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Appendix L2

(Item No 5 of Check List) Details of Research Publications

S. No	Article	Journal	Other Details Vol/No/Page No/ Year	Published in UGC- CARE / Scopus Indexed/ Web of Science
1	Small-Town Chronicles : Exploring Alice Munro's Intimate Worlds	22S University Journal of Arts	Vol. 12 No. 394 Pg. no. 162 - 174 Oct-Nov 2023	UGC CARE
2	Village Vistas and City Chronicles : Rural- Urban Lifestyle Perspectives	Inclusive	Vol. 11 No. 24 Pg.No. 229- 245 Dec - Jan 2024	UGC CARE

*Proof of list of Journals from Internet to be attached along with copies of reprints.

Scholar R. Jayaraj 18/01/24

A. Vijayakumar 18/01/24

Supervisor (Dr. M. Anjum Khan)


Checked By: [Signature] 18.01.2024

HoD/Dean of Respective School

The scholar Miss Jayasri, R (18PHENFC03) has published her article in the following journals:

1. IIS University Journal of Arts - indexed in UGC Care List Group I from June 2019 to present and
2. Inclusive - is indexed in UGC care list Grp. I from June 2019 to present.

This may be considered.

J. J. 
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Small-Town Chronicles: Exploring Alice Munro's Intimate Worlds

R. Jayasri & M. Anjum Khan

Abstract

This article explores the compelling tales found in Alice Munro's short stories, which offer a glimpse into the complex facets of small-town life. Munro's storytelling reveals the profound themes of life, tradition, and values that shape these intimate settings. From "The Progress of Love," where three women characters navigate the contrasts between city and small-town existence, to "Lichen," which explores the depths of father-daughter love, gardening, and the unwavering morality of small-town communities, Munro's storytelling reveals these intimate settings' profound themes. "Dear Life" highlights the ongoing significance of moral values and the affection for small-town residences embellished by the art of gardening, while "Circle of Prayer" introduces the readers to small-town burial customs and superstitions. By means of a careful examination, the article reveals the universal lessons concealed in these stories, providing an engrossing look into the world of small-town life as portrayed by one of the greatest writers of all time, Alice Munro.

Keywords: City vs. Small-town; Family relationships; Gardening; Small-town life; Tradition and values.

Introduction

Few writers in the enthralling field of literature can convey to readers the subtle nuances of small-town life with the elegance and depth that Alice Munro can. Munro has a long history of being a perceptive observer of people and the subtleties of living in close, intimate quarters. Her short stories are like windows into the heart of small-town life, vividly capturing its distinct features and difficulties. Munro's work is a tribute to her ability of narrative, from "The Progress of Love," which explores the relationship between city life and the peaceful simplicity of the small

town, to “Lichen,” which depicts familial love, gardening, and the complications of faithfulness. The article also reveals many facets of life in these tight-knit communities as it delves into her collection of works, which includes “Circle of Prayer,” which dissects the tapestry of small-town traditions in the context of funerals and superstitious beliefs, and “Dear Life,” which highlights the importance of moral values and an enduring love for small-town houses, nurtured by the art of gardening. This article entitled, “Small-Town Chronicles: Exploring Alice Munro’s Intimate Worlds,” is revealing the deep themes and engrossing stories that shed light on the various aspects of small-town life.

About the Author

Alice Munro is appreciated as one of the finest short story writers in the whole world and has been pivotal in creating short-story writing reputable in Canada. Furthermore, she has been included in the 2010 *Times magazine’s* “100 Most Influential people.” Through her works, the Canadian geography can be appreciated. Undoubtedly, Munro’s narratives are associated to definite geographical locations, because she is captivated by the environment and surroundings and her stories offer social maps of small-town life for example- rural Ontario. Reading Munro’s stories is to determine the pleasure of seeing two worlds at once: a regular everyday life and the ethereal map of another fictitious or secret world.

Objective

The article examines the various facets of small-town life as they are portrayed in Alice Munro’s short stories. By means of a targeted examination of significant literary pieces such as “The Progress of Love,” “Lichen,” “Circle of Prayer,” and “Dear Life,” the aim is to analyse the themes, personas, and stories that illuminate the distinct dynamics, customs, and principles inherent in small villages. By exploring these stories, readers will gain a better comprehension of the personal yet nuanced world that Munro expertly depicts, as well as the universal themes that resound throughout it.

Setting of the Short stories

The setting of Alice Munro’s short stories is usually in rural Canada, and Munro gives more preference to the setting of her short stories that explores small-town life. In her short story collection, *Too Much Happiness* (2013), she states, “Something had happened here. In your life there are

few places, or maybe only one place, where something has happened. And then there are the other places, which are just other places" (Munro). She believes that in every individual's life, there is a connection between them and a place for certain reasons. She sets her short stories in small towns based on her connections with them: her birthplace Wingham, Ontario; the place where she was brought up, Huron County; and the place where she currently lives, Clinton, Ontario, Canada.

Small-town Dynamics and Social Contrasts

In the short story collection, *The Progress of Love* (1986), the title short story "The Progress of Love" revolves around three generations of women characters. Euphemia serves as the narrator who reminisces about the past of her mother and grandmother. All three women comprehend the circumstances of their lives and lead uncomplicated lives. Euphemia is intrigued by the story of her mother Marietta, who exemplified willpower and determination in her life. In contrast, Euphemia leaves home at the age of fifteen to lead an independent life. She works as a waitress and attends night classes for typing and accounting, which later lands her a job in a real estate office. Euphemia recounts the life of her mother and her simple way of living. Marietta has a sister named Beryl, and their childhoods diverge when their father remarries after their mother's death:

These two sisters hadn't seen each other for years. Very soon after their mother died, their father married again. He went to live in Minneapolis, then in Seattle, with his new wife and his younger daughter, Beryl. My mother wouldn't go with them. She stayed on in the town of Ramsay, where they had been living. (TPL 7)

Marietta's decision to stay in Ramsay and lead a simple life is motivated by her desire for a peaceful existence and her disapproval of her father's actions. Like Kacey Musgraves, country music artist quotes, "I'm all about small towns, I think it's a great place to grow up" (Musgraves), which symbolizes Marietta's love for small-town life. Marietta is deeply disturbed by her father's remarriage following her mother's death and chooses to reside with a childless couple in Ramsay instead of accompanying him. Her sister Beryl, on the other hand, takes a more pragmatic approach to live a sophisticated city life, where she accepts the situation.

