CHAPTER SEVEN
SUMMING UP

Break a vase, and the love that reassembles the fragment is stronger than the love which took its symmetry for granted when it was whole ... and if the pieces are disparate, ill-fitting, they contain more pain than their original sculpture, those icons and sacred vessels taken for granted in their ancestral places.

Derek Walcott.

These words of Derek Walcott summarise in a nutshell the preoccupation of an artist, who tries to redeem and transfigure, through an act of creative imagination, what has been lost in the chaotic world of reality.

Several modern critics see Comparative Literature as a very essential but supplementary kind of discipline that helps critics to arrive at the right kind of assessment of the worth of literary works. In the words of Remak, Comparative Literature can be viewed

[. . .] less as an independent subject, which must at all costs, set up its own inflexible laws, than as a badly needed auxiliary discipline, a link between organically related but physically separated, areas of human creativeness. (8)
Both Porter and Munro through their works of art gain new insights into truth: "Among the arts, literature, specifically, seems to claim 'truth' through the view of life ('Weltanschauung') which every artistically coherent work possesses" (Welleck 34). Discussing her objectives in art, Porter has observed:

My whole attempt has been to discover and understand human motives, human feelings, to make a distillation of what human relations and experiences my mind has been able to absorb. I have never known an uninteresting human being, and I have never known two alike; there are broad classifications and deep similarities; but I am interested in the thumbprint. I am passionately involved with these individuals who populate all these enormous migrations, calamities [. . .] without which, one by one, all the "broad movements of history" could never take place; one by one as they were born. (qtd. in Mooney 13-14).

In the light of the above passage from Porter, the goal of her fictional art may be defined as equipping the readers with new perspectives to look upon the multi-faceted life, by keeping them fascinated by the mystery and beauty of the life on earth and the charm in human relationships.
To Weisstein, "the primary components that constitute any standard literary work are subject matter (stoff) itself, theme, motif, situation, image (Bild), trait (Zug) and topos" (129).

If Weisstein identifies the salient features figuring in any fictional art, Welleck stresses the need for the proper organization of these constituent elements in it, laying special emphasis on their mode of integration and unity in structure, despite the different genres art boasts off:

Literature must always be interesting; it must always have a structure and an aesthetic purpose, a total coherence and effect. It must, of course, stand in recognizable relation to life, but the relations are very various: [ . . . ] life can be heightened or burlesqued or antithesized, it is in any case a selection, of a specifically purposive sort, from life. (Welleck 212)

The second chapter of this thesis, "Canvas For Creations", analyzes the similarities and dissimilarities between the authors in question against the backdrop of their fictional art, contributed primarily by the differences in respect of their national, cultural and social milieux.
Art, with both Porter and Munro is gyno-centric; yet Porter's passion-informed art, is predominantly naturalistic and fascinates her audience even as it explores the depths of feminine feelings, and sensibilities from a refreshingly female perspective, rendering her art internally dramatic in the process. It is the sheer dramatic intensity in Porter that captivates her readers. Perhaps the fact that Porter belongs to an earlier period compared to Munro, explains the shrillness of tone in her protagonists, who raise their voices for claiming greater rights for women.

Munro, fashioned by the permissive, promiscuous age is more at ease in staking her claim for recognition amidst the world of men. Her protagonists are much more sensitive, relatively low-profiled but by no means soft or submissive, and can hold their own in a world of men, with superb ease and confidence. Their daring experiments bespeak their times and carry the confrontation right into the 'enemy' camp of men.

The third chapter 'Child is the Mother of the Woman' shows how Porter's Miranda stories can be classified only as a 'bildungsroman' which depict her progress from early childhood to youth and, still later, to womanhood.
Miranda stories are woven around a series of dilemmas and conflicts young girls go through. The immediate, cramping bonds that curb and restrict Miranda initially, are successfully overcome by her, who finds consummation in life, only through increasing assertion of her individuality. It is the experience she meets with at the hands of her familial and intimate friends that help her develop her own awareness and facilitate her initiation into life.

Munro's *Lives of Girls and Women* and *Who Do You Think You Are?* are 'Kunstlerroman' as they deal with the formative years of the budding artist, stage by stage.

In *Lives*, and *Who Do You Think You Are?* the progress of Del and Rose from innocence to experience is traced step by step. Munro strives to show in these stories, how girls get terribly inhibited in their struggle for happiness owing to their realization that societal honours are accorded to boys, on much easier terms.

