing destabilizes notions of unity, coherence and balance; it becomes a source of disruption for patriarchal narrative structure. She points out rightly "that while Munro's stories call attention to narrative fragments and multiple tellings, her narrative structure does not reflect a disruptive/eruptive post modernism. Instead, one finds in her use of "piecing" traces of another tradition in women's writings in which 'quilting' functioned as an icon for the recuperation of fragmented tradition; the coming together of disparate elements into a "healed" whole" (Showalter 1997, 225-27).

Discussing intertextuality in Munro's art, Barbara Goddard also subscribes to a critical view, strikingly similar to that of Showalter: "using intertextuality and patch work to discuss the body of/as literature, Munro
explores "production of meaning" through multiple, shifting 'worlds'" (44).

In Porter’s story "Old Order", the occupation of old women making patch work out of old family funeral, is symbolic. The old ladies in the story take scattered events from memory, rearrange them in an enhanced orderly patch work and put them back again, since they are of no use or interest to the younger generation. Patch work covers are made to merely enshrine family relics:

The rolling pin was the Grandmother’s irreplaceable treasure. She covered it with an extraordinarily complicated bit of patch work, added golden tassels to the handles, and hung it in a conspicuous place in her room [. . .]. So she fitted a patchwork case over the shagreen and made a sort of envelop of cut velvet and violet satin, held together with briar stitching to contain the portrait. (CS 326)

It is remarkable that Porter uses third-person narrative in her short stories while Munro prefers the first-person narrative for most of her stories. Critics like Welleck are well aware of the difference caused by
perspectives in art deliberately chosen by authors, especially, in the context of modern/post-modern irony:

Telling a story in the first person (the Ich-Erzählung) is a method carefully to be weighed against others. Such a narrator must not, of course, be confounded with the author. The purpose and effect of narration in the first person vary. Sometimes the effect is to make the teller less sharp and 'real' than other characters. (222)

For instance, Porter’s 'He' is written in an ironic vein throughout in the form of the first-person narrative, yet the narration in it proves to be stronger than any third-person narrative can be. Mrs. Whipple may profess love for her retarded son, but the reader never really catches her, making a single gesture of kindness to him.

When 'He' climbs the peach trees and goes "skittering along the branches like a monkey" (CS 50), his mother shouts at him:

[. . .] Come down out of there, you!" when he finally reached the ground she could hardly keep her hands off Him for acting like that before people, a grin all over His face and
her [sic] worried sick about Him all the time.  
(CS 50-51)

There is a latent irony even in the scene where the doctor advises the mother to cover him with a blanket:

Mr. and Mrs. Whipple took a blanket off their own bed and put His cot in by the fire. "They can't say we didn't do everything for Him," she said, "even to sleeping cold ourselves on His account" (CS 55).

The first-person narrative mode enables Munro, to probe skilfully the innermost recesses of her protagonists' minds. Munro prefers a first-person narrative in most of her works, as she is primarily preoccupied with the depiction of the inner feelings and thoughts, often from the character's point of view.

First-person narrative is used in Munro's "Tell Me Yes Or No". The narrator exorcises her own nagging pain, by deliberately switching on a past episode from her frozen memory into the present flow of life. The 'You' in this story, is the soul of the one-time lover to whom the narrator attempts to communicate sporadically through letters, without ever posting them:
Would you like to know how I was informed of your death? I go into the faculty kitchen, to make myself a cup of coffee before my ten o'clock class. Dodie Charles who is always baking something has brought a Cherry Pound cake (the thing 'We Old' pros know about, in these fantasies, is the importance of detail, solidity; yes, a cherry pound cake). It is wrapped in waxed paper and then in a newspaper. The Globe and Mail, not the local paper, that I would have seen. (SIB 88-89)

The only element of surprise about the narrative here is that the entire letter, describing so vividly her present-day state of affairs and dwelling on the narrator's sensibility, is meant never to be sent anywhere.