Marietta's small-town upbringing and desire for a quiet life in Ramsay further influence her decision to distance herself from her father's pursuit of wealth. On the other hand, Marietta's sister Beryl, who grew up in Cal-

ifornia and is accustomed to city life, has a different perspective. Despite their contrasting upbringings, Beryl visits Marietta in Netterfield County, where she experiences a simpler lifestyle and gains a better understanding of her sister's contentment with what she has.

In this short story, the contrasting personalities of Marietta and her sister Beryl has been highlighted. Marietta is characterized as a person who values family and love, that symbolizes small-town life's characteristics, while Beryl is portrayed as being obsessed with money and beauty, which is a part of sophisticated city life. Marietta's observation about Beryl's unique perspective on events emphasizes their differences, as she remarks, "Why shouldn't Beryl's version of the same event be different from my mother's? Beryl was strange in every way – everything about her was slanted, seen from a new angle" (TPL 22). Beryl's materialistic tendencies are demonstrated when she takes the family to a fancy hotel for dinner, which is not Marietta's style. Marietta reflects on the experience and describes it as "a huge, unsettling event," despite Beryl's intentions to make it a pleasurable experience (TPL 20). Marietta prefers homemade food and believes that eating outside is unhealthy, which is also considered as one of the qualities of small-town people, while preferring fancy restaurants are city peoples' type.

Marietta finds the idea of dining out in public unsettling, as expressed in the quote, "Eating a meal in public, only a few miles from home, eating in a big room full of people you didn't know, the food served by a stranger, a snippy-looking girl who was probably a college student working at a summer job" (TPL 20). For Marietta, having food served by a stranger in a crowded room is uncomfortable, as she prefers the familiarity of home-cooked meals and the intimacy of small-town life. Despite her discomfort, Marietta agrees to dine out because she wants to spend time with her sister Beryl, who had suggested the idea. Marietta respects Beryl's preference for dining out and goes along with it to bond with her sister after many years of separation.

Marietta's way of life in the small town is distinct from that of Beryl's. The environment holds considerable importance for Marietta, who is content with what she has and endeavours to make the most of it. Rural inhabitants tend to express their emotions and feelings in an authentic manner, which gives insight into their personalities and outlook. In the article *Emotions in Everyday life*, Debra Trampe, Jordi Quoidbach, and Maxime Taquet defines, "*provincial emotions*, that is, emotions that are strongly connected to several other emotions, but only of the *same valence*. For in-

stance, *love*, *gratitude*, *pride*, and *awe* are strongly connected to many other positive emotions but do not inhibit negative emotions." Likewise, people from provincial background express their positive emotions and feelings in a genuine way which chronicles their character and attitude.

Munro is able to present life in its unadulterated form, because she keeps her storytelling and her stories to be simple and straightforward. It is this aspect of her art that allows her to easily connect nature and human existence. It is evident in the following observation:

normality implies the fears and foibles, the cowardliness, and self-deception that go into the fabric of human nature. And it includes illness and death, suffering and disappointment. ... Though Munro in no way makes light of tragedy and pain, she unassumingly but authoritatively establishes in its rightful place the inevitability of struggle and the way in which certain circumstances reduce choice. In all the "free space around" her. (blin 47)

Munro, in allowing her main characters to narrate the story provides a subjective interpretation to reality itself including the environs in which it takes place. It also allows her to accomplish the task of entangling nature and human life with the backdrop of the small-town life, which would have seemed illogical if the narration should happen to be objective. "boundaries between fiction and reality in Munro's world are very thin, a matter of belief and the ironic awareness of the fictionality of reality is in part a defensive strategy employed by narrators that provides protection from and artistic coherence to a chaotic reality." (Singh 3)

However, "Lichen," the second short story from this collection, containing tales of damaged relationships. The title of the story has a dual meaning. One interpretation is the symbiotic relationship between a fungus and an algae, which mirrors the unhappy marriage between Stella and David. The second interpretation is a fruticose lichen, which describes a promiscuous young woman named Dina. Stella and David's marriage lasted for twenty-one years but ended eight years ago due to David's infidelity. He has a history of falling for other women and Stella was not his first wife. "Lichen" is a story of absent presences and present absences, of attempts to communicate that do not succeed: the photographed body of an absent woman, a woman made silent and invisible, becomes merely a sign to both her male and her female interpreters, each of whom reads the sign differently. (Micros 44)

Despite the estrangement between David and Stella, his yearly visits serve as a testament to his care for his former wife and her family. Like clockwork, David pays an annual visit to Stella's home, thoughtfully coinciding with her father's birthday: "Once every summer, he makes this visit, timing it as nearly as he can to Stella's father's birthday. He always brings the same present—a bottle of Scotch whiskey" (TPL 34). This gift of Scotch whiskey goes beyond tradition; it symbolizes camaraderie and is commonly enjoyed during celebratory moments, signifying the deep bond between the giver and the recipient. David's consistent choice of this gift reveals his strong desire for a positive relationship with Stella's father. In essence, the Scotch whiskey not only embodies camaraderie but also symbolizes the care and concern David holds for this familial connection.

Caring and familial love play a pivotal role in small town communities. Stella's profound love for her father is evident as she goes to great lengths to ensure his well-being. At the age of ninety-three and completely blind, Stella had to make the difficult decision of placing him in a nursing home. However, she doesn't let this diminish her devotion, visiting him frequently and always respecting his emotions. Fortunately, Stella's father accepts this situation with grace and understanding. On his birthday, David's presence brings immense joy to Stella's father, prompting her to comment, "Daddy was so pleased to see you, David. A man just means more, for Daddy" (TPL 52).

