

Literary Traveller as Reader:
Reading Alice Munro's *Lives of Girls and Women* in Huron County

by

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A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of
The University of Manitoba
in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of

MASTER OF EDUCATION

Department of Curriculum, Teaching, and Learning

University of Manitoba

Winnipeg

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the experience of reading and being a reader within sites of literary significance. In this case, the investigation specifically pertains to the experience of a reader of Alice Munro's *Lives of Girls and Women* (1971) while visiting sites of significance related to the author and text. Though the literature related to literary travel is robust from a tourism standpoint, there is a need for studies that explore literary travel from literacy and literary perspectives, shifting the focus from the literary traveller as consumer to the literary traveller as reader. This study contributed to the filling of this gap. Using an auto-hermeneutic phenomenological approach, the researcher-participant visited sites in southwestern Ontario that are connected to Alice Munro and *Lives of Girls and Women* and recorded her experiences as a reader within that literary landscape. Through data analysis and interpretation, the researcher-participant discovered that her lived experience of literary travel included concretisation, exploration, negotiation, and connection. These findings indicated that, for this reader-traveller, literary travel provided the opportunity to engage in reading processes that deepened literary understanding and enhanced appreciation of this text and the author.

Acknowledgements

This thesis is the product of much support.

I would like to acknowledge and thank my advisor, Dr. Gregory Bryan, for his steadfast support throughout the process. Dr. Bryan's encouragement, demand for excellence, and wit allowed me to expand what I deemed possible, to grow as a thinker, reader, and writer, and to delight in the ups and downs that accompany such transformation.

Also, I would like to thank my committee members: Dr. Alison Calder and Dr. Brigid Magner. Their willingness to devote their time and expertise pushed me to move beyond my initial conceptions of this topic.

Special thanks also go to Morgan Gregory for his selfless assistance at each step in the process, and to my daughters, Madison and Danika, who have figuratively travelled with me throughout this journey.

Finally, I am grateful for the financial support of the University of Manitoba Faculty of Education Graduate Student Research Award. These funds made my literary travel research possible.

Dedication

To literary travellers, wherever you may wander.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter serves as an introduction to my thesis. I begin by providing some background to the topic, including a brief history of literary travel and the need for further research which focuses on the literary traveller as a reader. I then present the purpose of my study and my research question. Next, I provide an overview of the study's methodology and methods, followed by the significance of my study. I conclude by outlining the contents of the chapters that make up this report.

Background

The inclination of readers to visit sites of literary significance is not new. Literary travel—travel motivated by the desire to inhabit physical places associated with authors and their fictional worlds—has a long history (Magner, 2013; Robinson, 2002; Santesso, 2004; Schaff, 2011). Mike Robinson (2002), professor of Cultural Heritage at the University of Birmingham, contended that as early as the 18th century there existed a desire to visit, for example, the sites and routes associated with Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. Further, literary historian Aaron Santesso (2004) acknowledged David Garrick's early contribution to literary travel when the 18th century actor and theatre manager invited admirers of Shakespeare to Stratford-upon-Avon to participate in the Jubilee celebration of the Bard in 1769. Moreover, in Paul Beston's (2014) article on the First World War's Gallipoli campaign, Beston explained that poets and writers such as Rupert Brooke and Patrick Shaw-Stewart were eager to traverse the lands made famous by Homer, even during the extremes of war. Beston's inclusion of an extract from Shaw-Stewart's notebook revealed the poet's enthusiasm: "It is the luckiest thing and the most romantic. Think of fighting in the Chersonese ... or alternatively, if it's the Asiatic side they want us on, on the plains of Troy itself!"

Since these early manifestations, literary travel has evolved. According to Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology professor, Brigid Magner (2013), this evolution has included, among other markers, the implementation of “systems of memorialization ... such as the setting up of memorials and plaques” or the development of “rituals such as following in the footsteps of writers or their characters” (p. 2). Further, literary travel may have transitioned from a luxury pursuit of the elite to an experience enjoyed by many, compliments of the 20th century rise of the middle-class, wide-spread transportation, and mass literacy (Robinson, 2002; N. Watson, 2006).

With this increase in both practice and participation, an entire industry, dubbed *literary tourism*, has emerged. Literary tourism, which is set within the broader fields of heritage and cultural tourism (Bu et al., 2021), provides tourists with opportunities to travel to managed locations in order to engage imaginatively with real artefacts (e.g., home, household objects, writing objects, the grave) related to an author’s life and work (Robinson, 2002; Schaff, 2011). Robinson (2002) argued that the tourism industry anticipated readers’ interest in the lives and locations of authors and their works and, therefore, actively encouraged the transition in literary travel “from passive, informal, almost incidental, encounters with literary locales to deliberate creations of literary spaces for tourists” (p. 6). These spaces are often, though not always, “created, controlled, and largely artificial” (Robinson, 2002, p. 15), which makes them problematic places if the reader is looking for an authentic experience (C. Watson, 2013).

It seems that, at least in part, the commodification of travel-related literary experience has damaged literary tourism’s reputation among some scholars (Booth, 2007; Montz, 2016; N. Watson, 2006). In Nicola Watson’s (2006) introduction to *Literary Tourist: Readers and Places in Romantic and Victorian Britain*, she claimed that some academics are reticent to declare publicly their desire to visit locations connected to admired authors, while they simultaneously

maintain “a marked willingness to indulge in it as a private or even communal vice” (p. 5).

Further, professor Amy Montz (2016) noted that “the New Critics of the early twentieth century rejected a focus on the author’s biography and supposed intentions in favour of an emphasis on the text speaking for itself” (p. 61). Perhaps the embarrassment some academics feel is brought on by both the commodification of literary travel and new criticism’s emphasis on the text as the sole source of meaning. Watson (2006) argued that some people believe that “purists and professionals should find the literary text in itself enough, it should not need supplementing or authenticating by reference to externals, especially to supposedly non-textual external realities, such as author or place” (p. 6). But readers, both professional and lay, from the 18th century to today, do desire to travel to realities beyond the book. Readers as famous as Alfred, Lord Tennyson, who said, “Now take me to the Cobb, and show me the steps from which [*Persuasion*’s] Louisa Musgrove fell” (1897/1906, p. 456), have been enthusiastic literary travellers. Additionally, readers as unknown as the present author similarly wish to experience sites closely connected to their favourite authors and their works.

The scholarship on literary travel has suggested a variety of reasons why a reader might visit an author’s home or walk in the footsteps of a character; however, because literary travel literature is written mostly from a business or tourist industry perspective, limited attention has been given to the literary tourist as a reader and how literary travel can augment the reading experience. Ryan et al.’s (2009) study of tourist sites associated with the Chinese epic novel *The Dream of the Red Mansion* (Cao Xueqin, 1791) acknowledged this limitation. They claimed that within literary tourism studies “the novel or film is simply perceived as a factor determining a visit” and recognized the need to explore how “the visit may feed back into understandings of the novel or film” (p. 26).

MacLeod et al.'s (2018) study, "The Touring Reader: Understanding the Bibliophile's Experience of Literary Tourism," is a notable exception. MacLeod et al.'s (2018) qualitative study of questionnaire data related to literary travel form and motivation explicitly took up this gap. In their study they asked, among other questions, "whether there are literary-inspired travellers who travel to enhance their experience of literature" (p. 389). Given MacLeod et al.'s explicit research focus on the relationship between literary travel and reading experience, their study deserves elaboration here.

While attending a literary conference in the United Kingdom in 2014, MacLeod et al. (2018) distributed 91 questionnaires that asked a series of open-ended questions related to literary travel form and motivation to a very specialized group of literary enthusiasts. Thirty questionnaires were returned and the data in this sample, though acknowledged as limited, were analysed using content analysis methodology, beginning with open coding followed by close reading and thematic categorisation (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). MacLeod et al.'s (2018) initial data analysis found two key aspects of literary travellers that are pertinent to the study of literary travellers as readers. First, their initial analysis indicated the primacy of the literary work in these literary travellers' journeys. Rather than using guidebooks or visiting typical tourist destinations, the sample group used "the literary text itself as a primary source of inspiration and a practical resource" (p. 394). Second, their data revealed a "strong relationship between the visit and the act of reading where the experience *in situ* is valued for what it can add to the interpretation of the text and its subsequent re-reading" (p. 395).

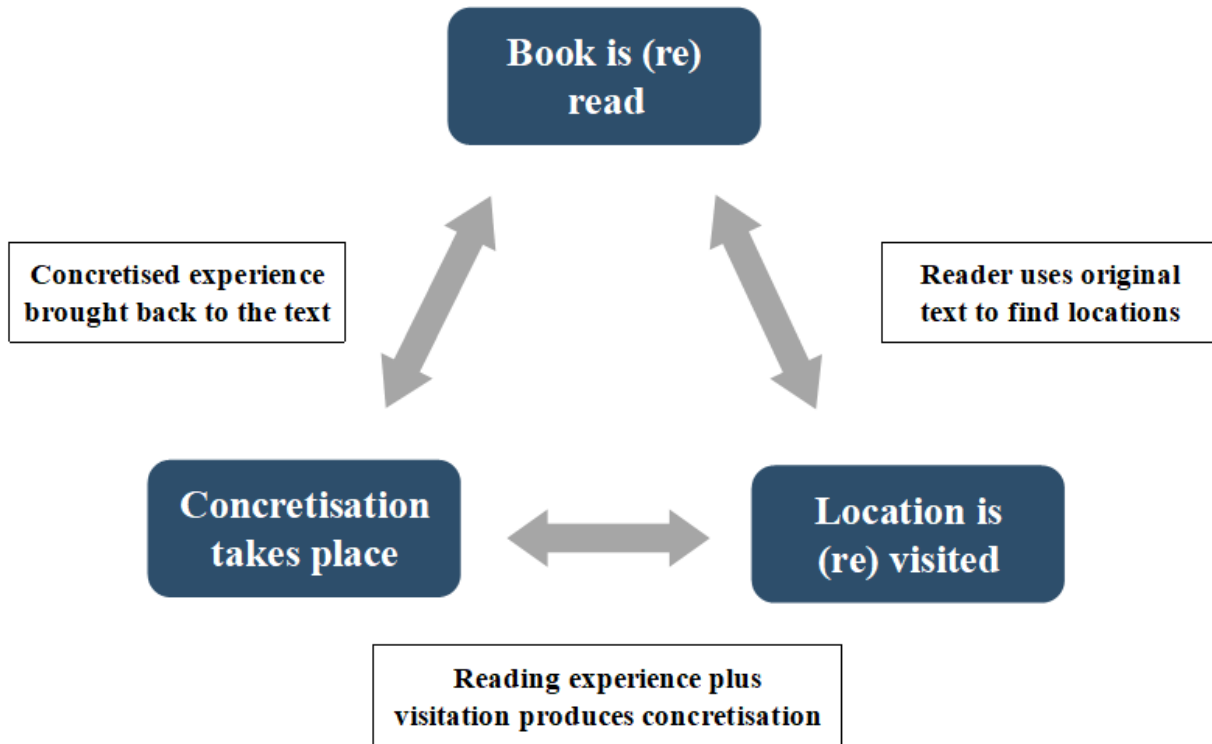
Further, MacLeod et al.'s (2018) study moved beyond the methodology commonly used in tourism studies by analysing their data "within the context of literary theory" (p. 391). More specifically, the researchers' methods were informed by reception theory and the work of

Wolfgang Iser (1972) and Roman Ingarden (1973). Reception theory is a version of reader response theory that acknowledges the reader's active role in the generation of meaning (Iser, 1972). MacLeod et al.'s methodology recognized the idea that reading and interpretation are active and collaborative processes. From this perspective, they drew on the concept of 'concretisation' as developed by the Polish philosopher Roman Ingarden in order "to explore the relationship between the practices of reading and the lived experience of the literary setting" (MacLeod et al., 2018, p. 391). Ingarden (1973) argued that the act of reading adds to a text, a process he called concretisation. According to Ingarden's theory of concretisation, all literary works have "spots of indeterminacy" (Ingarden, 1973, p. 338)—unwritten, ambiguous, or minimally developed aspects of the narrative—which invite and allow readers to add details to the text and, therefore, become collaborators in the creation process.

It is from this perspective that MacLeod et al. (2018) applied their conceptual model of the concretisation process as it relates to the reader and the text within a literary landscape (see Figure 1). They argued that "aligning the practice of literary touring to the concept of concretisation extends the role of the visitor whilst simultaneously underpinning the contribution that the literary tourism experience makes to the realisation of the text itself" (p. 391).

Figure 1

MacLeod et al.'s (2018) Conceptual Model of the Concretisation Process in the Reading and Visiting of Literary Locations



Note. From “The touring reader: Understanding the bibliophile’s experience of literary tourism,” by N. MacLeod, J. Shelley, and A. Morrison, 2018, *Tourism Management*, 67, p. 395 (<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2018.02.006>). Copyright 2018 by Elsevier Limited. Reprinted with permission (see Appendix A).

The application of this conceptual model during the close reading stage of the content analysis allowed them to explain their sample’s responses in ways not previously presented in the literary tourism literature. They found that there is a “symbiotic relationship between the acts of reading and becoming a tourist” (MacLeod et al., 2018, p. 395). The reader, inspired by a text, re-reads it looking for clues about pertinent locations in the field. While in the literary landscape, the reader-tourist’s site experiences help fill-in textual indeterminacies, which results in

concretisation. These literary travellers, McLeod et al. argued, “will return to the texts with a renewed appreciation having visited the associated sites” (p. 396). In the conclusion of their study, they stated that “future research is required to explore the lived travelling experiences of these readers in more depth perhaps by using a diary method to capture more detailed reports” (p. 397). It is in response to this call that I situated the present study.

Purpose of the Study and Research Question

The intent of this qualitative self-study was to investigate the experience of reading and being a reader within sites of literary significance. More specifically, I asked the following question: What is my experience as a reader of Alice Munro’s *Lives of Girls and Women* (1971/2005) while visiting sites of significance related to the author and the text? Though the literature related to literary travel is robust from a tourism standpoint, as MacLeod et al. (2018) stated, there is a need for studies that explore literary travel from a literacy and literary perspective. My study contributes to the filling of this gap.