The conflict between reason and passion can be seen in the lives of the young Del and Rose who personify most of the social and psychological tensions of women, in Munro, on account of the radical choices they make. These stories present their relationship with family members, eccentric men, sexual spurts of
growth, experiments with religion, art and life's mortality and mutability. Ironically, it is actually the challenges these young girls face, that enable them to develop as artists too.

If Porter's art can be defined predominantly as a 'bildungsroman', that of Munro can be called as 'kunstlerroman', as the former traces the development of a female protagonist stage by stage, through certain 'epiphanous' moments in which life itself offers freely valuable insights as sudden gifts of time and space. On the other hand, in Munro, the development of the protagonist is achieved through the initiative taken by the central character herself, by confronting new situations and seeking new relationships, including the ones related to sexuality.

Both Porter and Munro are preoccupied with issues relating to puberty and onset of adolescence in girls. However, Porter's Miranda stories chronicle with singular depth, vividness and empathetic insight, the inhibitions and repressions, often foisted by the patriarchal code on adolescent girls. It is the numbness inflicted on the sensibility of Miranda that drives her to grope for her solutions in life, during desperate moments of 'epiphany'. In as far as these stories trace the flowering of womanhood stage by stage,
they conform themselves to the concern of art, as 'bildungsroman'.

Munro's stories, on the other hand, reveal certain irrepressible curiosity on the part of her protagonists who launch themselves on seemingly endless experimentations, especially, in the realm of sexual deviations and permissiveness. It is this deliberate imaginative striving to sense what happens under the skin of another human being, irrespective of age or gender, during the dark moments of sexual excitement that ultimately, endows her protagonists with vicarious sensibilities and imaginative empathies, virtues that are essential for the formation of an artist with a special penchant for 'realism'. Hence, it is remarkably safe to hazard the view that Munro's art has all the ingredients for a 'kunstlerroman'.

In chapter four "Acolytes as Artists" Porter and Munro make the woman break her age-old silence and speak up. In the words of Gayle: "It is the task of historians of women to reconstruct the female experience [...] to fill in the blank pages and make the silence speak" (13). Munro also sees a vital connection between herself and life: "My writing has become a way of dealing with life, hanging on to it by re [-] creation" (Smythe 106).
The docile woman who is accorded a mere 'object' status in the patriarchal order, becomes the 'subject' occupying the very 'centre' in the fictional works of Porter and Munro, with the authors finding at last a 'voice' to give vent to the hitherto suppressed feelings, fears and frustrations. The insight into the interconnection between the art and the artists, in its origin, is, essentially, Freudian:

Art represents an attempt to gratify certain wishes in the artist; it is a kind of love affair, with the world; a quest for approval and acceptance but the artist in turn gratifies certain universal desires in his audience. (qtd. in Freud 124)

Freud, thus, extends the concept of Katharsis. He conceives art as an intermediate territory between the wish-denying reality and the wish-fulfilling world of fantasy. A similar kind of autobiographical link between art and the artist can be derived from the following statement from Porter too:

All my life has been a hideous blind mad struggle to break my shell and achieve to [sic] my destiny, and I am just now beginning to see that I was right, that I was not deceived by that inner conviction, I am an
artist." Art was, she would later say, the "solid ground" she had to stand on; it was what "gave meaning and hope to everything" (qtd. in Givner 1982, 19-20).

The above statement is almost equally applicable, word for word, to Munro too. As can be seen in the fourth chapter of the thesis, there is a significant difference between the women of Porter and those in Munro. Porter's women, on the whole, are rooted on firm ground, smacking of the world of daylight reality, while, in relative terms, Munro's women protagonists tend to inhabit a world of fantasy. Porter's "Miranda stories" and Munro's "Bardon Bus", and "Post card" are cases in point.

Both the writers prefer to study the sufferings of women at the hands of men, as well as the agony they experience when they dare to confront and challenge patriarchal notions and conventions.

The authors in question, through their works of art, extend the range of their artistic vision to "inequalities wherever they exist", paying particular attention to "particulars of women's lives, activities and goals", wherein lies the major source of their peculiar insight and rootedness in human experience.
Both Porter and Munro are unalloyed acolytes at the altar of womanhood and their art highlights all issues - political, social and cultural - from a purely female perspective. Yet it should be readily conceded that Porter's stories are couched in a more recognizably 'feminist' format, while those of Munro are sufficiently dispassionate and neutral, engaging the sensibilities of her global audience of both the sexes, with equal flair. It is perhaps here that the audience of these two artists to whom all their works are addressed, come into play. Porter's art addresses an audience at the threshold of voicing women's issues, fighting women's battles and formulating in feminine terms, a more equitable social and cultural order, demanding greater immunity for women from patriarchal strictures in the sexual sphere.