David lives a life of wealth, in contrast to Stella who leads a humbler life, yet she remains a strong woman. Stella enjoys gardening, with a garden containing both vegetables and "a jungle of wild blackberry bushes" (TPL 32). She takes things in stride, and David is often complimented on her behalf: "A charming wife, a wonderful person at parties, she has such a funny way of looking at things. Sometimes she was a riot. Your wife's a riot" (TPL 53). The reason for their divorce is David's lack of interest in marital relationships. The title "Lichen" itself refers to the marriage between Stella and David, which is akin to the symbiotic relationship between fungus and algae, with one producing more than the other. David is also unstable due to his inconsistent affection, but Stella does not blame him, rather she understands his nature:

Love is strange, it does strange things. David is actually a sensitive person— he's a vulnerable person. Love can make you mean. If you feel dependent on somebody, then you can be mean to them. I understand that in David, says Stella. (TPL 44)

Stella is accommodating and understanding, and even after their divorce, they are still able to share their feelings and thoughts with ease. David trusts Stella to keep his secrets, and sharing with her makes him feel lighter. David has a girlfriend named Catharine and also harbours a secret crush on Dina. Although he doesn't want to discuss his secret feelings with Catharine, he feels comfortable confiding in Stella. As the narrator describes it, "All his ordinary and extraordinary life—even some things it was unlikely she knew about—seemed stored up in her" (TPL 54). Desires are a natural part of human life and can provide hope and motivation. Stella's desire is for gardening, her father's desire is for cars, and David's desire is for women.

Munro focuses on the plight of women in a male-oriented social setup in which women suffer more both directly and indirectly owing to the relationship crisis that is the consequence of a discard in the interpersonal relationship between a man and a woman who are well into their middle and old age, "while Munro, in this story, explores the consequences of ageing for both men and women, she exposes more starkly its transformative effects on her female protagonist, Stella." (Duncan)

Even in this story, Munro has employed nature as an active symbolic setting which aesthetically appeals and adds poignancy to the harsh reality of life and its myriad composites of social, familial, and man-woman interactions. Landscape triggers moments of recognition when clarity of insight is mitigated with irony, grotesquery, or even, sometimes, humiliation. All three play to various degrees, complicit as they are with the aesthetic covenants governing the appreciation of landscape, to probe the political and poetic implications of the feminization of the land, which has been one of the constants of Canadian painting and literature since their inception. (Omhovere 82)

The third short story in the collection, "Circle of Prayer," uses its title to symbolize the act of praying in a group and the importance of community living, akin to hand-holding. This story delves into the lives of innocent people residing in a provincial area near a hillside who hold firm beliefs in the transformative power of prayer circles to restore normalcy to their lives. The narrative takes an intense turn in its opening scene, where Trudy impulsively hurls a jug at her daughter, Robin, before questioning her about the disappearance of her grandmother's cherished necklace with a startled exclamation, "Your grandmother's necklace. Why did you do that? Are you insane?" (TPL 255). Despite the evident fear in her initial appearance, Robin's nonchalant demeanor gradually emerges, making

Trudy's distress all the more poignant, especially considering the sentimental value attached to the necklace, as it was a keepsake from Robin's grandmother.

Small-town people cherish and hold dear mementos that remind them of their loved ones, much like Trudy, who values her mother's necklace in loving memory of her. Trudy's daughter, Robin, placed her grandmother's necklace in the casket of her departed friend. However, overwhelmed by emotions for their beloved friend Tracy Lee, the girls managed to sing a funeral song with their sweet voices. The song poignantly reflects their grief and loss, as they sing, "Now, while the blossom still clings to the vine, / I'll taste your strawberries, I'll drink your sweet wine" (TPL 263). As part of a ritual, the girls walk past the coffin and place their belongings inside. Robin also takes part by tenderly depositing her necklace in the casket. The family does not intervene, as they see this act as a genuine gesture of love and affection toward their departed friend.

As Trudy discovers that Robin has placed her grandmother's necklace in the coffin of Tracy Lee, she realizes that her daughter does not understand the true value of the necklace. As Oscar Wilde eloquently stated in his work *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, "Nowadays people know the price of everything and the value of nothing" (Wilde). For Trudy, the necklace holds great emotional significance because it belonged to her mother. Trudy is already dealing with deep sadness due to her husband Dan living with another woman, intensifying her emotions regarding the necklace. She desperately wants it back and confides in her friend Janet while they make roses out of pink Kleenex. Janet suggests that Trudy pray, stating, "Well. There is one thing you could do; I don't hardly know how to mention it. Pray" (TPL 268).

This episode also underscores the profound sense of devotion and care shared between the characters. It highlights Robin's willingness to part with her cherished necklace, while Trudy struggles to come to terms with this decision. Further, through the character of Janet, Munro introduces the superstitious beliefs prevalent among small-town people. Janet elucidates the tradition of the "Circle of Prayer," where a group of individuals pray for someone who confides their worries to a stranger, with the understanding that it must remain confidential. Trudy remains skeptical of this tradition, especially concerning the recovery of the necklace she threw into the coffin. Janet, however, reminds Trudy of the biblical phrase, "Ask, and it shall be given," encouraging her to voice her desires. Janet asserts, "It's not up to you to say that. You don't determine what's possible or im-

possible. You simply ask for what you want. Because it says in the Bible, 'Ask, and it shall be given.' How can you be helped if you won't ask? You can't, that's for sure" (TPL 269). Despite her initial reservations, Trudy ultimately decides to follow Janet's advice.