Overview of Research Methodology and Design

The present study used an auto-hermeneutic phenomenological approach to explore the research question. Auto-hermeneutic phenomenology is a qualitative research methodology that seeks to describe, interpret, and convey the meaning of a researcher’s lived experience of a phenomenon (Gorichanaz, 2017). Though the methodology will be explained more fully (see Chapter 3), suffice to say at this point that the study’s design was informed by research related to self-studies (e.g., Ellingson & Ellis, 2008; Gorichanaz, 2017; Maréchal, 2010; Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009) and hermeneutic phenomenology (e.g., Gadamer 1998; Lavery, 2003; Lindseth & Norberg, 2004; McManus Holroyd, 2007; Suddick et al., 2020).

In order to explore my experience of literary travel related to Alice Munro and *Lives of Girls and Women* (1971/2005), I travelled to Huron County in southwestern Ontario to visit sites of literary significance connected to both the author and the text. I would like to pay respect to the Indigenous Peoples, past and present, who care for the land on which I conducted my research by presenting the Huron County Land Acknowledgement (2021):

We would like to acknowledge that the land we stand upon today is the traditional territory of the Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee and Neutral peoples. We recognize the First Peoples' continued stewardship of the land and water, and that this territory was subject to the Dish with One Spoon wampum, under which multiple nations agreed to care for the land and resources by the Great Lakes in peace. We would also like to acknowledge and recognize the Upper Canada Treaties signed in regards to this land, which include Treaty #29 and Treaty #45 1/2, and our roles as treaty people, committed to moving forward in the spirit of reconciliation, gratitude, and respect with all First Nation, Métis and Inuit people.

While in Huron County, I used systematic self-observation (Gorichanaz, 2017; Rodriguez & Ryave, 2002) to record my reactions as a reader. This audio data was transcribed and then analysed and interpreted using hermeneutic phenomenological methods (Lindseth & Norberg, 2004; Suddick et al., 2020).

Significance of the Study

This study is important for several reasons. First, the findings contribute to the on-going dialogue within the field of literary tourism about the nature of literary travel experiences (e.g., Brown, 2016; Butler, 1986; Gothie, 2016; Lee, 2012; MacLeod et al., 2018; Montz, 2016; Orr, 2018; Reijnders, 2011; Robinson, 2002). Second, because the study foregrounds the literary

traveller as reader rather than as consumer, it continues and builds on MacLeod et al.'s (2018) reconceptualisation of literary travel as a meaningful literary experience. Third, the study's methodology—auto-hermeneutic phenomenology—offers an alternative in the field of qualitative self-study research to explore empirically the lived experience of the researcher related to a particular phenomenon (Gorichanaz, 2017). Finally, the study highlights a Canadian literary treasure through its focus on Alice Munro and *Lives of Girls and Women* (1971/2005).

Summary

People have long enjoyed literary travel. The related literature suggested a variety of reasons why people travel to geographic areas related to their favourite author and texts, but few have examined literary travel from a reader's or reading perspective. This chapter presented MacLeod et al.'s (2018) study as an exception to this paucity and briefly discussed how the incorporation of literary theory into the study of literary travel may provide further insight into this phenomenon. My study set out to explore my lived experience of literary travel while visiting literary sites related to Alice Munro and *Lives of Girls and Women* (1971/2005).

Outline of the Chapters

In the following chapters I present my study. In the second chapter, I present a review of the literature that informed this study. I begin with an overview of literary travel literature, followed by a biographical sketch of Alice Munro, and conclude with a brief discussion of *Lives of Girls and Women* (1971/2005), including its connection to biographical details and place. In the third chapter, I describe my study's methodology and the methods I used to collect, analyse, and interpret my data. In the fourth chapter, I present and discuss my research findings. My concluding chapter includes a summary of my findings, my reflections on them, the study's limitations, and recommendations for further research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter provides an overview of the three areas of research that informed this study. I begin with a discussion of the literature related to literary travel. I then present a biographical sketch of Alice Munro, followed by a discussion of *Lives of Girls and Women* (1971/2005). Together, these sections provide the background information needed to understand this study and my decision to explore my experience as a reader while visiting sites related to Munro and her text in southwestern Ontario.

Literary Travel

Travelling to sites of literary significance has a long history. Over time, however, literary travel has shifted “from passive, informal, almost incidental, encounters with literary locales to deliberate creations of literary spaces for tourists” (Robinson, 2002, p. 6). This shift has resulted in the creation of an entire industry: literary tourism. Much of the literature related to literary travel was born out of this industry, and thus literary sites are often situated as places to be managed and marketed with literary tourists conceptualised as customers (Laing & Frost, 2012). Nonetheless, a review of some of the literary tourism literature is necessary in order to establish a general sense of what has and has not been studied.

In this first section of the literature review, I clarify several terms related to literary travel. I present the types of literary travel and literary traveller motivation frequently discussed in the literature, and I identify a gap in the research that conceptualises the literary traveller as a reader rather than a customer.

Terms Related to Literary Travel

In this paper, *literary travel* is defined as the movement to and temporary inhabitation of physical places of literary significance. These significant places are called *literary sites*, which

includes places related to an author's life and career, geographical locations on which fictional settings are based (Magner, 2013; Robinson, 2002; Santesso, 2004; Schaff, 2011), official tourist destinations, managed by, for example, heritage industries, or unmanaged places with no commercial or heritage connection (Magner, 2013; Robinson, 2002; Schaff, 2011). These physical sites of literary significance comprise a *literary landscape*, which can be understood as an umbrella term that incorporates the various literary sites of significance visited by a literary traveller (MacLeod et al., 2018; Schaff, 2011). A *literary traveller* is someone who travels to literary sites and landscapes.

Types of Literary Travel and Literary Traveller Motivation

Literary travel can take various forms. R. W. Butler (1986), a renowned academic and pioneer of tourism studies, identified four types of literary travel: first, to pay homage to a favourite author and “to see the backcloth against which a work was produced to gain new insights into the work and the author” (p. 115); second, to “visit places of significance in the writing of fiction” (p. 115); third, to visit areas that were appealing to writers; and fourth, to visit a location because a writer aroused “sufficient interest ... for that area to become a tourist destination” (p. 118). Though Butler's categories are coarse and could be refined, tourism scholar Lorraine Brown (2016) acknowledged that Butler created a “useful typology” of literary travel (p. 167). Accordingly, the next section uses Butler's four categories of literary travel as a framework within which to discuss other literary tourism related articles and studies.

To Pay Homage to a Favourite Author. In the first type, literary travellers attempt to pay homage to a favourite author by travelling to a physical location associated with biographical details. These travellers often feel a sense of reverence for the author and are motivated by a desire to pay respect (Montz, 2016). Often this form of literary travel is perceived by the traveller

not as a trip or vacation, but as a “secular pilgrimage” (Brown, 2016, p. 167; Hyde & Harman, 2011; Montz, 2016). Brown (2016), for example, observed that visitors to the graves of both Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir behaved in quasi-religious ways: they left offerings, stood in silent reverence, or responded emotionally (e.g., crying). Similarly, Henry Lawson biographer and literary traveller Gregory Bryan (2012) stated that it was his “love” for Lawson’s work that “inspired” (p. 7) him to echo Lawson’s Australian Outback trek—a 450 km hike in the height of Australia’s summer heat from Bourke to Hungerford and back to Bourke. In his telling of this harrowing experience, Bryan reflected, “I expect that Henry would be surprised and more than a little amused that somebody would be inspired to go to all of this trouble in honour of him” (p. 26). As Brown and Bryan’s work indicated, this form of literary travel includes a sense of respect and reverence, as well as a recognition of the author’s significance in the emotional or spiritual life of the visitor (Brown, 2016; Bryan, 2012; Montz, 2016; N. Watson, 2006).

According to Butler (1986), a subset of this first type of literary travel involves visiting environments in which literary texts were created. Robinson (2002) argued that writers’ homes and workspaces are popular sites because they “provide a tangible connection between the created and the creator” (p. 8). His retelling of a visitor’s reaction to the writing table used by Emily Brontë located in the Brontë parsonage, for example, revealed that some literary travellers value a physical space predominantly for its connection to creativity: “Emily could have appeared at any moment to continue writing on the table I was looking at” (Robinson, 2002, p. 9). Similarly, after visiting Jane Austen’s home, University of Southern Indiana professor Amy Montz (2016) declared, “I feel as if I know Austen, not only because I have read her works and her life story, but also because I travelled to her home and saw her desk” (p. 64). Further, Magner’s (2013) article on literary tourism related to Australian author, Joseph Furphy, added

that for some visitors “writerly instruments” possess a spiritual significance, which Magner called “aura” (p. 6). Moreover, PhD student in Literature, Ashley Orr’s (2018) study of Jane Austen-related literary pilgrimages found that the literary tourist’s imagination contributes significantly to her perception of the home or object as meaningful. Orr claimed that “meaning, far from being contained within the heritage site itself, develops ... through the dynamic interaction between these locations and their visitors” (p. 250). These articles suggested that rather than mere novelty, visiting the homes and objects connected to the writing process were deeply moving and imagination-requiring experiences.

To Visit Places Depicted in Literary Works. The second type of literary travel involves visiting places depicted in literary works. Butler’s (1986) description of this type as “visit[ing] places of significance in the writing of fiction” (p. 115) is somewhat confusing. His supporting examples, 221B Baker Street and Sherwood Forest, demonstrate that he meant what Schaff (2011) described as a “place described in a work of fiction which has a counterpart in geography” (p. 169). Sometimes these depicted places have the same name as their real-world counterparts, such as Dickens’s London or Joyce’s Dublin; at other times, the author gives a fictional name to a real place, such as Hardy’s use of Wessex for Dorset (Schaff, 2011), Twain’s use of St. Petersburg for Hannibal (Twain & Blair, 1969), or A. A. Milne’s use of Hundred Acre Wood for East Sussex’s Five Hundred Acre Wood (Aalto, 2015). Most often, however, the author uses a “mixture of fact and fiction” (Magner, 2013, p. 12) in the creation of setting. This mixing can be seen in Joseph Furphy’s artistic rendering of Australia’s Riverina area in his novel *Such is Life* (1903) (Magner, 2013) and Mikael Niemi’s creative depiction of Sweden’s Pajala in *Popular Music from Vittula* (2000) (Ridanpää, 2011).

Tourism scholar David Herbert (2001) argued that this “merging of the real and the imagined” (p. 314) is appreciated by literary tourists because it invites imaginative engagement. Citing the work of geographer Douglas Pocock, Herbert claimed that literary tourists who visited the Brontës’ Haworth wanted to see the moors “less with the excitement of treading in the Brontës’ footsteps, than with the thought that Heathcliff might appear” (Pocock, 1987, as cited in Herbert, 2001, p. 314). Further, the work of Anderson and Saunders (2015), Anderson and Smith (2019), Lee (2012), and Reijnders (2011), emphasised the reciprocal relationship between the literary traveller’s imagination and the physical literary site. These scholars contended that the physical site informs the traveller’s impression of the imagined place, while at the same time the literary traveller’s imagination informs how the physical site is perceived. Thus, they argued, the literary site is a co-created place, actively constructed through the coming together of the traveller’s imagination and the details of the geographic location. The related literature suggested that travelling to sites depicted in fiction allows for immersion into a literary landscape, which, according to Montz (2016), satisfies literary travellers’ desire to “insert themselves in the stories” (p. 62), and it affords an experience that activates and nourishes the imagination.

To Visit Places That Appealed to Literary Figures. Travelling to areas appreciated by authors is Butler’s third type of literary travel. Butler (1986) argued that because literary figures were “fashion setters” (p. 118) whose opinions were valued, readers sought to visit places that authors enjoyed and admired. This type of literary travel affords visitors an opportunity to take in sites and sights not for their literary significance, but because of the allure the site had for a writer. One example of this type of literary travel was connected to The Lake District in the North West of England. Many travellers flocked to the area because the early romantic poets, such as Wordsworth and Coleridge, were inspired by it (Butler, 1986; Robinson, 2002). A more

recent example is Bryan's (2012) arduous journey in the Australian Outback. Bryan wrote, "It is because of Henry [Lawson], Australia's greatest writer, that I am here in Bourke.... [after Lawson's time in Bourke] for the remainder of his life his writing continued to be influenced and inspired by his experiences on the Track between Bourke and Hungerford" (p. 2). Bryan explained the significance of visiting the sites Lawson found inspiring:

I know Henry Lawson better than any person alive today. My claim is not based on knowing facts, figures, dates, or statistics. I make the claim based on having been out there on Henry's Track, having felt the blazing sun, having fought with bubbling blisters, having struggled with the long, often tedious miles, and like Henry, having come out the other side at Hungerford. Henry said, 'If you know Bourke you know Australia.' I say, 'If you know the Track, you know Henry'. (p. 172)

Though less common today—or at least less studied in contemporary tourism literature—visiting sites that appealed to authors, as Bryan's experience showed, can significantly deepen the literary traveller's understanding of and appreciation for an author.

To Travel to Tourist Destinations Promoted for their Association with Authors.

Finally, the fourth type of literary travel identified by Butler (1986) involves a broader travel destination. In this form, travellers aim to visit not only a single literary site but also a whole geographic region, which has "become characterized or personified by the author" (p. 120). A visit to Steinbeck Country (Wrobel, 2021) or Brontë Country (Booth, 2016; Robinson, 2002; N. Watson, 2006) are famous examples of this form. According to Alison Booth (2016), visitors who travel to Brontë Country can expect a vast experience that offers immersion in the real and fictional sites related to the famous sisters within a large area in and around West Yorkshire, England.

Another well-known example of literary travel related to an entire geographic region is travel to Prince Edward Island, which is promoted for its association with Lucy Maud Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables* (Gothie, 2016). Magner (2020) stated that "tourists trek to Prince Edward Island in Canada to locate 'Anne's Land'" (p. 154), a clear example of how a literary work or its characters may become the focus of some literary travels and travellers. In a study of literary tourism associated with L. M. Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables* (1908), Sara Gothie (2016), like Magner, emphasised the importance of Anne in the region. Yet, Gothie also argued that "the Anne tourist industry thrives near sites historically linked to Montgomery" (p. 413). Gothie suggested that Prince Edward Island offers travellers an encompassing literary travel experience based on the region's connection to both the character and the author. In addition, Gothie's analysis indicated that visits to tourist destinations promoted for their literary associations often include Butler's other types of literary travel: travellers pay their respects by visiting "sites of Montgomery's birth, childhood, employment, marriage, and burial" (p. 413); travellers witness the "production context" (p. 416) of their favourite novel; travellers find opportunities to immerse themselves in the "storybook setting" (p. 416); and, travellers visit the land that inspired Montgomery's imagination. Though Gothie did not identify Butler explicitly in her discussion, her observations and data suggested that Butler has indeed created a "useful typology" (Brown, 2016, p. 167) of literary travel.