In "The Peace Of Utrecht", Helen, a young mother returns to a small town by name Jubilee of her childhood. Munro's evocation of life in Jubilee is eminently realistic because of her choice of the first-person narrative here:

I drove up the main street, a new service station, new stucco front, on the Queen's Hotel - and turned into the quiet, decaying
side streets where old maids live, and have birdbaths and blue delphiniums in their gardens. The big brick houses that I knew, with their wooden verandahs and gaping dark-screened windows, seemed to me plausible but unreal. (DHS 196)

The tone of Munro's first-person narrative has such an air of authentic ring about it that it evokes her presence in her work as Munro herself could have been in real life. The first-person narrative also enables her to skillfully probe and expound the psyche of the protagonists concerned. In Lives, Del Jordan is the first-person narrator, who finds herself torn between opposed interests and conflicts, discoveries and epiphanies.

According to Carl Jung:

[. . .] beneath the individual 'unconscious' - the blocked - off residue of our past, particularly our childhood and infancy lies the 'collective unconscious' - the blocked off memory of our racial past, even of our pre-humanity. (qtd. in Welleck 84)

Porter uses the flashback technique with the present consciousness harping often back on the past, as depicted through Miranda's thoughts and actions.
Munro uses the narrative approach mainly for stories based on memory, most of which are located in and around the rural town of Ontario. In "Peace of Utrecht" Helen’s return to and re-discovery of Jubilee is followed by Del Jordan in Lives of Girls and Women; by various characters in Something I’ve Been Meaning to Tell You; by Rose in Who Do You Think You Are? and by the protagonists of The Moons of Jupiter.

Both Porter and Munro employ numerous flashbacks in their narratives. The narrative of Porter’s "The Journey" moves back and forth indicating that the past never ceases to count. The story depicts the journey of some old women through life in all its vicissitudes, thoroughly at peace with the world they have created. For instance, in the case of a particular woman,

By the time her children began to marry, she was able to give them each a good strip of land and a little money, she was able to help them buy more land in places they preferred, by selling her own, tract by tract, and she saw them all begin well, though not all of them ended so. (CS 339)

The entire corpus of "Grave" is a flashback, with the present consciousness moving often backward recalling the past, depicted primarily through Miranda’s
thoughts and actions. Miranda lives in Mexico while the flashback period of the narrative is totally preoccupied with the action taking place in the South:

[. . .] It was a very hot day and the smell in the market, with its piles of raw flesh and wilting flowers, was like the mingled sweetness and corruption she had smelled that other day in the empty cemetery at home: the day she had remembered always until now vaguely as the time she and her brother had found treasure in the opened graves. (CS 368)

"The Peace of Utrecht" is suffused with several layers of memories and Munro has appropriately used the flashback technique in this story. The protagonist entertains a feeling of guilt for not having called on her mother even once, when the latter lived all alone. After guiltily recalling the early years of her mother's illness and her eventual departure from Jubilee, she confesses in a lament, fraught with irony: 'I find the picture is still not complete' (DHS 200).

Many of Katherine Anne Porter's short stories end with sensational moments which expose her characters to an understanding, if only momentarily, of the limits of their own isolated lives. Her plots are dramatic and often built around epiphanous moments.
In "Theft", the epiphanean moment consists in the moment when the protagonist who has withdrawn so far into her inward fanciful world of reverie, realizes that she had lived essentially without any will of her own, supinely allowing others to manipulate the entire course of her life:

[. . . ] books borrowed from her and not returned, journeys she had planned and had not made, words she had waited to hear spoken to her and had not heard, and the words she had meant to answer with; bitter alternatives and intolerable substitutes worse than nothing, and yet inescapable: the long patient suffering of dying friendships and the dark inexplicable death of love – all that she had had, and all that she had missed, were lost together, and were twice lost in this landslide of remembered losses. (CS 64)

In "Jilting of Granny Weatherall" the old woman’s terminal vision consists in her helpless craving for the knowledge to be obtained towards the very end or just at the moment following her death on earth, when the dying woman comes to terms with the fact of mutability and mortality:
Granny lay curled down within herself, amazed and watchful, staring at the point of light that was herself; her body was now only a deeper mass of shadow in an endless darkness and this darkness would curl around the light and swallow it up. (CS 88-89)

Miranda, in "Circus" has a momentary vision of the terror implicit in the trickery of circus clowns and tightrope-walkers and has to be carried home by Dicey, a blackmaid. Only the grandmother understands the child's nausea and anguish, and passes her judgement on the relative merits of childhood and of maturity. The span of life is so short that neither the old nor the young can live long enough to be able to solve the jig-saw puzzle of existence: "The fruits of their present are in future so far off, neither of us may live to know whether harm has been done or not. This is the trouble" (CS 347).