Trudy believes in the tradition followed by Janet to retrieve her mother's necklace, even though she does not pray directly to God. In his work *A Philosophy of Boredom*, Lars Fr. H. Svendsen states, "Traditions bring continuity to one's existence, but this sort of continuity is precisely what has been increasingly lost throughout modernity" (Svendsen), highlighting the importance of traditions in maintaining relationships. Each family has its own unique traditions that strengthen relationships, such as dining together, praying together, or singing together. Although it is unclear whether Trudy ultimately retrieves the necklace, the story emphasizes her desire to preserve the memories, the relationship with her deceased mother and daughter, and also their traditions.

Munro is an observant compassionate and understanding individual who pens stories in which she not only portrays the pain and suffering involved in human relationships across various social institutions, but she also, in her own simplest and straightforward way, informs the reader to face life with courage and fortitude. The clarity of her message to her readers become increasingly clear in her later stories when compared to her earlier ones, "What Munro wants us to understand is that life has its own challenges and one has to accept of as a part of life. Munro takes up another aspect of women's sensibility in her fiction when she takes up the issue of deserted women left alone to fend their way in life, [as presented in] "Circle of prayer"." (Mandal & Kumar 170)

From the short story collection *Dear Life* (2012), the title short story, "Dear Life," introduces the protagonist, an unnamed narrator, who shares her life story and familial relationships in a small town near Ontario. Munro's unique talent for vividly portraying small-town life and her deep emotional insight into her characters, particularly the protagonist, is evident from the very beginning.

The protagonist is born in the 1930s and grows up in a middle-class family that can afford a country lifestyle. However, she feels that the environment and the small-town school are inadequate for her education, and she yearns to attend a town school. Despite her father's financial instability, he diligently pays town taxes to ensure that she can attend the town school. Initially, the protagonist feels out of place in her new school and believes

that she lacks knowledge compared to the other students. Nevertheless, she discovers joy in her life in the town:

In many ways it wasn't easy for me in town, either, because everybody else had been together since grade one, and there were many things that I hadn't learned yet, but it was a comfort to see my new school's unsoiled seats and to hear the noble urban sound of its flush toilets. (DL 301)

After starting at a new school, the protagonist befriends a girl named Diane and enjoys visiting Diane's grandmother who treats them equally. However, they often arrive home late due to the protagonist's admiration of the houses they pass on their way home. One house in particular on a small hill, near Waitey streets, catches her attention, where a one-armed veteran of the first world war lives with his wife and some sheep. Although not a typical small town, the place possesses small town qualities.

One of the downsides of life in a small town where everyone knows each other is the prevalence of moral judgment. In such a close-knit community, moral policing tends to become a prominent characteristic. For example, the narrator regularly visits Diane's grandmother, which doesn't sit well with the narrator's own mother. The mother's disapproval is evident when she purposefully ignores Diane's grandmother's friendly wave and instead honks the car horn to call the narrator back.

The mother's reluctance to have the narrator associate with Diane stems from the fact that Diane's mother died from a disease associated with prostitution. This tragic event leads to resentment within the narrator toward their own mother. This pattern of judgment and gossip is not uncommon in small towns, where illegal activities and those involved in them tend to be the subject of relentless scrutiny. In light of this, the narrator's mother firmly advises the narrator to steer clear of Diane, reflecting the prevailing tendency in small-town communities to distance themselves from individuals connected to controversial circumstances.

Munro explores the significance of animals in her short stories, which is a characteristic of small-town life. The narrator's father is keen on raising cows and horses, and he has constructed their enclosures and shelters himself, as the narrator describes, "He built all the pens and shelters in which the animals would live, and put up the wire walls that would contain their captive lives" (DL 302). Additionally, he has a twelve-acre grassland beneath twelve elm trees, which the narrator assists him in main-

taining by providing water to the animals and cleaning their shelters. The narrator takes pleasure in these tasks. The narrator's home is an old one, situated by the riverbank and surrounded by trees.

Munro employs the characters of the narrator, father, and mother to illustrate the traits of small-town residents. The narrator demonstrates an affinity for nature and animals, deriving enjoyment from caring for and feeding them. Meanwhile, the father undertakes the responsibility of tending to the animals, even constructing their shelters himself. Conversely, the mother exhibits a disdain for illicit behaviours, cautioning her daughter to steer clear of such families.

Alice Munro has made a great contribution to Canadian literary history because of her writing about her own town and nation in a style of realism and the achievements she has gotten in short-story writing. Under her pen, the life of the city, community and family is full of stress and tension in a piece-looking way. The meaningful narration underlying her story embodies ecological colour to novels. (Zhang)

Conclusion

The exploration of Alice Munro's small-town tales immerses readers in the rich tapestry of her narratives. Munro's storytelling allows us to traverse the delicate balance of life in these close-knit communities, where the tension between city and small-town life, the complexities of familial bonds, the weight of tradition, and the significance of moral values are skilfully woven into her prose.

Through the lens of "The Progress of Love," the clash and coexistence of city and small-town existence are witnessed through the eyes of three women, each representing a different facet of this dichotomy. In "Lichen," the profound love shared between a father and daughter, the daughter's passion for gardening to find her peace of mind, and the stark unacceptability of extramarital affairs within the small-town context are explored with poignant clarity. "Circle of Prayer" unveils the enduring traditions and superstitious beliefs that shape small-town funerals, offering a glimpse into the heart of these communities. Finally, "Dear Life" reminds us of the enduring love for small-town houses, nurtured by the art of gardening and fortified by the importance of moral values.

In the end, Munro's short stories serve as windows into a world both intimate and complex, where the seemingly ordinary conceals layers of depth

and meaning. Through her nuanced narratives, she not only celebrates the idiosyncrasies of small-town life but also underscores the universal truths that connect us all. It is a testament to her storytelling prowess that her tales, while rooted in a specific time and place, continue to resonate with readers around the world. To conclude this journey through these stories, readers are left with a deep appreciation for the enduring power of Munro's words and her ability to bring small-town life to life on the page.