This brief discussion of Butler's (1986) literary travel typology and related literature indicates that scholars have studied a wide range of literary travel topics. Though a full discussion of literary travel is beyond the scope of this study, additional topics in the research included visitor satisfaction (Herbert, 2001), character performance or emulation in literary spaces (Gothie, 2016; Reijnders, 2016), and authenticity in literary sites (Faucett & Cormack,

2001; Montz, 2016; Robinson, 2002; C. Watson, 2013). These fields of inquiry are important, but often framed both the literary text and the reader within a “business paradigm, with an emphasis on marketing and management” (Laing & Frost, 2012, p. 17).

Literary Traveller as Reader

Bryan’s (2012) work on Henry Lawson indicated that visiting literary sites of significance can deepen the traveller’s understanding of and appreciation for an author and his literary works: “I take from the Track restored self-belief, unforgettable memories, and deeper understandings of Henry” (p. 321). Yet, my research has suggested a need for more studies of literary travel that focus on the literary traveller as a reader. Here, *reader* can be understood as someone who makes meaning of words and *literary traveller as reader* as someone whose travels serve to deepen and enhance the meaning-making process associated with reading a particular text. As discussed in Chapter 1, MacLeod et al.’s (2018) study is a notable exception. MacLeod et al. (2018) observed that research on literary tourism largely ignored the fact that literary tourists are readers and that there may be a “relationship between the practices of reading and the lived experience of the literary setting” (p. 391). In response to this paucity, they integrated literary theory into their methodology and created a conceptual model of literary travel based on reception theory and Roman Ingarden’s (1973) concretisation theory. They then explored their data through this reader-focused, rather than tourist-focused, lens. They found, among other things, that literary tourists often visit literary sites because of what it adds to their reading of a literary work.

In the conclusion of their study, MacLeod et al. (2018) stated that “future research is required to explore the lived travelling experiences of these readers in more depth perhaps by using a diary method to capture more detailed reports” (p. 397). It is in response to this call that

the present study of my experience as a reader of Alice Munro's *Lives of Girls and Women* (1971/2005) while visiting sites of literary significance is situated.

Alice Munro: A Biographical Sketch

Alice Munro (nee Laidlaw) is a Canadian fiction writer of national and international acclaim. She has written 14 original collections of short stories and her work has been collected into seven additional compilations. Since her first book, *Dance of the Happy Shades* (1968), won the Governor General's Award for fiction in 1968, she has won many other major literary awards including two more Governor General's Awards (1978, 1986), the Giller Prize (1998, 2004), the Man Booker International Prize (2009), and the Nobel Prize in Literature (2013). This is an impressive litany of accomplishments for anyone, let alone for a small-town girl, born in southwestern Ontario during the depression.

In this next section of the literature review, I present a biographical sketch, which reveals Munro's evolution as a reader and a writer during three distinct phases of life: childhood (1931–1949), early adulthood (1949–1968), and mature adulthood (1968–2021). In so doing, I show that Munro's life and fictional worlds have deep roots in southwestern Ontario, and that travel to her homeplace was appropriate in the attempt to study my experience of literary travel as a reader. The information presented here comes from a variety of sources (e.g., published interviews, journal articles about her life and work); however, I am indebted to Robert Thacker whose biography on Munro, *Alice Munro: Writing Her Lives* (2011), proved to be an invaluable resource in my quest to understand Munro's history.

Childhood (1931–1949)

Alice Munro (nee Laidlaw) was born in Wingham, Ontario, on July 10th, 1931, to Robert Eric Laidlaw (1901–1976) and Anne Clark Chamney (1898–1958). When Robert (Bob) and

Anne married in 1927, Bob was a fox farmer and Anne was a schoolteacher. Together they bought a five-acre property west of Wingham along the Maitland River in Huron County, situated in southwestern Ontario (Thacker, 2011). In an essay-memoir written for the inaugural issue of the literary magazine, *Grand Street*, Munro (1981) described the property's "unusual location" (p. 23). Geographically her home was located in an in-between space, neither in the country nor within Wingham's borders. It was here, in this in-between space, that Munro grew up with her younger siblings Bill (b. 1936) and Sheila (b. 1937) (Thacker, 2011). It was also here that Alice Munro's imagination and penchant for stories and storytelling were born and nourished (McIntyre, 2013; Staines, 2016; Thacker, 2011).

As a young girl, Munro loved to read and write stories. In an interview with Catherine Ross (1989), published in *Canadian Children's Literature*, Munro recollected that by the time she was eight years old, she saw herself as a reader, but also understood that in her world reading was a "private pleasure" (p. 15). Her larger community—mostly hard-working country folk of Scots-Irish Protestant descent—had "little appreciation for fiction" (Thacker, 2011, p. 377) and saw reading as something to be outgrown. Despite warnings to avoid what Munro's community called a "dangerous addiction" (Ross, 1989, p. 15), her appetite for stories grew.

This hunger for imagined worlds was fed through the "odd assortment" of books that was in her house and available at the Sunday school and town libraries in Wingham (Ross, 1989, p. 23). Her early appreciation for narrative began with Dickens's *Child's History of England*, which Munro described as her "first real book" and as a "glorious adventure" (Ross, 1989, p. 15). This delight in alternative worlds grew stronger when she read *Emily of New Moon* (1923) by L. M. Montgomery and *Wuthering Heights* (1847) by Emily Brontë. In her interview with Ross (1989), Munro declared *Emily of New Moon* as "the watershed book of my life" (p. 16). She explained

the book's allure in a separate interview with Tim Struthers (1983), claiming that unlike most books written for children at the time, Montgomery's tale showed "a sense of injustice and strangeness in family life and mystery in people" (p. 19). In 1989, Munro accepted an invitation to write the afterword for a new edition of *Emily of New Moon* wherein she wrote: "In this book, as in all the stories I've loved, there's so much going on behind, or beyond, the proper story" (Munro, 1989, as cited in Staines, 2016, p. 10). This appreciation for narrative layers continued as she moved into early adolescence. In an interview with Harold Horwood (1984) she claimed that Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* was "the BIG influence from the time I was 12-14" (p. 124, emphasis in original), suggesting that she found the combination of the gothic atmosphere and attention to everyday detail fascinating. She recalled,

I remember something about the little brooks when the snow was melting and all that kind of detail which I think you have to do if you want to make up a novel of strong emotions that's credible. And that is one of the things I loved about it. It was the way I could visualize everything—the way I was really living in that house. (Horwood, 1984, p. 124)

These early reading experiences informed and shaped Munro's imagination, which found expression both in her juvenilia and in her professional writing.

Munro told Ross that there came a time "when the reading was not enough" (Ross, 1989, p. 22), and she felt compelled to create stories of her own. These tales, she argued, were often "imitations" of the books she was reading (Ross, 1989, p. 20) and took shape in her mind as she walked to and from school (Thacker, 2011). Given her home's isolated geographic location, her walks to Lower Town School from 1937 to 1939, to Wingham Public School from 1939 to 1944, and to Wingham and District High School from 1944 to 1949 gave her plenty of time to create

and practice combining the ordinary details she saw around her with the emotional intensity she found in her reading (Thacker, 2011).

One of the early tales first conjured in her mind while walking was, unsurprisingly, inspired by *Wuthering Heights*. In the introduction to her *Selected Stories* (1998), Munro stated that the book's "long shadow fell over all the remaining years of my adolescence, and I carried in my head a whole demonic tragedy" (p. xi), which she turned into her imitation novel, *Charlotte Muir* (Staines, 2016; Thacker, 2011). Munro characterized this early writing as "dreadful," but also saw the process as pivotal to her artistic development: "I made the glorious leap from being a victim of my own ineptness and self-conscious miseries to being a godlike arranger of patterns and destinies ... I have never leapt back" (as cited in Staines, 2016, p. 12). Thacker (2011) observed that *Charlotte Muir* has since been lost, but that "on those long walks to and from school she was both making up stories and ... literally and imaginatively infusing that place with what was known and imagined" (p. 71).

Munro's power of expression, though still in its infancy, was generally acknowledged within her high school and community (Thacker, 2011). Munro's Grade 10 and Grade 11 English teacher, Audrey Boe, saw something "singular" in Munro's creative compositions. Boe called herself Munro's "first fan" and encouraged her to pursue university studies (Thacker, 2011, p. 84). Similarly, Munro's friend, Mary Ross, predicted she would go on to be a writer. In a paraphrase of an interview with Mary Ross, Thacker stated, "Even though she wrote about 'the normal things of everyday,' Mary Ross remembers, they were quite different from, and far more accomplished than, what other students wrote. They were of a different level altogether, making a commonplace subject interesting" (Thacker, 2011, p. 84).

As Munro's own and others' belief in her writing abilities increased during her high school years, so too did the challenges she faced at home. Throughout these years Munro's mother, Anne Laidlaw, battled Parkinson's disease, though they did not know the name of the disease at the time (Munro, 1981, p. 30). As a result, Munro had increased responsibilities around the house, which left little time for personal pursuits (May, 2013, 2017; Thacker, 2011). Further, after World War II ended, the demand for fox furs declined and with it, Bob Laidlaw's business. Ultimately, the business failed and the family faced severe economic hardship. To make ends meet, Munro's father took a job working nights as a security guard at a local factory (May, 2013; Thacker, 2011). These challenges had a significant impact on Munro. As she entered her final year of high school, the reality of her situation was clear: despite her talent for writing and her desire to attend university, there was no family money to make her dreams happen. Rather than get discouraged, Munro decided to make them happen for herself (Thacker, 2011).

With the encouragement and support of her high school teachers, Miss Boe and Miss MacGregor, Munro determined to get to the University of Western Ontario through scholarships (May, 2013; Thacker, 2011). According to Munro, "These were competitive scholarships, so you had to get the best in a certain category" (as cited in Thacker, 2011, p. 85). With focus and determination, by the end of her graduating year Munro had written "the provincial exams in eleven subjects – composition and literature papers in English, French, German, and Latin plus Botany, History, and Zoology" (Thacker, 2011, p. 86). The wait for the results was long, and in a moment of self-doubt she nearly signed a contract to become a rural schoolteacher. Thankfully, she did not, for she had earned her scholarship to the University of Western Ontario by achieving first class marks in all of her exams except German (Thacker, 2011). According to an

announcement in her local paper, Munro earned “the highest standing in six Grade XIII papers including English, History, French and one other paper,” which meant that her scholarship included two years tuition (valued at \$250.00) and a cash prize of \$50.00 for “a total value of \$300” (as cited in Thacker, 2011, pp. 86–87).

Early Adulthood (1949–1968)

With her scholarship in hand, Munro left her home and her community in Huron County and headed to University of Western Ontario in London, Ontario. Though she wanted to study writing, she enrolled in the journalism program because writing fiction “was not considered a viable, or even respectable, means for a young woman to earn a living” (May, 2013, p. 20). During this first year, Munro took English 20 with Professor Robert Lawrence and she submitted her first story, “The Dimensions of a Shadow” (April, 1950), to Western’s student literary publication, *Folio* (May, 2013; McIntyre, 2013). After reading the story, Lawrence brought Munro to the attention of the English Department’s Professor Murdo MacKinnon who successfully recruited Munro for the English honours program (Thacker, 2011).

Munro continued to write and submit two more stories to the student publication, “Story for Sunday” (December, 1950) and “The Widower” (April, 1951) (Bentley, 2017; McIntyre, 2013; Staines, 2016). Bentley’s (2017) study of these three early stories showed that they anticipated many features of Munro’s later writing:

The three short stories of Alice Laidlaw reveal a writer in the process of finding the themes, absorbing the ideas, and developing the techniques that would emerge fully assimilated in the work of Alice Munro, the consummate physical and psychological realist of southwestern Ontario. (p. 153)

These stories set Munro apart from the other student writers on campus, and as Thacker (2011) mentioned those “who knew the magazine were talking about Alice Laidlaw as *Folio*’s ‘find’” (p. 92).

According to fellow Western student and future husband, James Armstrong Munro (Jim), Munro not only stood apart from other writers, she also stood apart from the other girls at Western. After a brief exchange with Munro in the Lawson Library, where she worked, Jim began to ask around about her. Soon after, they started dating, and by the Christmas of 1950, they were engaged (Thacker, 2011). Though Jim was a history student and bound for business due to his father’s influence, he participated in the literary and arts scene at Western. He acted with the university’s theatre company, The Players’ Guild, and shared Munro’s love of books. Together they regularly attended cultural functions at the university, which included many theatre performances and book readings (Thacker, 2011). According to Thacker, one of the things Munro really appreciated about Jim was how he viewed fiction: “Alice has said that Jim is one of the very few men she has known – apart from English teachers – who ‘really read fiction seriously’” (Thacker, 2011, p. 120).

Despite finding a supportive partner and early writing success, Munro struggled financially during her time at Western. The scholarship money paid for her tuition but left little for anything else. Accordingly, she worked two part-time jobs and even sold her blood to make ends meet (May, 2013; Thacker, 2011). These financial difficulties did not discourage Munro for she appreciated “being in that atmosphere, having all those books, not having to do any housework” (as cited in Thacker, 2011, p. 94). However, when the scholarship money ran out after two years of a four-year program, her time at Western came to an end.

Fortunately, Munro had met Jim. Jim believed in the importance of fiction and he believed in her writing abilities. When they married in December 1951 and moved to Vancouver, British Columbia, Jim encouraged her to keep writing. As a symbol of his belief in her, in 1952 for her 21st birthday, he bought her a typewriter (Thacker, 2011). As Munro stated in an interview with *Canadian Fiction Magazine* editor Geoff Hancock (1987), “Jim Munro helped me, just by believing I was a writer. Not that I would become one, that I was one” (p. 192).