Munro being a product of a relatively more egalitarian and enlightened age, does not find any special need to harp on basic feminine rights and her art undoubtedly emerges as more urbane, balanced and better-composed in comparison with that of her illustrious American predecessor.

One of the salient themes in Porter has been that the protagonists in them accord almost a disproportionate importance to the dictates of the
society around them, thereby subscribing to the diminution of the dignity of the individual. The Chapter entitled "Society Vis-a-Vis Self" deals with this issue.

Such a phenomenon can be seen illustrated through the protagonist in 'He', where the Whipples confine themselves to a narrow world of life within four walls for fear of the exposure of their idiotic child before a merciless world; Thompson of "Noon wine" who literally goes grovelling around, in order to ingratiate himself into the good books of his neighbours, pleading innocence after his inadvertent killing of Hatch; and Mrs.Halloran, who is desperate to project before the world, an exalted facade of herself, in respect of her husband's status of employment.

Beyond a shade of doubt, Porter's world is dominated by the dictates of the society and the milieux presented in her stories are those of a close-knit, integrated community which expects every single member of the group to conform to its norms and notions unquestioningly.

In contrast, Munro's protagonists tend to be victims of certain existential situations, be it in the form of the contempt of the dominant group in society for an individual member, the helplessness faced by
individuals in old age, or a failure in love staring at the face with the reappearance of a rival on the scene at a critical moment. Thus, the quest for identity becomes all the more complex, in the Canadian context, on account of the possibility of fortuitous events overtaking individuals, due to constant sociological mobility. As Frye has rightly observed,

Canadian sensibility has been profoundly disturbed, not so much by our famous problem of identity, important as that is, as by a series of paradoxes in what confronts that identity. It is less perplexed by the question 'Who am I?' than by such riddle as 'Where is here?' (220).

'Survival' is a great fact of Canadian life, and constitutes one of the major thematic strands running through Canadian Literature as a whole. As Atwood remarks: 'Stick a pin in Canadian Literature at random and nine out of ten you'll hit a victim" (33).

Inclement weather, long winters, inaccessibility to places and inward-looking tendencies of immigrant groups, have been some of the factors responsible for the lack of social cohesiveness in Canada. This can be seen illustrated in several stories of Munro like "Boys
and Girls", "Who Do You Think You Are", "Day of the Butterfly", "An Ounce of Cure", and "Oranges and Apples".

Edward Said also speaks of cultural formation in Canada that "moves from the 'filial' to the affiliative [...] from automatic inheritance of parental identities to an active, personal and eclectic accumulation of identification" (qtd. in Sharad 60).

Often, the hybridity of culture in an individual does result in him/her ending up in a dangling state, and the victim, consequently, faces an identity crisis. Viewed from such a perspective, Stouck's description of the Canadian literary imagination as something "obsessed with the limitations rather than the possibilities of human experience" (1972, 9-20) is, in a profound sense, true.

Chapter six "Art as Artifact" shows how an analysis of the 'motif' of stories in Porter and Munro further reveal that Porter's vision is pronouncedly feminist, vociferously demanding that women should be regarded as peers to men in the intellectual, social, political and intellectual spheres. Women in Munro however, are far more self-assured as they tend to be urbane, intensely alert, and highly self-conscious of
their fundamental strengths as individuals. Further, far from being confined to a life of narrow households and limited social circles, Munro's women emerge as vibrant intellectuals fully-equipped to take charge of the situation in the wider arena of life. Nevertheless, in essence, Munro's vision can be recognized as distinctively 'feminine' as well as 'feminist', reflecting the problem of women in general, dwelling on feminine sensibility bordering on the delicate and the refined, often, singularly mindful of the feelings of the men involved in the relevant situations too.

In their mature phase as artists, both Porter and Munro employ images and objects which turn more and more into symbols, which tend to assume a greater and still greater profundity in their allusiveness and suggestive strength, thus, considerably enhancing the literary quality of their works.

Porter and Munro have also an astounding felicity in employing telling symbols in their fiction. Most of the titles in Porter and some of the significant ones in Munro, are highly symbolic, perfectly in tune with the situations in which they are employed.