Commenting on the dramatic climax in the story "The Circus", Charles Kaplan goes rather far off the mark when he says: "The Circus" is one of the 'epiphanies' resulting in Miranda's growth into experience, where she sees a 'vision of monstrous evil revealed at the heart of gaiety and fantasy" (323).
In "Old Mortality", Miranda travels along with her cousin Amy, and is informed that Aunt Amy had been a sex-starved flirt who met with a reckless but merry death. This proves to be such a shocking revelation to the girl, that she realises all on a sudden how little she has ever understood of her own past. The momentous shock she receives at this information, underlines her own earlier, innate naivete and eggs her on ultimately to doubt the very rationale behind any quest for truth:

What is the truth, she asked herself as intently as if the question had never been asked, the truth, even about the smallest, the least important of all the things I must find out? and where shall I begin to look for it? [. . .]. (CS 221)

Towards the close of the story, however, Miranda reconciles herself to finding out her own truth as an individual despite all her fallibility: "At least, I can know the truth about what happens to me, she assured herself silently, making a promise to herself in her hopefulness, her ignorance" (CS 221).

According to Mary Burgan, in selecting sheer epiphanic moments for the climax of most of her stories, Porter and Eudora Welty emerge as pioneers anticipating
the techniques of several contemporary American feminists, a fact several critics have taken cognizance of:

American modernists like Katherine Anne Porter and Eudora Welty [. . .] perceived that it was in their power to manipulate the signifying moment in narrative structure of their own devising so as to represent the rhythms of feminine understanding in a tour de force of language. It was in this realization that the structure of temporality contained within the epiphanic short story could be their achievement, [. . .] . (qtd. in Brown 1995, 278)

James Carscallen, on the other hand, views these special 'epiphanous' moments in Munro as "standing out against the rest of the story", "which sums up the story meaning" (qtd. in Jeffrey 10).

Munro's 'epiphanies', referred to as "queer bright moment(s)" (qtd. in Jeffrey 15), are used as tropes of consolation for the reader, to whom some of the 'seeing' is always left, even as James Carscallen observes: "The 'queerness' arises from the juxtaposition of unexpected, surprising phrases or ideas, which results in a defamiliarization of the ordinary" (qtd. in Jeffrey 74).
Thus, Munro tends to involve her readers too in her art by provoking them to respond to the increasingly absorbing denouement of her fictional narratives.

In "Oranges and Apples", the unsuspecting Murray returns home from his departmental stores and gets the real picture of his voluptuous wife Barbara, in an 'epiphanic' moment, as he catches her in a compromising mood with a voyeuristic friend, lolling on the lawn in her bathing suit:

in the middle of the day, in her own backyard, she lay on the grass inviting him. Promising - no, she was already providing - the most exquisite co-operation. It was obscene and enthralling and unbearable. (FOY 127)

Murray's life, henceforth, is divided into a 'before' and an 'after', revealing the core of his marriage that is equally suggestive of both. Munro's art at this point, as at several of her best moments, is extremely realistic, enriched by irony.

Porter's observation is multi-faceted, mostly comprising what is visual and psychological, literal and metaphoric. For instance, Great aunt Eliza is described in "The Fig Tree" in terms, at once realistic and comical:
Great-Aunt Eliza loomed like a mountain with her grizzled iron-colored hair like a curly wig, her steel-rimmed spectacles over her snuff-colored eyes, and snuff-colored woollen skirts billowing about her, and her smell of snuff. When she came through the door she quite filled it up. When she sat down the chair disappeared under her, and she seemed to be sitting solidly on herself from her waistband to the floor. (CS 359)

In a critical study of Porter’s art, Lodwic Hartley makes a pertinent observation with regard to the attention Porter bestows on details, because her perception is both intense and minute:

The greatest gift of Porter is her consummate mastery of detail whatever may be her structural or emotional limitations, she has the uncanny power of evoking richness from minutiae. (214)

For instance, in Porter’s story "The Witness", a child is assigned with the task of providing a graphic description of Uncle Jimbilly, bringing out, essentially, a child’s point of view, which emerges through the objects selected for comment:
His hands were closed and stiff from gripping objects tightly, while he worked at them, and they could not open altogether even if a child took the thick black fingers and tried to turn them back. He hobbled on a stick; his purplish skull showed through patches in his wool, which had turned greenish gray and looked as if the mother had got it. (CS 340)

On the other hand, while depicting adult men in her fiction, Porter tends to pay a closer attention to their physiognomy and physique as a whole, employing a language, rich in visual imagery which is at the same time, profoundly metaphysical.