Munro spent the next two decades (1952–1973) in British Columbia, first in Vancouver (1952–63) then in Victoria (1963–73). In 1963, Jim Munro gave up his job with Eaton’s Department Store to open Munro Books. At this point, Munro was an unknown writer, so the decision to start a business was a large financial risk. Nonetheless, Munro supported the decision and together they ran Munro Books, which allowed her time to write and honoured Jim’s desire to pair his business acuity and his love of books (McCulloch, 1994). During this time, Munro led a sort of “double-life” (Ross, 1992). While tending a home and raising her three daughters, Sheila (b. October 5, 1953), Jenny (b. June 4, 1957), and Andrea (b. September 8, 1966), she continued to write short stories, though very much in private (McIntyre, 2013; Ross, 1992).

Munro’s reflections on this process of juggling family and fiction during the 1950s and 60s revealed that it was a challenging time. In her introduction to her *Selected Stories* (1998) she clearly stated this tension:

When you are responsible for running a house and taking care of small children ... it’s hard to arrange for large chunks of time. A child’s illness, relatives coming to stay, a pile-up of unavoidable household jobs, can swallow a work-in-progress as surely as a power failure used to destroy a piece of work in the computer. (p. x)

These domestic responsibilities meant that she wrote in “frantic spurts” (Munro, 1998, p. x), and while she “wanted to write a novel,” she “got into the habit of writing short stories” (Munro, 1998, p. x). She sold her first short story, “A Basket of Strawberries,” to *Mayfair* in 1953 (Ross, 1992) and continued to have modest writing success throughout the 1950s and 1960s, selling her stories to various Canadian publications including *Canadian Forum*, *Queens Quarterly*, *Chatelaine*, *Tamarack Review*, and *The Montrealer* (Horwood, 1984; Staines, 2016). However, it was not until 1967, at the age of 37, that she got her first big break.

Mature Adulthood (1968–2021)

In 1967 an editor at Ryerson Press asked Munro to contribute a few stories to a collection of short fiction featuring several Canadian authors; however, as Munro revealed in her interview with Jeanne McCulloch (1994) for the *Paris Review*, that book fell through. Fortunately, Ryerson was sufficiently impressed by her work that it asked her to submit a few more stories to create a collection of her work alone. This manuscript was accepted and published in 1968 as *Dance of the Happy Shades* (May, 2013; McCulloch, 1994; Staines, 2016). This collection featured stories, largely set in the Huron area, that were written during the late 50s and 60s (May, 2013). Despite its long incubation, *Dance of the Happy Shades* quickly transformed Munro’s career. The book “was a critical success, receiving nearly universally positive reviews and winning her the Governor General’s Award” (McIntyre, 2013, p. 61). On its heels, Munro published *Lives of Girls and Woman* in 1971, which garnered international attention and “fundamentally altered Munro’s status” (Thacker, 2011, p. 252).

At the same time, Munro’s personal life was also fundamentally changing; her 20-year marriage to Jim Munro was dissolving. In a particularly poignant section of Robert Thacker’s (2011) biography of Munro, he shared Munro’s thoughts about Jim, their marriage, and its end.

Munro had married Jim when she was just 20, and though she believed he “rescued her ... got her away from her mother’s illness and the family’s struggle for survival” (p. 544), Munro admitted she saw herself as an artist first and, thus, she “felt ever directed away from their relationship into her writing” (Thacker, 2011, p. 542). Though they felt great respect for one another, Alice and Jim mutually decided to part ways. Therefore, in 1973 she left British Columbia and returned to southwestern Ontario. At the age of 42, she set up home with her two youngest daughters in London, Ontario. Having to support herself financially for the first time in her life, she took a part-time job teaching writing at York University in 1973 and held a writer-in-residence position at Western University in 1974–1975 (May, 2013; Staines, 2016).

These first years back in Ontario would be an important time for both Munro’s professional and personal life. While teaching at York University and helping her daughters with the transition, she worked on the manuscript of a third collection, which was published in 1974 as *Something I’ve Been Meaning to Tell You* (McIntyre, 2013; Thacker, 2011). In August of the same year, while doing publicity for the book, she agreed to an interview with Harry Boyle for *Sunday Supplement*, which aired on CBC Radio (Boyle, 1974). According to Thacker (2011) this interview was heard by several people who would “have a huge impact on Munro’s life and career” (Thacker, 2011, p. 18), but two of these listeners seemed particularly significant: Douglas Gibson and Gerald Fremlin.

The first listener of note was Douglas Gibson who was then working at Macmillan of Canada as the editorial director of the trade division (Thacker, 2011). After hearing the interview, Gibson reached out to Munro to arrange a meeting in order to ask her to work with him at Macmillan. As a result of this exchange, Munro worked with Gibson as her editor on her fourth collection, *Who Do You Think You Are?* (1978). From then on, he remained her editor in

Canada, including throughout the writing of her fifth collection, *Moons of Jupiter* (1980). Munro appreciated Gibson's editorial talents and his support for her as a short story writer rather than a novelist, so when he moved to McClelland and Stewart in 1986, she followed him and published her sixth collection, *The Progress of Love* (1986) with McClelland and Stewart's Douglas Gibson Books (Thacker, 2011).

According to Thacker (2011), the second important listener to Munro's 1974 interview with Boyle (1974) was Gerald Fremlin. Munro had met Fremlin nearly 25 years earlier at Western University. In her interview with McCulloch (1994), Munro reminisced about their first meeting. During his university days, Munro explained, Fremlin was a regular contributor to the *Folio*, so when Munro wanted to turn in her first submission, "The Dimensions of a Shadow," in 1950, she approached him thinking he was the editor. He was not, but he did facilitate her connection with those in charge at *Folio*. More importantly, Fremlin read this first story, and in the summer of 1950, he sent Munro a fan letter. The letter, Munro recalled, was pure "literary appreciation" (McCulloch, 1994, p.15); Fremlin complimented her writing and compared her to Chekhov (Thacker, 2011). Though she felt the letter was "one of the best I ever got" (as cited in Thacker, 2011, p. 98) and she never forgot about it, she moved on with her life and Fremlin moved on with his.

However, when Fremlin heard Munro say during the Boyle interview that she had returned to southern Ontario, he saw it as an opportunity to reach out to, and possibly reconnect with, Munro (McCulloch, 1994). He had recently retired from his career as physical geographer and editor of the *National Atlas of Canada*, and returned to his hometown of Clinton, Ontario (35 km south of Munro's hometown of Wingham) to care for his elderly mother. That fall, he and Munro re-established their friendship and by the winter Munro knew that she wanted a life with

Fremlin (McCulloch, 1994; Thacker, 2011). The following summer (1975), she left London and moved to Clinton. In doing so, she returned to her childhood haunts in Huron County; her life, as Staines (2016) argued, “had come full circle” (p. 18).

Though both Munro and Fremlin thought that their return to Huron County would be temporary, they remained in the area for the next 45 years. Fremlin’s interest in the geography and the history of the area awakened a new creative connection to the place in Munro, which she explained to McCulloch in 1994:

One of the reasons to stay now is that the landscape is so important to both of us ... thanks to Gerry I appreciate it in such a different way. I couldn’t possess any other landscape or country or lake or town in this way. And I realize that now, so I’ll never leave. (p. 15)

Thacker (2011) claimed that Munro’s return to Huron County in 1975 allowed her to explore the place creatively from a different perspective. From 1951–1975, she had written about Huron County and its people from a distance, but her return activated “in her fiction a new imaginative relation with Huron County” (Thacker, 2011, p. 294). This imaginative relation infused her work from that point on (McCulloch, 1994; Staines, 2016; Thacker, 2011).

From her publication of *Who do You Think You Are?* in 1978 to *Dear Life* in 2012, Munro reached “a new level of success” (McIntyre, 2013, p. 62). Between these years, Munro published nine other collections—*The Moons of Jupiter* (1982), *The Progress of Love* (1986), *Friend of My Youth* (1990), *Open Secrets* (1994), *The Love of a Good Woman* (1998), *Hateship, Friendship, Loveship, Courtship, Marriage* (2001), *Runaway* (2004), *The View from Castle Rock* (2006), and *Too Much Happiness* (2009)—for a total of 14 works over her 60-year career.

This impressive body of work was recognized by the Secretary of the Nobel Prize in Literature, Peter Englund, when he described Munro during her award ceremony as “the master of the contemporary short story” (Englund, 2013). Though this mastery has developed over her 60-year career, this brief biographical sketch has shown that her writing potential was hatched, nourished, and rejuvenated in Huron County in southwestern Ontario. It is here that Munro became a reader and writer, and it is here that she perfected her craft. The present study examines my literary travel experience as a reader of Alice Munro’s *Lives of Girls and Women* (1971/2005) while visiting the area that had such a fundamental impact on the writer Munro became.

Lives of Girls and Women and Place

In 1970 Alice Munro sent to her publisher a manuscript of what she has described as a “collection of linked stories” titled *Real Life* (Munro, 2006, as cited in Kruk, 2017, p. 63). Though the title was changed because another book was soon to be published with the same name, the manuscript was accepted and became Munro’s second published collection, *Lives of Girls and Women* (1971/2005) (Thacker, 2011). The book—referred to at various times as a novel (e.g., Purdham, 2013), a short story cycle (e.g., Beer, 2001), a series of linked stories (e.g., Staines, 2016), interconnected stories (e.g., Coleman, 2013), or an episodic novel (e.g., Besner, 1990)—presents eight stories that can be read in isolation but are interconnected through their focus on the growth and development of a single character, Del Jordan.

In this section of the literature review I provide an overview of the story, discuss the role of autobiography in the book, and establish the connections between Del’s and Munro’s homeplace. In so doing, I show that *Lives of Girls and Women* (1971/2005) is an important book

which constructs a vivid, fictional setting that has significant connections to the real geography of southwestern Ontario and Munro's *real life*.

Overview of Lives of Girls and Women

Using a first-person, retrospective point-of-view, Munro presents Del Jordan's growth from innocence to experience in Jubilee, a small town in southwestern Ontario, during the 1940s. As Margaret Atwood (2016) observed, the book is a *bildungsroman* because it chronicles "the youth and education – both formal and informal, both spiritual and carnal – of its central character, Del Jordan" (p. 96). The events depicted in the book span nearly a decade, from the summer Del is nine years old to the fall of her 18th year. Along the way, Del attempts to negotiate who she is within and against her family and her community's values and expectations.

The book's early stories feature a young Del. At this point, her experiences are located close to home and centre around Del's interactions with family. Events such as visiting a neighbour or the death of an uncle show Del beginning to question her community's ready-made roles, or what Garner and Murray (2008) called the "social norms" or "social scripts" seen as acceptable by her society (p. 2). As the book progresses, Del grows older and her experiences move further afield and involve more mature matters (Perrakis, 1982). As Del contends with issues such as religion, feeling like an outsider, and sexuality, her child-like questioning of ready-made roles becomes young-adult resistance in her effort to become a "self-created self" (Munro, 1971/2005, p. 171).

Del's desire to create extends beyond her identity. In fact, *Lives of Girls and Women* is also a *künstlerroman* because it depicts the formation of an artist (Atwood, 2016; Perrakis, 1982). As the book unfolds, Del grows from a curious observer in the opening story to a struggling young writer in the book's epilogue. Throughout, Del senses and is drawn toward the

power of words and story, believing that they have the potential to capture the varied and often contradictory aspects of being (Bell, 2012; Perrakis, 1982). Unfortunately, in Del's hometown of Jubilee, artistic sensibility meets resistance. As Atwood (2016) noted, "A fight is going on all the time in this book, between the artist-soul in Del and the expectations and demands of others" (p. 98). Despite opposition and a failed attempt, Del persists in her writing because she sees that "peoples' lives, in Jubilee as elsewhere, were dull, simple, amazing and unfathomable—deep caves paved with kitchen linoleum" (Munro, 1971/2005, p. 236). She knows that fiction will allow her to explore and negotiate these paradoxical elements: "What I wanted was every last thing, every layer of speech and thought" (Munro, 1971/2005, p. 236). In the end, as Atwood (2016) noted, Munro leaves Del at the threshold; the reader anticipates Del's writing success, but as Atwood argued, "The success of this venture is implied rather than described, the proof of it being the book the reader is reading as the story ends" (p. 114).

Autobiography in Lives of Girls and Women

Many critics have concerned themselves with the extent to which the portrait of Del's growth in *Lives of Girls and Women* (1971/2005) is autobiographical. This line of inquiry seems valid given the fact that on the copyright page of the first edition Munro told readers that "this novel is autobiographical in form but not in fact" (Munro, 1971, as cited in Staines, 2016, p. 16). Thacker's (1988/2016) essay, "'So Shocking a Verdict in Real Life': Autobiography in Alice Munro's Stories," offered a brief analysis of "the relationship between fact and fiction" (p.80) in Munro's writing and acknowledged the many parallels between Munro's real life and the fictional characters and situations she creates, especially in *Lives of Girls and Women*. At the same time, however, Thacker presented Munro's response to John Metcalf's interview question which asked, "How far is your work autobiographical?":

Oh. Well. I guess I have a standard answer to this ... in incident—no ... in emotion—completely. In incident up to a point too but of course, in *Lives of Girls and Women* which is a ... I suppose it would be called an autobiographical novel ... most of the incidents are changed versions of real incidents. Some are completely invented but the emotional reality, the girl's feeling for her mother, for men, for life is all ... it's all solidly autobiographical. (Metcalf Interview, 1972, as cited in Thacker, 1988/2016, p. 82, ellipses in original transcript)

In his discussion of this answer, Thacker acknowledged Munro's lived experience as important source material for her writing, but he also emphasised her fictionalization and artistic rendering of it. Munro expanded on this idea in "What is Real?" (1982), an essay she wrote for *The Canadian Forum* in response to the oft asked question of autobiography in her work:

Yes, I use bits of what is real, in the sense of being there and really happening ... and I transform it into something that is really there and really happening, in my story. No, I'm not concerned with using what is real to make any sort of record. (p. 36)

Accordingly, as one delves deeper into the parallels between the world Munro created in *Lives of Girls and Women* and her real life, it is important to remember Munro's artistry (MacKendrick, 1983).