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Village Vistas and City Chronicles: Rural-Urban Lifestyle Perspectives

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Abstract

This research paper examines the theme of Provincial Life as depicted in the literary works of renowned authors Alice Munro and Ruskin Bond. Drawing upon a comparative literature approach, the study aims to explore the distinctive qualities and nuances of small-town living as opposed to metropolitan existence. The research objectives of this paper include: 1) analysing the portrayal of rural life and its inhabitants in the selected works of Munro and Bond, 2) investigating the cultural and societal influences on individuals' lifestyles in small communities, 3) examining the representation of natural surroundings and their impact on the characters' experiences, and 4) exploring the similarities and differences between rural and urban lifestyles as depicted by the two authors. The research is supported by an extensive review of scholarly articles and critical analyses that delve into the subject of provincial life. Through a comprehensive analysis of Munros and Bond's works, this research paper aims to shed light on the captivating allure of small-town living, the challenges faced by individuals in rural settings, and the profound influence of local society and natural surroundings on shaping their lives. Ultimately, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of the complexities and richness of provincial life as portrayed in literature.

Key words: Provincial Life, Small-town dynamics, urban lifestyle, Alice Munro, Ruskin Bond

Introduction

Provincial life holds significant importance in the fabric of society, as it represents a distinct way of living that is deeply intertwined with cultural heritage, community values, and a connection to nature. The charm of provincial life lies in its simplicity, slower pace, and strong sense of community, where individuals are closely knit and rely on one another for support and companionship. Small communities offer a unique setting where traditions, customs, and shared experiences shape the lives of their inhabitants. The portrayal of provincial life in literature allows readers to explore the intricacies of these communities, offering glimpses into their idiosyncrasies, struggles, and triumphs. Through literary works, such as those by Alice Munro and Ruskin Bond, the essence of provincial life is captured, inviting readers to delve into the nuances of small-town dynamics, the relationships that flourish within such settings, and the impact of the local society and natural surroundings on the lives of its inhabitants. Understanding and appreciating provincial life not only enriches our literary landscape but also provides valuable insights into the human experience and the diverse tapestry of cultures that exist within society.

This research aims to address several key questions regarding the portrayal of provincial life in literature, specifically focusing on the works of Alice Munro and Ruskin Bond. The research questions include: 1) How do Alice Munro and Ruskin Bond depict the complexities and subtleties of small-town life in their respective works? 2) What similarities and differences can be observed in their portrayal of small-town dynamics? 3) How do these authors explore the unique qualities and challenges associated with living in small communities? 4) What insights can be gained from their examination of provincial life in terms of societal norms, relationships, and individual experiences? 5) To what extent do the local society and natural surroundings

shape the lives of characters in their works? By addressing these research questions, this study seeks to deepen our understanding of the representation of provincial life in literature and provide valuable insights into the nuances of small-town dynamics as depicted by Alice Munro and Ruskin Bond.

Unraveling the Writing Styles of Alice Munro and Ruskin Bond: A Comparative Perspective

The natural environment plays a significant role in shaping the settings of the short stories written by Alice Munro and Ruskin Bond. Both authors have gained renown for their exploration of the human condition through their respective collections of short stories. Alice Munro, a Canadian writer, is recognized for her narratives that delve into the intricacies of human relationships, particularly within small-town and rural contexts. Munro's writing has been credited with revolutionizing the structure of short stories, as she brings a modest and subtly witty approach to her work, which is often attributed to her upbringing in rural Canada (Bosman, 2013). On the other hand, Ruskin Bond, an Indian author, has established himself as a versatile writer across various genres, including short stories, novels, and poetry, all of which are set in the majestic Himalayan region of India. Bond's short stories specifically aim to convey his deep appreciation for the natural world and inspire readers to develop a love for nature's untamed beauty (Beniwal, 2021, p. 117). Both Munro and Bond are celebrated for their simple yet profound writing styles, as well as their ability to capture the intricacies and splendor of ordinary life.

The thematic interests of Alice Munro and Ruskin Bond serve as distinctive features that set them apart. Munro's stories delve into complex subjects such as memory, identity, and gender roles. Her fiction offers readers insights into the intricate processes of life, portraying the trials

and occasional triumphs that individuals experience as they transition from childhood to maturity. Munro's particular focus lies in exploring the lives of women and the challenges they face in navigating relationships and societal expectations. In contrast, Bond's works often revolve around the simple pleasures of life, highlighting themes such as the joys of friendship, the beauty of nature, and the enchantment of childhood. His tales celebrate the resilience and resourcefulness of children who must confront the world on their own terms. Bond's extensive collection of charming short stories and introspective novels has garnered international acclaim, covering a wide range of topics including cross-cultural dimensions of Indian society, unrequited love, and the power and beauty of nature (Fatma, 2013, p. 1). Another similarity between Munro and Bond lies in their approach to character development. Both authors place emphasis on the inner lives of their characters as they navigate challenging circumstances, creating believable and relatable individuals. Renowned for their captivating narrative styles, Munro and Bond bring their characters to life, captivating readers with their storytelling prowess. Their narrative styles are similar in the following ways:

Realism: Both Munro and Bond share a strong commitment to depicting life honestly, without embellishment or sensationalism. Their writings revolve around ordinary individuals, their struggles, and experiences that resonate with readers. Munro's realism is grounded in her philosophical insights, moral sensibility, dialectical thinking, and versatile narrative style. Through her works, she offers a nuanced portrayal of life's complexities (Geng, 2022, p. 1). Similarly, Bond captures the essence of the Himalayan foothills, including locations like Dehradun, Mussoorie, and Shimla, with such authenticity that readers can readily identify with the sorrows, joys, simple lifestyles, and hardships depicted. His writings provide a gateway to the enchanting and mysterious world of hills, forests, and the diverse array of animals that

inhabit them (Dhibar, 2017, p. 774). Both authors prioritize realism as a means of connecting with readers, offering genuine glimpses into the human experience and the natural world.