In "Hacienda" for example, Kennerly tries to assume a kind of moral superiority above the Mexicans, self-consciously looking with his "light eyes, and leather colored hair". His "voice brays", his nerves are "bundles of dried twigs", and his body is corrupted "with warm beer and sweet American chocolates" (CS 138-39).

Talking of Munro's stylistics, Blodgett observes, "Munro's fiction is rooted in a living world of painted, perhaps even outraged lives. Munro is primarily a realist" (1), for she has an extraordinary eye for
surface detail, colour, setting, mode of dressing, mores of conduct, mannerisms in speech, and behaviour, assumptions and attitudes.

In Del’s Gothic fiction included in Lives the daughter, the central figure in the work, articulates a fantasy of an adolescent. Correspondingly, the language, at this point, becomes somewhat vague, bordering on something embarrassingly morbid, purely in keeping with the adolescent indulgence in extravagant daydreaming, thereby lending a profoundly realistic touch:

She bestowed her gifts capriciously on men [. . .]. But her generosity mocked them, her butter sweet flesh, the colour of peeled almonds, burned men down quickly and left a taste of death. She was a sacrifice, spread for sex on moldy uncomfortable tombstone, pushed against the cruel bark of trees, her frail body squashed into the mud and her dirt of [. . .] . (Lives 204)

In the chapter "The Flats Road", Del employs a realistic mode of language when she describes her teacher Farrie as a woman who, "hennaed her hair, which was bobbed in the style of the nineteen-twenties" (Lives 120). The following observation of the same teacher
shows what a sharp eye Del has, for women's sartorial habits and styles:

She made all her own clothes. She wore high necks and long chaste sleeves, or peasant drawstrings and rickrack, or a foam of white lacy frills under the chin and at the wrists, or bold bright buttons set with little mirrors. (Lives 12)

In the story "The Love of a Good Woman" Ailsa is presented as an assertive, compact person endowed with vitality:

Ailsa's hair was arranged in bunches of tight permanent curls, with her hat riding on top. She had shrewd pale eyes behind sparkle-rimmed glasses, and round pink cheeks, and a dimpled chin [. . .]. Ailsa managed her curves assertively; not provocatively, as if she was made of some sturdy ceramic. (LGW 349)

"The Peace of Utrecht" is about Helen's visit with her children to see her sister Maddy for the first time since the death of their mother due to a long, lingering illness. Helen's estrangement and bitterness towards her sister is revealed in the following passage which contains some of the most strikingly realistic touches
and insights in the portrayal of human relationships, tinged with inevitable irony:

Maddy and I, though we speak cheerfully of our enjoyment of so long and intimate a visit, will be relieved when it is over. Silence disturbs us. We laugh immoderately. I am afraid - very likely we are both afraid - that when the moment comes to say good bye, unless we are very quick to kiss, and fervently mockingly squeeze each other’s shoulders, we will have to look straight into the desert that is between us and acknowledge that we are not merely indifferent; at heart we reject each other, and as for that past we make so much of sharing we do not really share it at all, each of us keeping it jealously to herself, thinking privately that the other has turned alien and forfeited her claim. (DHS 190)

If Munro’s portraits of women and their costumes are often indicative of their inner disposition as well as the cultures of their respective sociological milieux, Porter and Munro, have a pronounced predilection as regards interior decor as well as architecture. In fact, their relish in describing
buildings has rendered their art not only metaphorical but eminently monumental, representative of the age in which they lived.