Connections Between Del's and Munro's Homeplace

The connections between the real place where Munro grew up and the fictional setting of Del's growth in *Lives of Girls and Women* (1971/2005) are unmistakeable. As many critics, and Munro herself, have noted, Del's world—made up of the Flats Road, Jubilee, and the Wawanash River within Wawanash County—was born out of the physical geography of Munro's homeplace: Lower Town, Wingham, and the Maitland River within Huron County in

southwestern Ontario (McIntyre, 2013; Munro, 1998; Simonds, 2016; Staines, 2016; Thacker, 1984/2016, 2011). What follows is a presentation of several key locations in the book in relation to their real-life counterparts.

Flats Road and Lower Town. The book opens with a story called “The Flats Road,” which immediately emphasises the centrality of place in Del’s journey. The Flats Road of the opening story is a few miles long and runs west from the near-by town of Jubilee. This place “was not a part of town but it was not a part of the country either. The curve of the river, and the Grenoch Swamp, cut it off from the rest of the township, to which it nominally belonged” (Munro, 1971/2005, p. 8). Del’s house “was at the end of Flats Road” (p. 7) on a nine-acre property on which her father raised foxes. In contrast to the “civilized, desirable things” (p. 7) associated with Jubilee, this in-between place was populated with an assortment of odd characters including bootleggers and ex-prostitutes and its houses “were set further apart and looked in general more neglected, poor and eccentric than town houses would ever be” (p. 8).

Like Del, Munro grew-up in an in-between place called Lower Town. In an interview with Allan Twig (1981), Munro described this location: “We didn’t live in town and we didn’t live in the country. We lived in this kind of little ghetto where all the bootleggers and prostitutes and hangers-on lived” (p. 18). In Thacker’s (2011) biography of Munro he outlined Lower Town’s history, chronicling its growth in the mid-to-late 19th century and its rapid decline a few years later when nearby Wingham was chosen as the junction site for several rail lines. When this happened, most of Lower Town’s population and commerce moved to Wingham, leaving Lower Town a shadow of its former self. Moreover, Lower Town is located in the flood plain of the Maitland River. This location meant that it flooded regularly, and because of this, people of greater means did not choose to live there. As a result, “most of the houses in Lower Town – and

especially those closer to the river – were rented (owned largely by better-off people who lived in Wingham)” (Thacker, 2011, p. 45), meaning that most of Lower Town’s residents were transient and economically disadvantaged.

Munro’s childhood home was situated on somewhat higher ground at the end of Lower Town Road (Simonds, 2016; Thacker, 2011). The brick home, still standing today, was described by Munro (2006) in an essay titled “Home” as “a poor man’s house ... where people have lived close to the bone for over a hundred years” (p. 112). It was located on nine-acres of farmland and “something of an island, set off by itself between the end of Lower Town road and the river” (Thacker, 2011, p. 53). Munro would have walked several kilometres down Lower Town road, past the houses and the residents of Lower Town to get to Wingham, which she did daily to go to school.

Jubilee and Wingham. Just as Munro walked from Lower Town to Wingham, so, too, did her protagonist, Del, walk from Flats Road to Jubilee. Munro/Del described the view of the town upon approach:

Jubilee was visible from a rise about three miles away, on the No. 4 Highway The No. 4 Highway was also the main street of Jubilee. We could see the towers of the Post Office and the Town Hall facing each other, the Town Hall with its exotic cupola hiding the legendary bell ... and the Post Office with its clock-tower, square, useful, matter-of-fact. The town lay spread almost equidistantly on either side of main street. (Munro, 1971/2005, p. 65)

As an outsider and youngster, Del perceived Jubilee as a wonderful and exciting place. She “loved the order, the wholeness, the intricate arrangement of town life” (p. 66). She also appreciated the variety of people and places it contained. More specifically, after producing a

litany of Jubilee's offerings (which included the names of various streets, Krall's Ladies' Wear, the Baptist Mission, the library, and the Lyceum Theatre) she declared, "All these things, rituals and diversions, frail and bright, woven together—Town!" (p. 67).

"Town" was also where Del experienced many key moments in her development. Significant places mentioned throughout the book included Jubilee High School, the Post Office, and the Town Hall. Of these, the Town Hall seemed particularly important. Like many small-town halls, it housed various community resources, including the town library which Del frequented often. Though the library was a single room and had limited offerings, it provided Del, especially in her early teen years, a place of belonging: "I was happy in the library. Walls of printed pages, evidence of so many created worlds—this was a comfort to me" (Munro, 1971/2005, p. 111). Further, the Town Hall housed the Jubilee Auditorium, where Del and her classmates performed *The Pied Piper*. This space of artistic creation nourished Del's belief in the importance of imagination:

The Town Hall stage behind me seemed bright as a bonfire, lit by such fanatical devotion. Devotion to the manufacture of what was not true, not plainly necessary, but more important, once belief had been granted to it, than anything else we had. (p. 123)

Like Del, Munro also appreciated and was shaped by her hometown, Wingham. In 1974, Munro wrote an article for the *Jubilee*, "a short-lived publication from Gorrie, Ontario, a village east of Wingham" (Thacker, 2011, p. 49) that aimed to honour Munro's work. In the article, Munro discussed the significance of the place: "When I was quite young I got a feeling about Wingham – the town, of course, from which Jubilee has come – which is only possible for a child and an outsider ... everything seemed a bit foreign, and particularly clear and important to me" (Munro, 1974, as cited in Thacker, 2011, p. 49).

Munro's Wingham of the 1940s was a small but successful rural town. Though it was originally a railway community, it developed several industries and was granted a licence for a commercial radio station (CKNX) in 1935 that gave it some reputation in southwestern Ontario (Thacker, 2011). In an interview with George Hancock (1987), however, Munro explained that though she found Wingham "full of event and emotion and amazing things going on all the time," she also felt the weight of its oppressive climate: "It's a rural culture with a strong Scots-Irish background ... a culture that has become fairly stagnant. With a big sense of righteousness" (p. 204). Despite, or perhaps because of, this combination of repression and expression, Wingham has served as source material throughout Munro's career, and it is "particularly clear and important" in *Lives of Girls and Women* (Munro, 1974, as cited in Thacker, 2011, p. 49).

Wawanash River and Maitland River. The Wawanash River runs through Del's homeland and throughout the book. At times the river is a place of wonder and discovery, while at other times it is a place of fear and tragedy. The book's first sentence depicts the river as a source of delight for young Del: "We spent days along the Wawanash River, helping Uncle Benny fish" (Munro, 1971/2005, p. 3). Similarly, as Del spends time on a hot day with an irritating cousin, the river offers reprieve both from the heat and the cousin's incessant chatter: "We went down the road and along the river bank. In the heat of the dry stubble-fields, cracked creek-beds, white dusty roads, the Wawanash river made a cool trough I took off my shoes and walked barefoot" (p. 42). Further, when Del is a teenager, the river and its bank become places of youthful adventure and sexual exploration: "I would go home from these sessions by the river and not be able to sleep sometimes till dawn ... because I had to review, could not let go of, those great gifts I had received, gorgeous bonuses—lips on the wrists" (pp. 203-204).

The Wawanash River, however, is not static; just as it rose and fell with the seasons, so, too, did it shift from a source of wonder and delight to a source of fear and pain. For example, Miss Farris, a teacher who inspired Del when she was in middle school because of her devotion to artistic creation, was drowned in the Wawanash River. Del struggled with the loss and found it extremely difficult to make sense of the tragic event. Just as painful, the river was the site of Del's near drowning by the hands of her then boyfriend, Garnet French. Garnet wanted to baptise Del in the river, but she refused. He did not accept her refusal and forced her underwater: "I thought that he might drown me. I really thought that. I thought that I was fighting for my life" (Munro, 1971/2005, p. 223). The Wawanash River—a place of discovery and demise—was a constant in Del's life. This fickle river ran through Del's experiences as surely as it ran through Flats Road and Jubilee.

An equally present body of water in Munro's life was the Maitland River. The Maitland River was called the Menesetung in Chippewa (Anishinaabe), but was renamed after Sir Peregrine Maitland (Lee, 2004, p. 251) following the "opening and settlement of the Huron Tract" (Lee, 2004, p. 7). Though a discussion of Indigenous heritage is beyond the scope of this thesis, I respectfully acknowledge the river's traditional name, Menesetung.

In his biography of Munro, Thacker (2011) traced the river's three branches through Lower Town and Wingham up to Goderich and out to Lake Huron. In doing so, Thacker emphasised the significant position the river held in Munro's community and over Munro's imagination. According to Thacker, as a young girl, Munro spent hours walking the banks of the Maitland River "thinking her thoughts [and] imagining her stories" (p. 74). In 1974, Munro wrote an essay for the *Weekend Magazine* wherein she clearly articulated the river's creative allure:

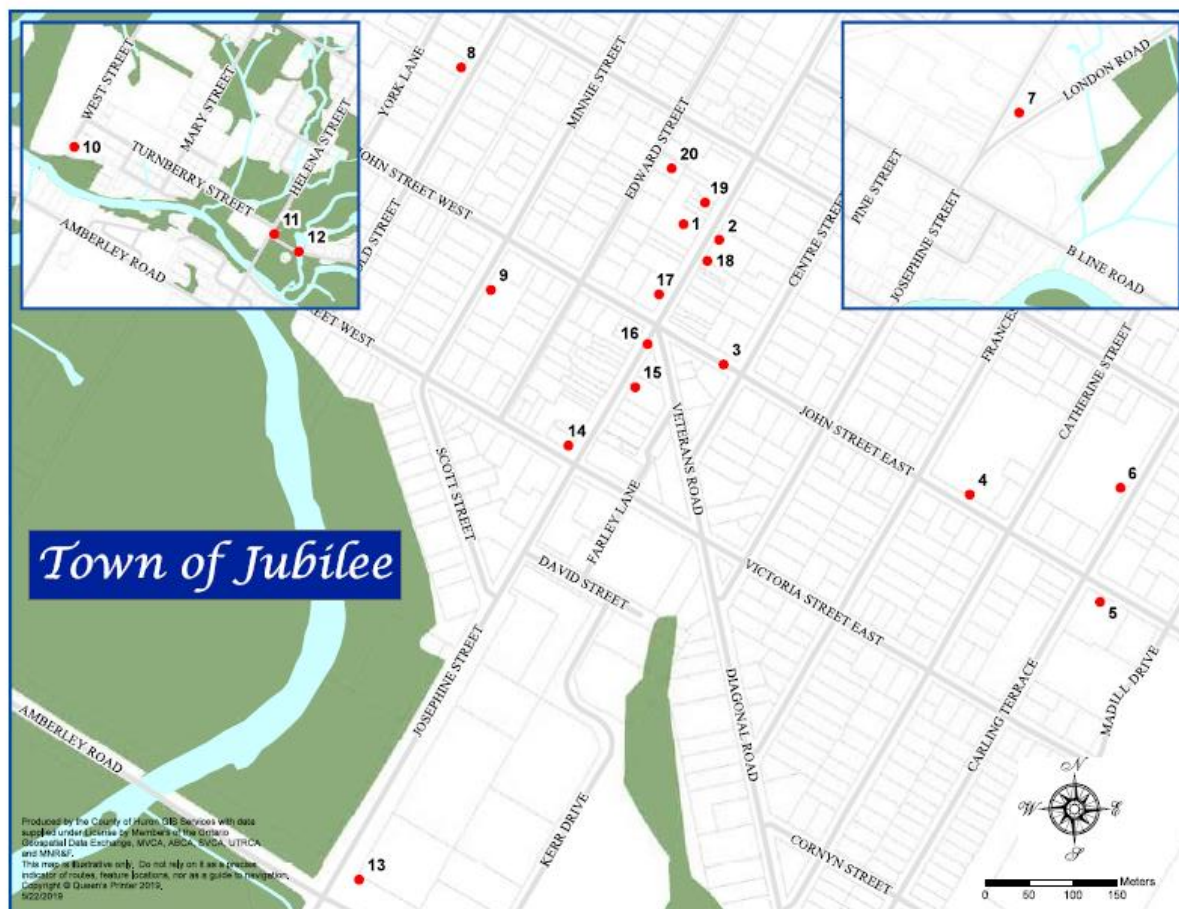
We believed there were deep holes in the river I am still partly convinced that this river—not even the whole river but this little stretch of it—will provide whatever myths you want, whatever adventures. I name the plants, I name the fish, and every name seems to me triumphant, every leaf and quick fish remarkably valuable. This ordinary place is sufficient, everything here is touchable and mysterious. (Munro, 1974, as cited in Ross, 1983, p. 125, ellipsis in original)

It seems that for Munro, the Maitland River, with its enigmatic holes and its ordinary plants and fish, allowed her to imagine the coexistence of the mysterious with the everyday. As Del puts it in *Lives of Girls and Women*, “Lying alongside our world was Uncle Benny’s world like a troubling distorted reflection, the same but never at all the same It was his triumph, that he couldn’t know about, to make us see” (Munro, 1971/2005, p. 26).

Munro’s fictional Flats Road, Jubilee, and Wawanash River lie alongside Munro’s real Lower Town, Wingham, and Maitland River. As discussed, these parallels are recognised in the related literature. Further, these parallels are emphasised in the Alice Munro self-guided tour brochure created by the Township of North Huron. The brochure is titled “Town of Wingham Jubilee Self-Guided Tours From Alice Munro Published Writings,” and it includes a map titled “Town of Jubilee” (see Figure 2), which indicates relevant literary sites. Interestingly, the tour brochure and the self-guided tour it offers present Wingham, Ontario, and Munro’s fictional town of Jubilee as one-and-the-same place. Given the established connections between the physical area in southwestern Ontario and Munro’s life and the fictional world in *Lives of Girls and Women*, a trip to this region provided an appropriate context within which to explore my lived experience as reader while visiting sites of significance related to an author and a literary text.

Figure 2

North Huron Township's Map of Sites Related to Alice Munro



Note: From “The town of Wingham Jubilee: Self-guided tours from Alice Munro published writings,” by Township of North Huron, pp. 5-6 (<https://www.northhuron.ca/en/discover-north-huron/alice-munro-garden.aspx>). Copyright 2019 by Queens Printer. Reprinted with permission (see Appendix B)

Summary

In this chapter, I have presented an overview of the three areas of research that informed my study. I began by discussing literary travel, including its origins, contemporary manifestations as reflected in the related literature, and the need within the field to reconceptualise the literary traveller as a reader, rather than consumer. Then, I presented an

overview of Munro's biography and established the influence her homeplace in southwestern Ontario had on the writer she has become. Finally, I provided an overview of *Lives of Girls and Women* (1971/2005) in relation to place in order to show the parallels between Munro's real and fictional worlds. Taken together, these three areas of research established the framework to study literary travel from a reader's perspective and that visiting sites of significance in Huron County related to Alice Munro and *Lives of Girls and Women* provided a rich literary landscape in which to study my experience.