Regionalism: Munro and Bond place a significant emphasis on highlighting the unique culture, traditions, and customs of specific regions in their writings. Through vivid descriptions of the environment, local inhabitants, and social structures, they enable readers to visualize and engage with the stories on a deeper level. Munro's fiction thrives on the fertile soil of regionalism, drawing vitality from the regional landscape, particularly in her stories set in Huron County. The narrator in her works serves as the conduit through which the world is articulated, capturing the essence of the regional experience (Sinha & Kumar, 2022, p. 135). Similarly, Bond's writings have been lauded for their portrayal of the life in the hills he calls home. Considered by some as a "regional writer," Bond realistically represents rural life in Garhwal, shedding light on various social issues prevalent in the hills (Saklani, 2016, p. 23). Both authors skilfully incorporate regional elements into their narratives, offering readers a glimpse into the distinctiveness of these settings and the people who inhabit them.

Characterization: Munro and Bond demonstrate exceptional skill in crafting captivating characters. They intricately design individuals who possess a combination of flaws, strengths, and vulnerabilities. Through profound exploration of their characters' inner lives, they delve into their motivations, aspirations, and inner conflicts. Munro's talent lies in creating characters characterized by eccentric individualism, capturing their complexities and authenticity. Her writing evokes a sense of completeness and verisimilitude, particularly in her vivid portrayals of the past. As an intuitive writer, Munro prioritizes clarity and truthfulness over formal considerations (Mambrol, 2023). Similarly, Bond's literary world centres around the lives of the poor and middle-class individuals. His genius is evident in the originality and naturalness

with which he brings his characters to life. In his stories, readers encounter not mere words on paper, but vibrant worlds inhabited by genuinely breathing and living people (Geetu Saini & Dr. Yashpal, 2013, p. 44). Both authors excel in the art of characterization, presenting readers with richly developed individuals who resonate with authenticity and captivate the imagination.

Subtlety: Munro and Bond employ a subtle approach in their writing, refraining from providing all the information to readers upfront. Instead, they utilize symbols, metaphors, and subtle hints to convey their intended messages. Their narratives often remain open-ended, allowing for individual interpretation and the exercise of creative license. **Language:** Both authors employ a style of writing characterized by its simplicity and evocativeness. Through their use of straightforward language, they create a clear and vivid mental image for readers. They skilfully employ imagery, metaphors, and similes to enhance the reader's understanding and immersion in the narrative.

In conclusion, Ruskin Bond and Alice Munro are both accomplished authors who possess a remarkable ability to capture the nuances of the human experience. However, their writing styles and thematic interests diverge. Bond's writing exhibits a gentle and evocative quality, celebrating the joys found in the Himalayan region and the simple pleasures of life. On the other hand, Munro's prose is characterized by its precision and understatement, delving into emotionally challenging landscapes. Despite these differences, both authors excel in their craft, offering unique perspectives on the complexities of human existence.

Contrasting Rural Charm with Urban Hustle in the Short Stories of Alice Munro and Ruskin Bond

Munro's concise yet rich narratives highlight the virtues of rural life. However, these descriptions are not one-sided, as they also present the merits of different environments. It is

argued that Munro's rhetorical technique, which provides a multifaceted view of the countryside by acknowledging its advantages and disadvantages, strengthens the overall positive perception of rural living. By contrasting the images of country and city life, Munro reveals that there exists a divide between the two lifestyles that can be challenging to bridge (Naddi, 2013, p. 1). Similarly, Ruskin Bond also favours the portrayal of rural life in his short stories. He frequently presents a preference for the countryside and depicts city life as mechanical and monotonous. Bond skilfully incorporates elements of dreams and social observations to uncover the true essence of reality in his narratives. The settings of his stories and dreams often involve hilltops, mountains, riverbanks, valleys, or villages. The characters in his stories are often superstitious villagers or individuals connected to nature. These narratives carry profound messages that remain relevant in our contemporary times (Bawane, 2018, p. 655).

In Alice Munro's short stories, the theme of small-town life versus city life is explored, with the story "The Progress of Love" particularly highlighting the contrasting experiences of the sisters, Marietta and Beryl. Marietta embraces the simplicity and charm of small-town life, while Beryl is drawn to the allure of sophisticated city living. The narrative emphasizes their divergent perspectives, as Beryl is portrayed as unique and unconventional in her outlook: "Beryl was strange in every way— everything about her was slanted, seen from a new angle" (Munro, 1996, PL 22). The differences between the sisters extend to their attitudes towards their father's second marriage. While Marietta disapproves of the idea, Beryl approaches it with practicality and indifference. Their respective lifestyles have been shaped by their surroundings, with Marietta residing in Netterfield county, a small-town setting, and Beryl residing in California, renowned for its urban elegance. When Beryl suggests dining out at a hotel, a common practice in city life for family gatherings, Marietta expresses disapproval and

prefers homemade meals. Furthermore, Marietta values simplicity and love, reflecting the mindset of small-town residents, whereas Beryl prioritizes social status and wealth, embodying the influence of city life.