In Porter's short story 'Hacienda', the room of the flamboyant actress Dona Julia is presented in a passage highly metaphorical:

[. . .] puffy with silk and down, glossy with bright new polished wood and wide mirrors, restless with small ornaments, boxes of sweets, French dolls in ruffled skirts and white wigs. The air was thick with perfume which fought with another heavier smell. (CS 161)

When the grandmother enters the house in Porter's "The Source", her transforming presence ushers in swift and dramatic miracles in the household:

Curtains came down in dingy heaps and went up again stiff and sweet-smelling; rugs were heaved forth in dusty confusion and returned flat and gay with flowers once more; the kitchen was no longer dingy and desolate but a place of heavenly order where it was tempting to linger. (CS 324)
When Miranda describes the jungle in "Pale Horse and Pale Rider" an ominous atmosphere is instantly evoked by Porter’s uncanny language, metaphorical again, highly suggestive of the chaos in Miranda’s inner world:

[. . .] a writhing terribly alive and secret place of death, creeping with tangles of spotted serpents, rainbow colored birds with malign eyes, leopards with humanly wise faces and extravagantly crested lions; screaming — long armed monkeys tumbling among the broad fleshy leaves that glowed with sulphur—colored light and exuded the ichor of death, and rotting trunks of unfamiliar trees sprawled in crawling slime [. . .] . (CS 299)

Miranda also hears voices of discordance and vague warning: "Danger, danger, danger [. . .] war, war, war" (CS 299).

Language in Porter is not only evocative but can be intensely realistic. There is a definite touch of realism bordering on the comical, with regard to the following passage from Porter’s "Flowering Judas", as Laura goes to pray in a church:

[. . .] she ends up examining the altar with its tinsel flowers and ragged brocades, and
feels tender about the battered doll-shape of some male saint, whose white, lace-trimmed drawers hang limply around his ankles below the hieratic dignity of his velvet robe. (CS 92)

Discussing her own penchant for realism in art, Munro has gone on record that she tends to capture

The way people live. The way houses are furnished and all the objects in them. I am crazy about doing these [. . .] . I like people’s clothes too. I like doing that. I do a lot of surface thing. (qtd. in Gadpaille 62)

In Munro’s "Thanks for the Ride", Lois, the small town girl picked up by two young men on the look out for an evening’s fun, invites them into her house and asks them to wait while she changes her clothes. The youngman who is to be her date describes the scene:

The little front room had linoleum on the floor and flowered paper curtains at the windows. There was a glossy chesterfield with a Niagara Falls and a To Mother cushion on it, and there was a little black stove with a screen around it for summer, and a big vase of paper apple blossoms. A tall, frail woman
came into the room drying her hands on a dish towel, which she flung into a chair. Her mouth was full of blue-white china teeth, the long cords trembled in her neck. (DHS 49)

A nostalgic description of the city of Ontario of a bygone-age is presented in splendid detail at the close of Munro's "The Time of Death":

There was this house, and the other wooden houses that had never been painted, with their steep patched roofs and their narrow, slanting porches, the wood-smoke coming out of their chimneys and dim children's faces pressed against their windows. Behind them there was the strip of earth, plowed in some places, run to grass in others, full of stones and behind this the pine trees, not very tall. In front were the yards, the dead gardens, the grey highway running out from town. (DHS 99)

There is also a striking touch of cinematography about the dynamic details provided in the closing lines in the passage above. The small town Ontario in decay, is captured again in Munro's description from "Thanks for the Ride":

It was a town of unpaved wide, sandy streets and bare yards. Only the hardy things like red and yellow nasturtiums, or a lilac bush with brown curled leaves, grew out of that cracked earth. The houses were set wide apart, with their own pumps and sheds and privies out behind; most of them were built of wood and painted green or grey or yellow. The trees that grew there were big willows or poplars, their fine leaves greyed with the dust. There were no trees along the main street, but spaces of tall grass and dandelions and blowing thistles - open country between the store buildings. The town hall was surprisingly large, with a great bell in a tower, the red brick rather glaring in the midst of the town's walls of faded, pale-painted wood. The sign beside the door said that it was a memorial to the soldiers who had died in the First World War. (DHS 46-47)

Passages such as the above have made critics like David Stouck comment that Munro has created "a documentary realism which reveals something of the mystery of existence" (1984, 268). When the girl-narrator of "Something I have been Meaning to Tell You"
describes the grandmother's house, she says it is "polished, fragrant, smooth, cozy as the inside of a nutshell" (SIB 193).