Chapter 3: Methods

In this chapter I present my research methodology and methods. I begin by stating my research methodological approach and delineating each of the approach's three components—phenomenology, hermeneutic, and auto. Next, I discuss the worldviews embedded in this approach and my positionality as the researcher. I then present my research study design, including methods used for data collection, transcription, analysis, interpretation, and presentation. I conclude by identifying validity and reliability threats associated with my study and present the measures taken to guard against them.

Auto-Hermeneutic Phenomenology

Because I wanted to explore my experience as a reader of Alice Munro's *Lives of Girls and Women* (1971/2005) within a literary landscape and what it means to be this reader, I used an auto-hermeneutic phenomenological approach (Gorichanaz, 2017). Auto-hermeneutic phenomenology is a qualitative research methodology that seeks to describe, interpret, and convey the meaning of a researcher's lived experience of a phenomenon.

Phenomenology

In order to explore my lived experience as a reader within a literary landscape, I used a phenomenological approach. Phenomenology is a deeply philosophical approach within qualitative research that studies the “lived experiences of individuals about a phenomenon” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 3). Phenomenology originated in Germany in the early 20th century but has evolved and taken on diverse and often contradictory meanings since that time (Lavery, 2003; Pernecky & Jamal, 2010). Though divergent applications of phenomenology exist, Gorichanaz (2017) stated that they fall into two categories: “The Husserlian school of transcendental phenomenology and the Heideggerian school of hermeneutic phenomenology” (p. 3).

While both schools seek to explore the “essence of experience” (Creswell, 2007, p. 79), there are significant differences between the two (Finlay, 2012). Husserl’s transcendental phenomenology attempts to examine the underlying structures of experience through description (as opposed to interpretation) of the data collected. This version of phenomenology rejects the application of any theories or researcher presuppositions. Instead, the researcher’s bias is bracketed, and rich descriptions based on the data are offered as a way to reflect the essence of the experience (Tuffour, 2017). In contrast, Heidegger’s phenomenology is interpretive. It seeks not only to describe phenomenon but also to understand what it means to be in relation to the phenomenon. This emphasis on meaning necessitates interpretation—hermeneutic interpretation (Gorichanaz, 2017; Henriksson & Friesen, 2012; Pernecky & Jamal, 2010). In this study, I employed the later, Heideggerian, approach.

Hermeneutic Phenomenology

In this study I sought to describe *and* interpret my research data. I documented my lived experience as a reader in a literary landscape and explored what it meant to be this reader. To do so, I needed to interpret my data rather than merely present it; thus, I adopted a research paradigm that offered an interpretive dimension. Hermeneutics is the theory and methodology of interpretation, and it has a natural relationship to phenomenology (Henriksson & Friesen, 2012). Because Heideggerian phenomenology is concerned with what it means to be in relation to a phenomenon, any researcher who studies a phenomenon from a Heideggerian perspective enters a “hermeneutical situation” (Henriksson & Friesen, 2012, p. 2). Drawing on the work of Heidegger, Gadamer, and Ricoeur, Henriksson and Friesen (2012) argued that “it is impossible to study experience without simultaneously inquiring into its meaning, and it is impossible to study meaning without experiential grounding” (p. 3). Hermeneutics, they argued, is needed to

make sense of the lived experience. Hermeneutic interpretation is “achieved through a hermeneutic circle which moves from the parts of experience, to the whole of experience, and back and forth again and again to increase the depth of engagement with and the understanding of texts” (Lavery, 2003, p. 24). Further, for hermeneutic phenomenologists, “language and experience ... are co-emergent, with language having not merely a descriptive function, but one that is expressive, and ‘co-constitutive’ of experience” (Henriksson & Friesen, 2012, p. 3). Accordingly, hermeneutic phenomenology requires the researcher to pay close attention to both what is said about the phenomenon and the language used to describe it.

In short, hermeneutic phenomenology is the study of phenomena that uses interpretation to reveal “their nature and meanings” (Kafle, p. 181; McManus Holroyd, 2007). The hermeneutic phenomenologist gathers data related to the lived experience of individuals and through inductive and iterative methods interprets that data in order to create “fresh, complex, rich descriptions” (Finlay, 2012, p. 17) of these experiences (phenomena) and what they mean to the subject. This approach operates from a position that interpretation is inherent to sense-making and that description itself is an interpretive process.

Auto-Methodology

I employed an auto-methodology in this study to explore my own experience as a reader of Alice Munro’s *Lives of Girls and Women* (1971/2005) within a literary landscape. Auto-methodologies are becoming more common in various fields (e.g., education and health science) as the academic study of the self gains credibility (Gorichanaz, 2017). Auto-methodologies, such as autoethnography (Ellingson & Ellis, 2008; Maréchal, 2010) or practitioner self-study (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009), allow the researcher to study the self in relation to an issue or problem. However, given the former’s emphasis on personal experiences in relation to culture,

beliefs, and socio-political concerns and the latter's focus on improving practice, they are inappropriate for my study. Fortunately, Gorichanaz's (2017) work with auto-hermeneutic phenomenology provides a valid option. He combined principles and methods drawn from systematic self-observation (SSO) (Rodriguez & Ryave, 2002) with hermeneutic phenomenological approaches. In doing so, Gorichanaz (2017) offered "a systematic way to explore and describe the ontological nature of one's own personally lived experience" (p. 1).

Worldviews

Inherent in auto-hermeneutic phenomenology are several philosophical worldviews. First, as Henriksson (2012) argued, "Phenomenology is an attitude towards life" and "a style of thinking" (p. 120). A researcher who employs the hermeneutic phenomenological approach should maintain a "phenomenological attitude" (Henriksson, 2012, p. 123), which reflects reflexivity, openness, a suspension of judgement, and, "at least initially, refrains from importing external frameworks" (Finlay, 2012, p. 19).

Second, hermeneutic phenomenology is grounded on an interpretivist worldview. The hermeneutic phenomenologist believes that data can be interpreted "through a hermeneutic circle which moves from the parts of experience, to the whole of experience and back and forth again and again to increase the depth of engagement with and the understanding of the texts" (Lavery, 2003, p. 24), whilst simultaneously recognising that one's understanding of knowledge and being is always "on-the-way, partial, and particular" (Kafle, 2011, p. 189; Lavery, 2003).

Finally, hermeneutic phenomenology recognises the participant's background and researcher's background as contributing forces in understanding the phenomenon. In the literature, this background is referred to in various ways such as "lifeworld" (Heidegger, 1927, as cited in Neubauer et al., 2019, p. 94), "fore-structure" (Gadamer, 1960, as cited in McManus

Holroyd, 2007, p. 3), or “historicality” (Lavery, 2003, p. 24). Regardless, hermeneutic phenomenology understands that “individuals’ realities are invariably influenced by the world in which they live” (Neubauer et al., 2019, p. 94) and that this background is brought into the research project, including during data gathering and data interpretation processes (Neubauer et al., 2019; Suddick et al., 2020). Given the fact that “an individual cannot step out of his/her lifeworld” (Neubauer et al., 2019, p. 94), instead of bracketing off their lifeworlds, hermeneutic phenomenologists make their perspectives and experiences explicit (both to themselves and within the study) and reflect on how their “historicality” (Lavery, 2003, p. 24) inform their interpretation of the data (Lavery, 2003; Neubauer et al., 2019; Suddick et al., 2020). Hermeneutic phenomenological studies “can be understood as a double hermeneutic” (Gorichanz, 2015, para. 16) wherein the researcher interprets the participant’s interpretation of the phenomenon under study (Gorichanz, 2015). However, because the researcher and the participant are one-and-the-same in auto-hermeneutic phenomenological studies, they use a single hermeneutic. Gorichanz (2015) claimed that this single hermeneutic approach is productive in coming to understand a lived experience for it “eliminates the possibility for misinterpretation of the participant’s account” (para. 16). While this might be true to an extent, the auto-hermeneutic phenomenologist must be reflexive and consider how her lifeworld has informed not only her experience of the phenomenon and description of the phenomenon in situ, but also the interpretation of the resulting data (Gorichanz, 2015, 2017).

Positionality

Though I attempted to maintain a “phenomenological attitude” and refrain from “importing existing frameworks” during my experience (in the field and during the early stages of data interpretation), I acknowledge my positionality or in Lavery’s (2003) words, my

“historicality” (p. 24), including my history as a reader, my view of the author and text, and the role reader response theory and literary biography have in my understanding of what it means to be a reader.

My History as a Reader. I came to the study of the phenomenon of literary travel as a middle-class woman who has identified as a reader all of her life. As a child, I was read to often and had regular access to books. Since then, I have maintained a private life and a professional career that have prioritized literature and reading, allowing my love and understanding of narrative to flourish. This personal reading history meant that I approached my literary travel research from a positive position, believing that time spent in books and in all book-related activities is time well spent. I agree with literary critic Helen Vendler (2015) who contended

The arts and their attendant disciplines restore human awareness by releasing it into the ambience of the felt world, giving a habitation to the tongue in newly coined language, to the eyes and ears in remarkable re-creations of the physical world, to the animal body in the kinesthetic flex and resistance of the artistic medium. Without an alert sense of such things, one is only half alive. (p. 18)

Accordingly, I brought to this study the expectation that my visit to Munro Country would allow for on-going interactions with *Lives of Girls and Women* (1971/2005) that would make me feel and be more alive. The findings presented in this study should be understood in light of this background.

My Views of Author and Text. I came to this research project as an Alice Munro fan. I first read Alice Munro’s *Lives of Girls and Women* (1971/2005) when I was a young adult; the experience was monumental, for it was the first book that reflected back at me a portrait of myself and how I saw and operated within the world. Since then, I have read all of Munro’s work

and I am consistently staggered by her ability to show the paradoxical nature of being in such a deceptively simple prose style. Consequently, I brought great admiration and reverence for Munro and *Lives of Girls and Women* to my literary travel experience. I discuss the implications of this fan position in the “Negotiation Between Researcher and Fan” section of Chapter 4.

Reader Response Theory and My Understanding of Reading. My understanding of reading is informed by reader response theory. Reader response theory argues that a reader’s experience of a literary work is a product of interactions between a reader and a text (Iser, 1978; Rosenblatt, 1938, 1978). In response to text-centred literary approaches such as new criticism, reader response theorists Louise Rosenblatt (1938, 1978) and Wolfgang Iser (1972, 1978) emphasised the reader’s role in the meaning making process. Further, they both argued that rather than an objective, pre-existing entity, a literary work is something that “comes into being” (Rosenblatt, 1978, p. 14) within the active collaboration between the reader and the text. More specifically, Rosenblatt (1978) called the co-created entity a “poem” and conceptualised it as “an event in time” (p. 6). What poem is generated, she argued, is dependent on specifics: “A specific reader and a specific text at a specific time and place: change any of these, and there occurs a different circuit, a different event—a different poem” (Rosenblatt, 1978, p. 14). This view of the reader’s contribution to the meaning making process informed both my literary travel experience and my data analysis and interpretation process.

Literary Biography and My Understanding of Reading. My understanding of reading experiences is also informed by literary biography. Literary biography is the exploration of details related to an author’s life, which aims to both illuminate the author and the author’s writing (Benton, 2015). According to biographer and literary traveller Gregory Bryan, “What a writer creates is a product of everything in the life of that writer. What they write and how they

write it is a product of their experiences” (personal communication, February 2, 2021).

Understanding an author’s history, then, can lead to a fuller appreciation of the author’s literary works (Bradford, 2019). Various sources, such as diaries, archival material, or letters can be used to gain insight into the unique experiences of the author (Bell, 2019), which, biographical critic, Jackson Benson (1989), argued is necessary “before we can fully comprehend an author’s writing” (p. 108). Thus, as I moved through my literary travel experiences, I did so with a pre-existing appreciation of the benefits of literary biography for literary understanding.

Research Design and Procedures

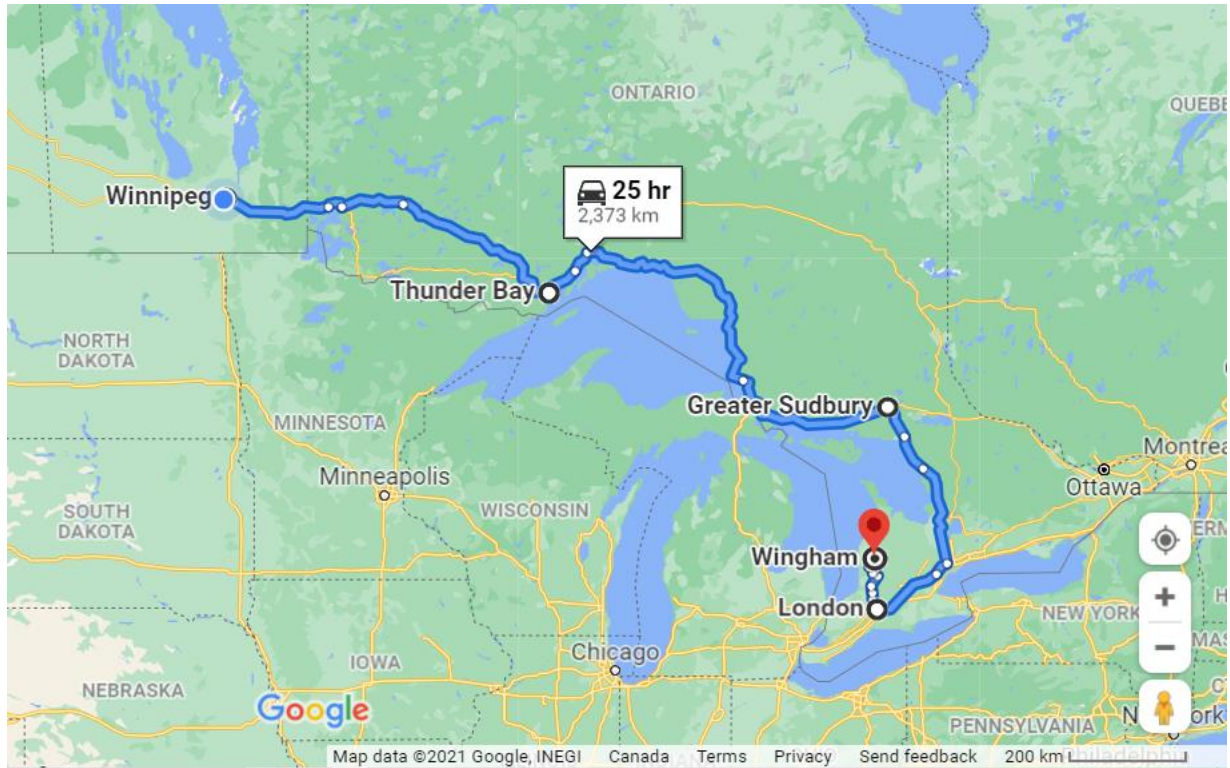
In the following section, I outline my research methods. I begin by presenting my study’s research context, followed by a description of the methods used to collect, transcribe, analyse, and interpret the data. I conclude with a discussion of the decisions I made related to how my findings and discussion were organised and presented.