The theme of small-town life versus city life, particularly focusing on the qualities associated with small-town living, is explored in the short story “Haven” through the characters of Jasper and Dawn. Dawn embodies the archetypal small-town woman, as her life revolves around her husband: “Dawn’s life is devoted to her husband” (Munro, 2013, DL 112). She has willingly surrendered her life to Jasper’s control. Jasper, in turn, embodies the typical traits of a small-town individual. He restricts his wife from befriending neighbours, insists on her taking care of all household chores, and maintains strict standards of cleanliness within the house. While outside the house, Jasper assumes a different persona, as he is a renowned doctor and a sociable figure within the community. Dawn obediently follows her husband’s instructions, performing all the tasks assigned to her and even refraining from eating until her husband has left the house. When their neighbours extend an invitation to attend a concert together, Jasper dismisses the idea, considering concerts and parties as extravagant displays of wealth and social status. Dawn, never voicing her own opinions, complies with her husband’s wishes, providing Jasper with full control over her life. This narrative highlights the reality that men continue to exploit women in various societies, irrespective of cultural or historical differences. Alice Munro captures this aspect of reality in her short stories. (Anitha S, 2020, p. 62)

The short story “The Moon in the Orange Street Skating Rink” explores the theme of contrasts between small-town life and city life, specifically focusing on job opportunities and discipline. The characters Sam and Edgar engage in acrobatics, inspired by the performances they have witnessed in circuses and on the streets. Motivated by their passion, they leave their home and settle in a boarding house, where the head of the house, Miss Kernaghan, has established a set

of rules that must be followed for residents to live there. These rules include abstaining from alcohol and cigarettes, refraining from using disrespectful language or displaying bad attitudes, and not eating in their rooms. Miss Kernaghan asserts, “No drinking, no smoking, no bad language or bad morals” (Munro, 1996, PL 135). Her character exemplifies the disciplined nature often associated with small-town life. Despite the limited job opportunities available in small towns compared to cities, Sam and Edgar perform acrobatics on the streets of Gallagher town, their small-town residence, in order to earn a living. Although the income from their performances may be modest, they find satisfaction in the money they earn. It is evident that economic exploitation persists in societies influenced by patriarchal oppression. Alice Munro is aware of this fact and she continuously presents such exploitations in her works as part of her mission to portray the intricacies of small-town life. (Boynton, 1979, p. 33)

Similarly, the short story “Miles City, Montana” explores the theme of small-town versus city life, specifically addressing the impact of technology and the affection for small-town living. The narrator in this story yearns to return to her small-town roots after living in the bustling city of Vancouver, which signifies her deep attachment to her hometown. As a result, the narrator plans a trip back to her small-town with her husband and children when her husband is granted a twenty-day holiday. The itinerary involves five days of travel to reach their destination, ten days spent in the small-town, and five days for the return journey (Munro, 1996, PL 87). The fact that the narrator's husband rarely receives time off from work underscores the common reality in cities where work takes precedence over other aspects of life, such as family and leisure time. During their travels, the narrator's daughter relies on a paper map for navigation, a contrast to the prevalent use of digital mapping tools like Google Maps in contemporary times. As they journey, the narrator and her family experience the

discomfort of the heat, prompting the narrator to yearn for the cool and serene environment of her small-town, characterized by its lush trees, blooming flowers, mountains, and lakes.

The short story “Mrs. Cross and Mrs. Kidd” explores the dichotomy between small-town life and city life through the themes of marriage and the gifts received by the two protagonists. Mrs. Cross and Mrs. Kidd, long-time friends who married at a young age and had multiple children, exemplify the typical characteristics of small-town life. In small towns, early marriages and large families are common societal norms. Despite having several children to care for them, both women find themselves residing in an old age home. Interestingly, their children’s gifts reflect the differences between small-town and city life. Mrs. Cross receives ornaments, images, and pillows, reflecting the sentimental value placed on material possessions in small-town culture. In contrast, Mrs. Kidd, an avid reader, is given books, symbolizing the intellectual pursuits often associated with city life. The themes of marriage and gift-giving serve as vivid illustrations of the contrasting aspects of small-town and city living.

The short story “Passion” skilfully explores the dichotomy between small-town and city life, vividly exemplified through the character of Grace. In her interactions with Maury, Grace frequently attends movies, but she finds herself dissatisfied with the portrayal of the protagonist. Through this comparison, Alice Munro highlights the contrasting experiences of the affluent city woman and the financially constrained small-town girl. Despite having all her material needs met, the wealthy character, played by Elizabeth Taylor, yearns for more. In contrast, Grace, limited by her lack of resources, works as a waitress to afford her college tuition. It is not wrath that Grace feels towards the character, but rather envy. Grace recognizes that she cannot emulate Elizabeth’s appearance, as society and men have certain expectations of women—to be beautiful, cherished, pampered, selfless, and devoid of intelligence. As a small-town girl, Grace aspires to a life of affluence and happiness in the city, but she faces

financial constraints, as small-town jobs typically offer lower pay. Small-town communities often expect women to prioritize marriage and child-rearing over pursuing their dreams and desires.

The comparison between small-town and urban lifestyles is a recurring theme in Ruskin Bond's short stories, exemplified by the narrative "Summer Season," where Visni shares his observations about women in both settings. By contrasting their attitudes and physical attributes, Bond sheds light on the differences between metropolitan and small-town girls. Visni, working as a cleaner in a theatre, is taken aback by the brightly painted faces of the city women, as the girls in his small-town possess a natural beauty and radiance. Although the rural girls may lack the perfumed scent associated with their urban counterparts, Visni finds them charming in their own distinct way. While most women at the theatre give him a disinterested look, Visni is fortunate to receive kindness and generosity from middle-aged women, who exhibit a more maternal nature and often reward him for his diligent work. Ruskin Bond is fond of portraying small-town life and its simplicity as well as it is tuned with nature. (Bhyrava, 2015, p. 55)

The theme of small-town versus city life is evident in the short story "Growing Up with Trees," where the narrator is raised by his grandfather amidst a rich collection of trees planted by him. The narrator's affinity for trees stems from the abundance of diverse species, such as peepul, neem, mango, jackfruit, and papaya, which adorn his grandfather's home. This starkly contrasts with city dwellings, typically crowded with theatres and stores. In small towns, people find solace and a sense of belonging amidst the warmth of trees and the natural ecosystem that surrounds them, often encompassed by forests.