The stories of both Porter and Munro highlight the writers' susceptibility to the beauty of nature. In Porter's "Holiday" Miranda watches with singular relish, the rhythm of replenishment and enrichment in nature:

[. . . ] the trees were freshly budded out with pale bloom, the branches were immobile in the thin darkness, but the flower clusters shivered in a soundless dance of delicately woven light whirling as airily as leaves in a breeze, as rhythmically as water in a fountain. (CS 419-20)

Porter in her story "Holiday", while dwelling in metaphoric terms on the landscape in Texas, reinforces the conflicting emotions battling in the consciousness of the narrator, fired with a definite sense of cheery, patriotic favour:

All the beauty of the landscape now was in the harmony of the valley rolling fluently away to the wood's edge. It was an inland country, with the forlorn look of all unloved things; Winter in this part of the South is a moribund
coma, not the northern death sleep with the sure promise of resurrection. But in my South, my loved and never-forgotten country, after her long sickness, with only a slight stirring, an opening of the eyes between one breath and the next, between night and day, the earth revives and bursts into the plenty of spring with fruit and flowers together, spring and summer at once under the hot shimmering blue sky. (CS 414)

Porter's "Pale Horse, Pale Rider" presents a far more intimate account of a quiet but rich pastoral landscape:

[. . .] there was the long slow wavering of gray moss in the drowsy oak shade, the spacious hovering of buzzards overhead, the smell of crushed water herbs along a bank, and without warning a broad tranquil river into which flowed all the rivers she had known. (CS 298-99)

Munro's "The Time of Death" presents the dramatic advent of winter in a fluid language which is dynamic as well as cinematographic in the sweep, range and depth it unravels before the readers:
The snow came, falling slowly, evenly, between the highway and the houses and the pine trees, falling in big flakes at first and then in smaller and smaller flakes that did not melt on the hard furrows, the rock of the earth. (DHS 99)

The following passage from Munro's *Who Do You Think Your Are?* describing a street looks like a closely shot frame of black-and-white photograph: "The street is shaded, in some places, by Maple trees whose roots have cracked and heaved the side walk and spread out like crocodiles into the bare yards" (Who 1).

Munro's mesmerising and highly imaginative art, is capable of integrating with a rare smoothness, macrocosmic landscape with ludicrously minute objects as in "A Trip to the Coast": "The sky was pale, cool, smoothly ribbed with light and flushed at the edges, like the inside of a shell" (DHS 174).

Literature, according to critics like Thomas Wharton, often functions almost like a historical or sociological document:

[. . .] peculiar merit of faithfully recording the features of the time, and of preserving the most picturesque and expressive
representation of manners; and to him and many of his antiquarian successors, literature was primarily a treasury of costumes and customs, a source book for the history of civilization, especially of chivalry and its decline. (qtd. in Welleck 102-03)

In Porter, accuracy of sartorial details and authenticity of personal descriptions stand out as two strikingly remarkable features, as her perception is remarkably intense and minute.

According to Welleck, the environs with which an individual surrounds himself are but logical extensions of his own inner self:

setting is environment, and environments, especially domestic interiors, may be viewed as metonymic, or metaphoric expressions of character. A man's house is an extension of himself. Describe it and you have described him [. . .]. (221)

In the words of Clara Thomas, Munro also "succeeds in describing a vast number of details of houses, interior decoration places and persons and weaving them into a strong and seamless fabric" (96). In her stories
she succeeds in depicting or evoking the place, the time and the social milieux of her choice.

Both Porter and Munro, thus, find a rare relish in dwelling at length on houses, buildings, places, persons, landscapes, seasons, and, above all, the age in which their protagonists live and register their existence.

According to V. Sachithanandan a true value of any work of art can be estimated only through a comparative analysis,

[...] as a work of art in spite of its individual traits belongs to literary tradition like other works of art of the past and present, its fullest significance can be brought out only through comparison. (5)

Through their art Porter and Munro have embellished the literature of the twentieth century to a remarkable extent.

A number of literary techniques such as motif, irony, symbolism, imagery, intertextuality, narrative mode, epiphany and descriptive techniques have been employed by both Porter and Munro with a view to mainly evoking the kind of a particular social milieu at any
chosen point of time. Their virtuosity lies primarily in marshalling and manipulating these fictional techniques in order to present their respective visions in their art; to drive home their ideological views and to seek fulfilment through finding voices to articulate depths hitherto remaining unrecognized and utterly unsurmised.