Nevertheless, Porter emerges as a more assured symbolist in her own right as her symbols are more profound, better organized and irrevocably integrated to
the basic structure of her stories. In the process, Porter’s art tends to emerge also as profoundly metaphorical.

It is mainly through imagery that both Porter and Munro lay bare their innermost souls, likes, dislikes, aspirations, interests, beliefs and goals testifying to the truth of Coleridge’s comment:

[. . .] Images, however beautiful [. . .] do not themselves characterize the poet. They become proofs of original genius only as far as they are modified by a predominant passion, or by associated thoughts or images awakened by the passion. (177)

To both Porter and Munro, imagery is an important vehicle of perception. In the words of Rene Welleck, "The visual image is a sensation or a perception, but it also 'stands for' and refers to something invisible, something 'inner'. It can be both presentation and representation at once" (Welleck 188). Thus, if imagery can be likened to a source of light, its metaphorical range of significance can be rightly termed umbrageous or even, penumbral.

In both Porter and Munro, imagery of 'light' signifies security, love and love of life itself. The
pattern of light and darkness and the play of the chiaroscuro are some of the techniques skilfully used by Porter and Munro.

As regards the interest evinced by both the authors in floral and bestial imagery, Ellen More's interesting observation is highly pertinent:

All the creatures - the flowers, the insects, the cats - that women writers use to stand in, for their own sex, [. . .] Women may be particularly fond of birds because they are a species of littleness metaphor by which women define themselves or because they are tortured as little girls are tortured or because they are "beautiful and exotic creatures" and "universal emblems of love" (67).

It is interesting to note that Porter uses imagery of 'fruits', to suggest positive traits in the humans, whereas Munro employs the very same imagery to underscore certain negative aspects in them, thus, each author indirectly revealing the impact of the specific milieu she has inherited in her bones.

The art of Porter and Munro is informed by a profoundly keen sense of irony. As regards the
ideological stances assumed by both the writers in question, Stimpson's critical statement is highly relevant: "The powerless have a culture of resistance, which works through code; through direct statement of polemic; and through the indirection of irony and parody" (227).

Dramatic monologue serves as a vehicle for ironic truth in Porter and she also employs dramatic irony and paradox to guard herself against the evil of vague sentimentality. Munro makes an effective use of irony in order to capture all the nuances and shades of feelings involved on the part of a characters in a particular situation, thereby striving for a greater comprehensiveness and authenticity in her art.

Several of Katherine Anne Porter's stories come to a climactic close with 'epiphanous' moments which expose her characters to a sudden understanding of their own inmost selves providing them often with a fillip to grow from innocence to experience. Munro's stories often end with a kind of epiphany smacking of a paradoxical - and hence, all the more comprehensive - perception of truth concerning existence in general.

Porter uses the third person-narrative as it is highly flexible, and has no defined or prescribed limit as to what extent the narrator can share with the reader
what he considers as the subject of interest. To Rene Welleck, the third-person narrative,

is undoubtedly the traditional and 'natural' mode of narration. The author is present at the side of his work, like the lecturer whose exposition accompanies the lantern slides or documentary film. (222-23)

Munro uses the first-person narrative mainly to draw the reader into the core of the central experience in her art. Her self-conscious choice of such a kind of narration ensures that she remains in superb control over her material too.

The choice of perspective constitutes the core of any work of art as it connotes indirectly the real goal that motivates the author and facilitates the artist in him/her, in respect of designing characters, plot, ambience etc. In the words of Rust Hills,

Correct maintenance of point of view, is an aid to the successful focusing and organising of a story. Choice of point of view determines the decisions regarding character, plot, style and so forth. It is the central way of achieving the detailed unified effect of the story. (126)
By and large, the art of Porter and Munro can be called 'realistic' - despite the difference in the areas of their primary preoccupation - for they have an extraordinary eye for nature, surface detail, colour, setting, modes of dress, mannerisms etc and they both do not flinch from including unsavoury details and incidents, if necessary, in any situation. On the other hand, they also are well aware of the fact that carried to the extreme, 'realism' can also result in a documentary quality in fiction and hence, refrain themselves, in most contexts, from excesses in this regard.

Porter and Munro possess in a marked degree the flair and the skill to paint a landscape, describe a character or evoke an atmosphere, with a few deft masterful strokes. Whether it is the countryside, a garden or a room, the readers of Porter and Munro stand to gain immensely, not only in terms of getting an intimate view of the outer world, but also gaining a rare glimpse into the real beauty of the soul and essence of things.