Similarly, the short story “Coming Home to Dehra” portrays the distinct features of small-town life, juxtaposed against city life. Ruskin Bond diligently highlights the unique characteristics of small communities in his short stories, underscoring their way of life. One aspect he focuses on is the items utilized in small communities, which serve to accentuate their distinctive nature. For instance, in small towns, people employed Khus reed curtains that required regular watering during the summer months when electric fans were not yet widely available. The scene is vividly described, depicting a bhisti (water-carrier) making rounds with his goat-skin water bag, splashing water on the thick Khus reed curtains. Lanterns provided illumination, and Khus acted as a natural cooling agent, in contrast to electric fans and lights, which were yet to be invented. Small-town residents adeptly adapted to their environment while cherishing the advantages of living in a close-knit community.

The short story “The Night Train at Deoli” by Bond explores the distinct characteristics of small-town life, particularly focusing on the setting of a small-town railway station. Within the station, both electric bulbs and oil lamps are present, but the preference of the townspeople leans towards oil lamps due to their inherent brightness, surpassing other lighting options commonly used in small towns. The author paints a picture of the station, describing how it is dimly lit with a combination of electric bulbs and oil lamps, with the faint light of dawn offering a glimpse of the jungle across the railway tracks. The solitary nature of the stop is highlighted as the narrator never witnesses anyone boarding or disembarking from the train. Bond delves into the history of the small-town train station, featuring a reception area, a room for the station master, and a desolate platform. On this isolated platform, one can find a produce stand, a tea shop, and a few stray canines. In stark contrast, city railway stations are often bustling with crowds as they serve as a major mode of transportation for city dwellers commuting to work.

Trains and the vibrant tapestry of Indian railway life hold a prominent place in Ruskin Bond's stories, depicting the unique charm and dynamics of small-town existence (Fernandes, 2004, p. 121).

The theme of small-town life versus city life is effectively conveyed in the short story "As Time Goes By," where the narrator holds a deep affection for the small-town environment. The narrator's admiration for small-town living stems from the abundance of natural elements such as rivers, lakes, waterfalls, and mountains that are emblematic of these communities. The adventurous spirit ingrained in most small-town residents is also highlighted. As the narrative unfolds, the narrator, accompanied by companions Somi and Dal, explores the jungle and discovers a pool. In this idyllic setting, they engage in activities like swimming, fishing, and even attempting to expand the pool with an explosion. The trio relishes the experience, enjoying the waterfall, and engaging in playful pursuits. These immersive interactions with nature are not feasible in urban areas, which are often plagued by pollution and overcrowding.

Conclusion

The theme of Provincial Life, along with its multitude of sub-themes, serves as a focal point that highlights the distinctive qualities of life in small communities. By employing a comparative literature approach, one can examine the similarities and differences between rural and urban lifestyles. Notable authors, such as Alice Munro and Ruskin Bond, have extensively explored and documented the intricacies of rural existence. Literature has long embraced the subject of provincial life, attracting numerous writers who seek to unravel its complexities. Alice Munro and Ruskin Bond, in particular, have emerged as significant contributors to this genre. Alice Munro's works primarily revolve around the depiction of country life and the experiences of individuals residing in small towns (Naddi 1; William 5; Zhang). Similarly,

Ruskin Bond focuses on portraying rural life and the harmonious coexistence of its inhabitants with nature (Chawla 40; Fatma; Giriya). Both authors skilfully capture the simplicity and charm of small-town living, where the local society plays a profound role in shaping individuals' lifestyles.

In conclusion, the examination of provincial life in literature, as evidenced by the literary works of Alice Munro and Ruskin Bond, illuminates the unique characteristics and significance attributed to small communities. Through their narrative endeavours, these authors offer a prism through which to perceive the intricacies and nuances of small-town existence, underscoring the profound sense of community, intrinsic connection to the natural world, and enduring customs that define provincial living. The comparative analysis of rural and urban lifestyles facilitates the identification of parallels and divergences between these contrasting milieus, engendering a deeper comprehension of the human condition. By delving into the complexities inherent in provincial life, valuable insights emerge pertaining to the dynamics of close-knit communities, the influence of local societies on individual lives, and the role of nature as a backdrop for personal growth and fulfilment. This research has thus yielded valuable contributions towards an enhanced understanding of the significance of provincial life, illuminating its cultural import and encompassing themes. By recognizing and appreciating the distinct qualities emblematic of provincial life, one not only enriches their literary discernment but also fosters an amplified understanding of the myriad ways in which individuals navigate their existence within diverse social and natural landscapes.

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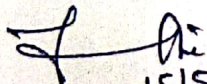
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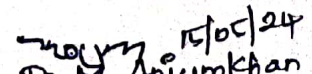
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Chapter - 1

Introduction

"Earth is a small town with many neighbourhoods in a very big universe"

- Ron Garan (*The Orbital Perspective*)

Literature and history share an intimate relationship, both revealing the intricacies of life. People study history through literature, and literature plays a significant role in the life of humanity, serving as a replica of life itself. The aim of literature is to entertain and enlighten the audience, with its primary focus on the presentation of life. Micaela English in the website *Town and Country*, under the title, "15 F. Scott Fitzgerald Quotes – Fitzgerald's Best Quotes from *Great Gatsby*", listed out the quotes of F. Scott Fitzgerald where he eloquently expressed about literature as, "That is part of the beauty of all literature. You discover that your longings are universal longings, that you're not lonely and isolated from anyone. You belong". English literature mirrors life's situations through novels, short stories, essays, and dramas, creating a strong bond with mankind by portraying its myriad emotions.

The new expression of the 'short story' designates a re-exploration of literature toward the close of the nineteenth century, how it is fabricated, accepted, and consumed. In his article titled "Frank O'Connor and the Modern Irish Short Story," Richard F. Peterson quotes the statement of Frank O'Connor, "the short story at its most characteristic something we do not often find in the novel- an intense awareness of human loneliness" (53). During the nineteenth century, the development and recognition of short stories in Britain and America had a remarkable impact on Canadian writing. However, Canadian short story writers did not gain as much popularity as their American and British counterparts. Writers like Isabella Valancy Crawford, Susan Frances Harrison, and Ernest Thompson attempted short story writing but did not receive widespread recognition.

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