Research Context

In this qualitative self-study, I used an auto-hermeneutic phenomenological approach to explore my experience as a reader of Alice Munro’s *Lives of Girls and Women* (1971/2005) within a literary landscape. In order to do so I travelled approximately 2,350 kms from Winnipeg, Manitoba to Wingham, Ontario (see Figure 3). From July 21-28, 2021, I visited literary sites of significance within Huron County (see Figure 4) related to both the author and the text. Alice Munro was born and raised in Huron County and *Lives of Girls and Women* is set there, which made this location an appropriate context within which to research my literary travel experience.

Figure 3

Google Maps Directions From Winnipeg, Manitoba to Huron County, Ontario



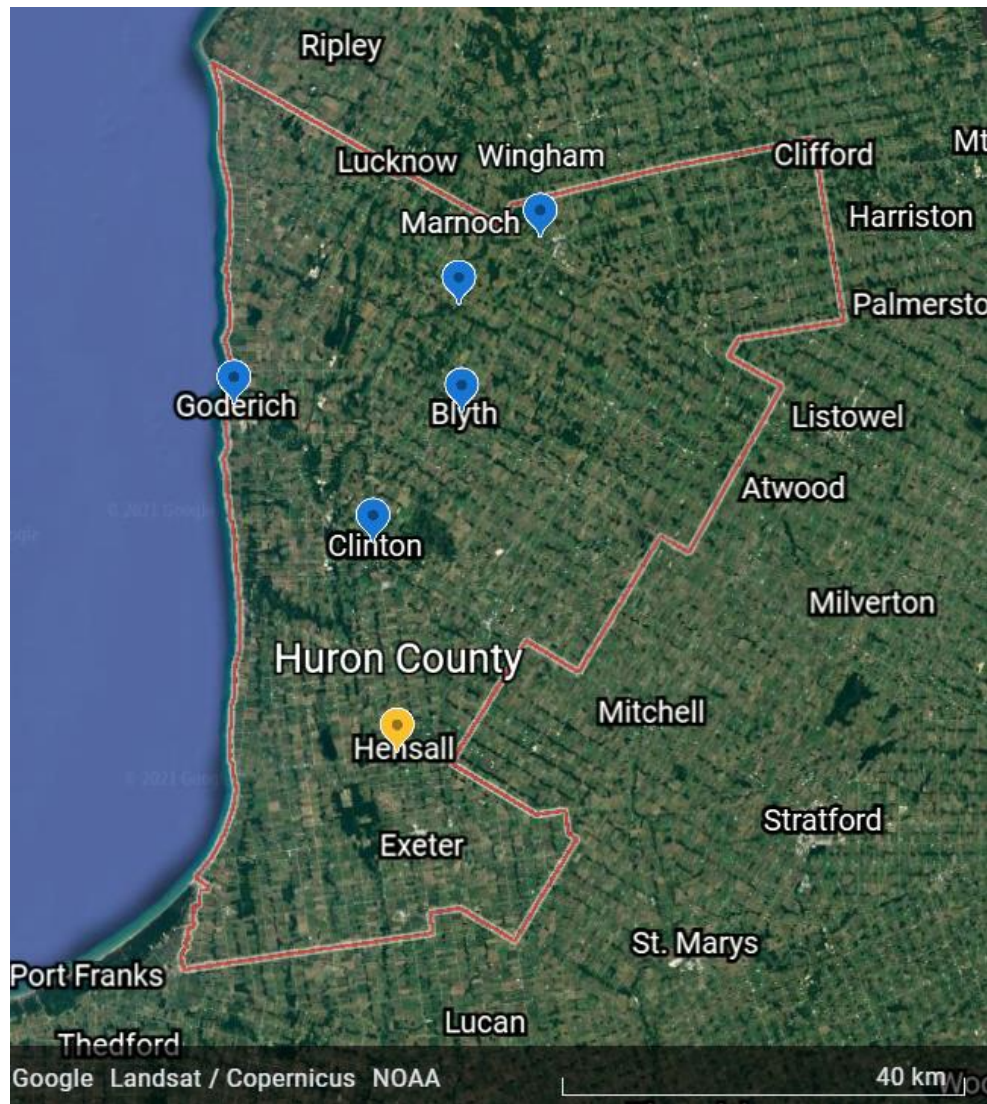
Note. Image reproduced from *Google Maps* in accordance with Google’s “Geo Guidelines,”

<https://www.google.com/permissions/geoguidelines.html>. From *Google Maps*

(<https://www.google.com/maps/dir/Winnipeg,+Manitoba/Thunder+Bay,+ON/Sudbury,+ON/London,+ON/Huron+County,+ON/@50.3918606>). Copyright 2021 by Google and INEGI.

Figure 4

Google Earth Image of Huron County, Ontario



Note. Image reproduced from *Google Earth* in accordance with Google's "Geo Guidelines,"

<https://www.google.com/permissions/geoguidelines.html>. From *Google Earth*

([https://earth.google.com/web/@43.70295143,-](https://earth.google.com/web/@43.70295143,-81.26013489,432.51429405a,245011.9648169d,30y,0h,0t,0r/data=Ck8aTRJHCiUweDg4MjhhNjBIYzcxODI3OTc6MHhjY2VkNWU3MDFkOTk5MTQwGXFleAHt0VAIWVleAuQYFTAKgxIdXJvbiBDb3VudHkYASABMicKJQojCiExYV8xYlZlNFh1VWI2Sk0xdEdDczM0aW5HYjNXX0hWR1Y)

[81.26013489,432.51429405a,245011.9648169d,30y,0h,0t,0r/data=Ck8aTRJHCiUweDg4MjhhNjBIYzcxODI3OTc6MHhjY2VkNWU3MDFkOTk5MTQwGXFleAHt0VAIWVleAuQYFTAKgxIdXJvbiBDb3VudHkYASABMicKJQojCiExYV8xYlZlNFh1VWI2Sk0xdEdDczM0aW5HYjNXX0hWR1Y](https://earth.google.com/web/@43.70295143,-81.26013489,432.51429405a,245011.9648169d,30y,0h,0t,0r/data=Ck8aTRJHCiUweDg4MjhhNjBIYzcxODI3OTc6MHhjY2VkNWU3MDFkOTk5MTQwGXFleAHt0VAIWVleAuQYFTAKgxIdXJvbiBDb3VudHkYASABMicKJQojCiExYV8xYlZlNFh1VWI2Sk0xdEdDczM0aW5HYjNXX0hWR1Y)). Copyright n.d. by Google, Landsat / Copernicus and NOAA.

Prior to my travel, a variety of sources were consulted to create a list of literary sites of significance within southwestern Ontario. *Lives of Girls and Women* (1971/2005) served as the primary source in the identification of literary locations. Secondary sources such as Robert Thacker's biography of Alice Munro, *Alice Munro: Writing Her Lives* (2011) and *The Cambridge Companion to Alice Munro* edited by David Staines (2016) provided information related to key biographical sites in Huron County and the sites' connections to Munro's fiction. In addition, I interviewed Alice Munro's biographer, Robert Thacker (personal communication, February 11, 2021). During our conversation, Thacker generously shared additional details related to literary sites of significance within Wingham and Huron County. Though I recognise an interview with Alice Munro would have yielded additional insight into key locations, given that she is ninety years old, in poor health, and a very private person, I did not contact her. However, I believe the sources I did consult provided sufficient information to create a thorough list of literary sites of significance.

During my six-day stay in Huron County, my list of sites of significance organically emerged into an itinerary (see Table 1). That is, I had a list of locations I planned to visit, but precisely when I visited each location, and the duration of each visit, was not predetermined. Two exceptions deserve mention. First, on Day 1, I purposefully planned to start my inquiry at Munro's/Del's home at the end of Turnberry Street/Flats Road. Second, on Day 3, the meeting with the Community Engagement Co-ordinator for Huron County and the Cultural Development Officer for Huron County (who is also the Huron County Representative for the Alice Munro Short Story Festival) had been prearranged. The rest of the days and their particular experiences unfolded naturally.

Table 1*My Literary Travel Itinerary, July 21-28, 2021*

Travel Day	Title and outline of the day's site visits
Arrival Day	Travel and Arrival <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Arrived at the London, ON, Airport at 3:30 pm - Drove 1.5 hours to motel, which is situated on the No. 4 highway, roughly 1.5 km outside of Wingham, ON.
Day 1	Town: First Impressions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stopped at the edge of town to take in the view of Wingham - Walked Turnberry Street/Flats Road, saw Munro's/Del's house - Traced Munro's/Del's walk to school - Explored the Maitland River - Went to the Lyceum Theatre
Day 2	Munro Biography Day <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Drove around and explored rural Huron County - Visited cemeteries: Wingham, Brandon-Belgrave, Blyth Union - Stopped in Marnoch: Munro's uncle's home and the fictional Uncle Craig, Aunt Elspeth, and Auntie Grace's home - Saw Munro's home in Clinton - Saw Munro's Grandparents' house in Blyth - Went to Goderich, ON, and Huron County Museum - Revisited Marnoch
Day 3	Delving Deeper Into the Text Day <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Walked-and-read myself into and through town - Took in and contemplated the "Intricate arrangement of town" (e.g., Josephine St., Victoria St., John St., Diagonal Rd.) - Spent time viewing key structures in town that are mentioned in the text and reading associated key passages which feature key structures/buildings (e.g., Town Hall, Post Office, Bank, Lyceum Theatre, Cenotaph) - Went searching for Third Bridge (Garnet French episode) and Mr. Chamberlain's route and spot

Table 1 (continued)

Travel Day	Title and outline of the day's site visits
Day 4	Delving Deeper Into the Place Day <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Revisited Marnoch - Met with Community Engagement Co-ordinator for Huron County and Cultural Development Officer for Huron County (also the Huron County's representative for the Alice Munro Short Story Festival) - Toured the Post Office/Huron County Museum - Tour of town provided by Community Engagement Co-ordinator for Huron County - Closer look at the rural landscape in Huron County (e.g., St. Augustine, countryside, Blyth)
Day 5	Wingham: Up-Close <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Went inside and toured Town Hall, including entry, council chambers, library, and theatre - Visited and documented all other text locations: all churches, Wingham Cenotaph, High School, CKNX, Gay-La Dance Hall, Diagonal Road/Jerry's house/fairgrounds, BA Station, Mrs. McQuade's, Brunswick Hotel, and Red Front Grocery store
Day 6	Revisits and Reflections <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Returned to Red Front Grocery - Spent time in Alice Munro Literary Garden - Sat beside a piece of the Maitland River (off Helena St.) on/close to "the little stretch" Munro talks about - Walked past Munro's/Del's house on Turnberry Street/Flats Road - Walked down West Street
Departure Day	Departure and Travel <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Departed Wingham, ON at 3:30 am - Drove 1.5 hours to London Airport - Returned to Winnipeg, MB

Data Collection

While hermeneutic phenomenological research does not prescribe specific data collection methods (Gorichanaz, 2017; Henriksson & Friesen, 2012), Gorichanaz (2017) suggested collecting data via systematic self-observation (Rodriguez & Ryave, 2002). Systematic self-

observation (SSO) is a qualitative research method which recognized that some “phenomena can be observed only by the person having the experience” (p. 3). While in Huron County, I used methods of systematic self-observation to record my responses to these sites in situ. Gorichanaz (2017) recommended two specific methods of data collection based on SSO: interval recording (e.g., time-based or before/during/after experience) and free-format narrative recording (e.g., as ideas emerge). He argued that recording one’s observations and reactions during the experience is necessary for it “reduce[s] the distance between occurrence and data collection, leading to data that is more accurate, vivid, and free from the transformations of faulty memory” (p. 4). Throughout my experiences, I used a reflective research journal (Laverty, 2003; Spence, 2007) to document my thoughts and feelings as they emerged (free-format) and I recorded 33 interval (before/during/after experience) voice memos (see Table 2).

The data collected reflected my answers to questions designed based on Gorichanaz’s (2015) and Smith et al.’s (2009) suggestion that hermeneutic phenomenological interview questions should be open-ended and explicitly focused on the phenomenon in question. I planned to respond to my questions before, during, and after site visits:

- What about the upcoming specific literary site visit am I looking forward to?
- How would I describe my experience at this literary site as a reader?
- How do I feel about this experience as a reader?
- How does or how did this experience impact my understanding of Alice Munro or *Lives of Girls and Women*?

Though I had originally planned to systematically record my thoughts before, during, and after each experience, this plan turned out to be unsustainable and problematic for a variety of reasons. First, I had not anticipated the intensity of the emotional responses I would have to some

of the experiences. These intense emotional reactions—though notable and which are discussed in Chapter 4 (see Theme 2: Negotiation)—sometimes interfered with my ability to record my thinking during certain site visits. My transcript reveals (see Entry 4, for example) the need to stop or pause recording during some experiences because I was overwhelmed with emotion. Second, I found on several occasions I wanted to be “in the moment” and thought that during-experience recording would detract from full immersion into the experience. In such cases, I did not record during the experience, but as soon after as was practicable (see Entry 25, for example). Third, some stops or experiences happened as a result of an in-the-moment decision (see Entry 28, for example), and, thus, I did not have the opportunity to record distinct pre-experience reflections.

Despite not perfectly following a systematic before, during, and after experience recording schedule, I did record 33 separate voice memos: seven before-experience, 15 during-experience, and 11 after-experience (see Table 2). Of note, three of the during-experience-recordings have multiple parts. In these recordings, I was in the midst of a single experience with multiple components. For example, Entry 10 is a during-experience recording of my cemetery visits. Rather than creating a during-experience recording for each cemetery visit, I pressed pause, rather than stop, on the recording device between each cemetery. Accordingly, my visits to three separate cemeteries appear as one during-experience recording. In Table 2, I have indicated these multi-component recordings by stating the number of parts in parentheses.

Table 2

Audio-Recording-Transcript Record: Record of My Before, During, and After Experience Audio-Recordings and Their Corresponding Transcript Entry Numbers and Titles

Transcript Details	Before Experience	During Experience	After Experience
Arrival Day - Travel Day			
Entry # Title	1 Travel Day		
DAY 1 - Town: First impressions			
Entry # Title	2 Day's plan		
Entry # Title		3 First reaction to town	
Entry # Title		4 Munro's/Del's house, End of Turnberry Street/Flats Road	
Entry # Title		5 Maitland River	
Entry # Title			6 Homes, Roads, Walk to school
Entry # Title		7 Lyceum Theatre	
Entry # Title			8 End of Day 1 reflection
DAY 2 - Munro Biography Day			
Entry # Title	9 Day's plan		
Entry # Title		10 (3-part recording) Cemeteries	
Entry # Title			11 Cemetery visits & meeting with local representatives
Entry # Title			12 Former houses in Blyth and Clinton
Entry # Title		13 Goderich	
Entry # Title		14 Huron County Museum	
Entry # Title			15 End of Day 2 reflection
DAY 3 - Diving Deeper Into the Text Day			
Entry # Title		16 (6-part recording) Walk-and-read through town	
Entry # Title			17 Searching for Garnet bridge & Mr. Chamberlain's route

Table 2 (continued)

Transcript Details	Before Experience	During Experience	After Experience
DAY 4 - Diving Deeper Into the Place Day			
Entry # Title	18 Day's plan		
Entry # Title		19 Marnoch (Uncle Alex's/Craig's house)	
Entry # Title	20 Meeting with Local Representatives		
Entry # Title			21 Local Representatives, Munro exhibit, Post Office, Tour
Entry # Title		22 Countryside: Wingham to Blyth	
Entry # Title			23 End of Day 4 reflection
DAY 5 - Wingham: Up-Close			
Entry # Title	24 Day's plan		
Entry # Title			25 Town Hall Library
Entry # Title			26 Town Hall Council Chambers
Entry # Title			27 Town Hall Theatre
Entry # Title		28 (7-part recording) Rolling commentary while documenting various locations	
DAY 6 - Revisits and Reflections			
Entry # Title	29 Day's plan		
Entry # Title		30 Red Front Grocery	
Entry # Title		31 Alice Munro Literary Garden	
Entry # Title		32 Sitting by the Maitland River	
Entry # Title		33 Walking down West Street	
Departure Day – Travel Day			

Data Transcription

Upon return, I created a transcript of my audio recordings (see Appendix C). This was a challenging step in the data collection process. As qualitative researcher Julia Baily (2008) contended, “Representing audible talk as written words requires reduction, interpretation and

representation to make the written text readable and meaningful” (p. 127). Accordingly, my transcription process involved several steps.

First, I used the transcription software Otter AI to translate coarsely the spoken words in my audio files into written text. Next, I went through the written text several times while consulting my reflective research journal and listening to the audio recordings to correct content errors—words said that were misunderstood or omitted in the Otter AI translation. Then, I revised the transcript in terms of paragraphing and syntax. Otter AI does insert paragraph breaks and basic punctuation (such as periods and commas), but making the transcript reflect the division between thoughts at the paragraph and sentence level required interpretation and manual representation. Run-on sentences and sentence fragments were a consistent feature of the audio recordings, and while I tried to maintain the spirit of the articulation, I added additional punctuation in an attempt to make the transcript more readable. Again, these decisions were made whilst listening to the audio recordings.

Finally, I formatted the transcript. The transcript is organised by day, starting with Arrival Day, followed by Day 1 through Day 6, and ending with Departure Day. I gave each day a descriptive title (e.g., Day 1 – July 22, 2021: Town: First Impressions). I then labeled each entry: Entry number, Day: followed by a statement of whether the recording was before, during, or after the experience – and a brief description of the entry’s content (e.g., Entry 3, Day 1: During experience – First reaction to town). I then added line numbers to each entry. This transcript is referenced throughout Chapter 4 and is included in Appendix C.

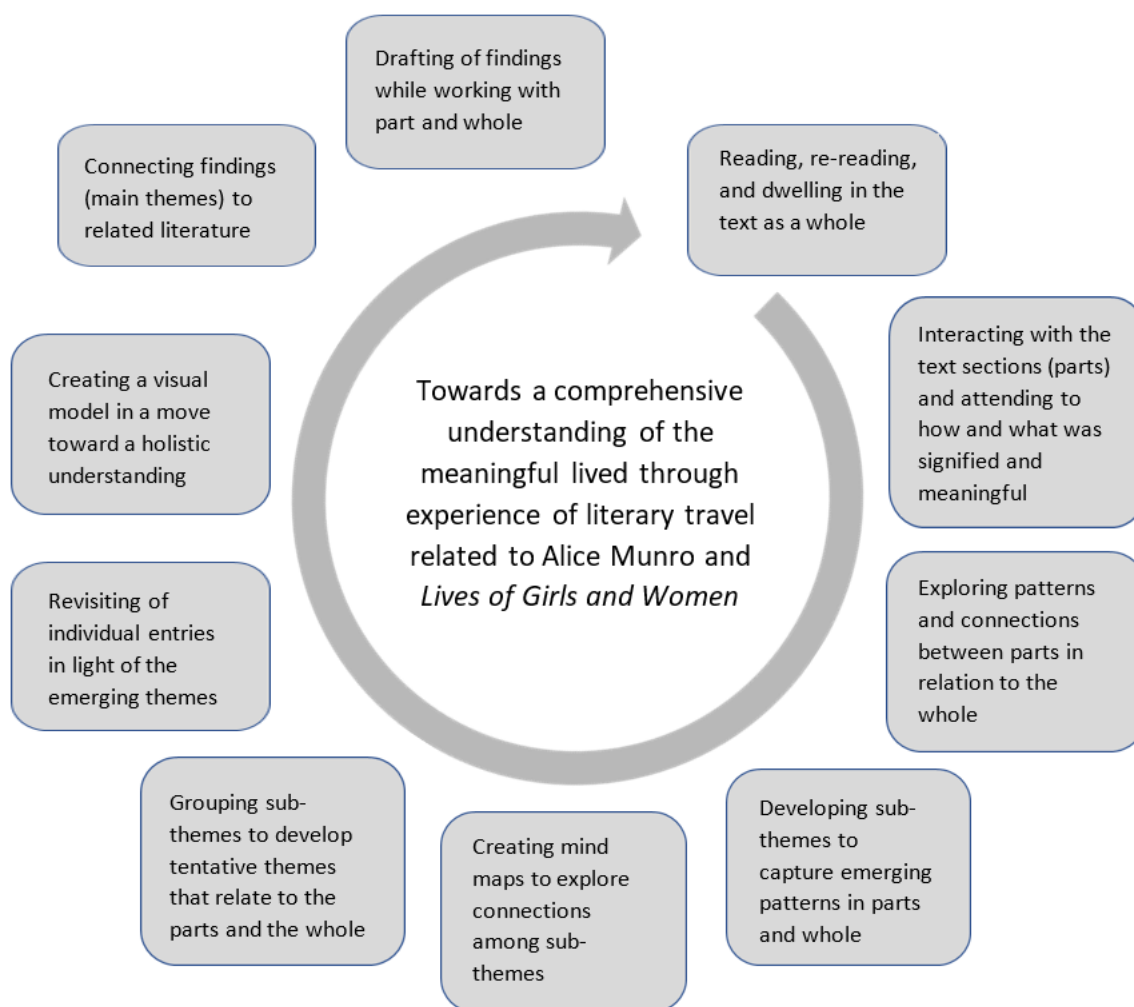
Data Analysis and Interpretation

Once I created the transcript, I analysed and interpreted my data following a hermeneutic phenomenological process (see Figure 5). This process was adapted from Suddick et al. (2020)

and informed by the work of Lindseth and Norberg (2004). Despite the linearity suggested in Figure 5, the process was iterative, recursive, and non-linear and required “playful, attentive questioning, sensing, dwelling and intentional reflection between part and whole” (Suddick et. al., 2020, p. 7).

Figure 5

My Data Analysis and Interpretation Process



Note. Adapted from “The Work of Hermeneutic Phenomenology,” by K. M. Suddick, V. Cross, P. Vuoskoski, K. T.

Galvin, and G. Stew, 2020, *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 19, p. 10

(<https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406920947600>). Copyright 2020 by The Author(s). Creative Commons.

I began by reading and re-reading the text as a whole. During this initial phase, which Suddick et al. (2020) called “dwelling” (p. 9) and Lindseth and Norberg (2004) called “naïve reading” (p. 149), I adopted a phenomenological attitude. This attitude included an “openness and questioning attentiveness to what comes to awareness” (Suddick et al., 2020, p. 4). I reflected upon my initial impressions of the text as a whole and considered how my “a priori fore-meaning” (p. 9)—or positionality—may have influenced my reading. I recorded my reflections, observations, and emerging thoughts and questions in my reflective research journal (Laverty, 2003; Spence, 2017).

I then shifted my attention from the whole of the text to its parts and began to interact with each part. According to Lindseth and Norberg (2004), how a text is divided into parts is dependent on the particular text. Given that my text was already divided into meaningful units based on before, during, and after experience recordings, I considered each recording entry as a unique part.

Following Suddick et al.’s (2020) method and Martin Heidegger’s claim that language shapes and reveals human consciousness (Laverty, 2003), I created a three-column chart that facilitated interaction with each part, including what was said and how it was said. In the first column, I pasted each part of the transcript. In the second column, I recorded and worked with key words and phrases from the text part, including asking questions of and making comments about content and form. In the third column, I attempted to articulate the meaning that was emerging through this interaction with the text’s parts in relation to the whole. I read through each of the text’s parts several times, adding new questions and observations to the three-column chart each time. Table 3 presents an example of the process using an extract from Entry 16 of the transcript.

Table 3

Hermeneutic Interaction Chart. Example of hermeneutic interaction with transcript parts used during my data analysis and interpretation process.

Entry 16, Day 3: During experience – Part of my walk-and-read through town experience		
Transcript extract	Working with what is given and appears in and through the ongoing dialogue with the text	Articulating the play of understanding and unfolding of meaning
<p>I can't look at the Post Office without thinking of Fern posing for the picture in front of it in front of a huge snow arch and the beginning of "Lives". And, looking at the Town Hall, so much happens there. I really hope I can get inside. The buildings do dominate the physical street, their towers are grand, I can see why they engraved themselves into Munro's imagination. I feel like I am mapping or layering. What do I mean? My imagined version of this site is meeting the real and I feel like a computer a bit, like my imagined image is being digitally produced and animated, while the new one is being layered on top. Or, that my imagined image is encircling the real one. Both exist. I probably sound like a crazy person, but there is a mental negotiation going on in my mind, that's for sure.</p>	<p>"I can't look at x without thinking about y textual detail" – the site (and others) elicits textual connection; these connections seem to happen without conscious effort</p> <p>The buildings "do" dominate – the inclusion of "do" suggests that the view confirms a pre-existing impression/idea</p> <p>"engraved" is an interesting word choice here – what does it suggest in this particular context?</p> <p>"mapping" and "layering" – words come up several times</p> <p>"meeting" – between imagined and real – does my use of "meeting" here suggest a forethought about something to be worked out?</p> <p>"computer" simile – actually repeated use of similes to describe this layering idea – as if direct language can't quite capture the thought – what, if anything, is suggested by the comparisons here?</p> <p>"encircling" – another attempt to describe the coming together of past and present images; "negotiation" and "both" – co-existence indicated</p> <p>"crazy" – awareness of public nature of the recording (researcher position)</p>	<p>The idea that seeing or being present in literary locations awakens connections to related parts of the text is emerging in the data → I am beginning to see this process as involuntary</p> <p>I am beginning to get the sense that layering or some other multi-image production is a part of my experience; the word layering has already come up a couple of times</p> <p>I am focusing on the idea that expressing what the layering process feels like is a challenge is beginning to surface → do I use other similes and/or figurative language to describe this process? Where/context?</p> <p>Here, it seems my understanding of literary travel is beginning to broaden to include some kind of → "negotiation" which I mention in the extract or some kind of layering of real and imagined</p> <p>Further support for the struggle to express layering evident here</p>

Drawing on the work of Gadamer, Suddick et al. (2020) contended that it is through interactions with the text that the researcher enters the hermeneutic circle, wherein the parts of the text are seen in relation to the whole and the whole of the text is seen in relation to its parts. Once I had interacted with each of the parts of the text, I began to look for patterns within the text as a whole. In this early phase, I identified 12 patterns or sub-themes (see Table 4): body, closeness to author, closeness to characters, discovery, emotion, eyes/sight/seeing, imagined vs. real, layers, researcher vs. fan, sleuthing, textual connection, and uncertainty. I then created a mind-map in my reflective research journal that placed each sub-theme around my research question (What is my experience as a reader while visiting sites of significance related to Munro and *Lives of Girls and Women*?). Using this mind-map and reflective writing (Spence, 2017), I began to draw connections between these sub-themes.

Table 4

List of Sub-Themes and a Brief Explanation of Each

Sub-Theme	Explanation	Sub-Theme	Explanation
body	response activated by physical interaction	imagined vs. real	imagined construction meets material reality
closeness to author	feelings of closeness to the author	layers	co-existence of multiple versions of location
closeness to characters	feelings of closeness to the characters	researcher vs. fan	cognitive response meets affective response
discovery	finding or uncovering new information	sleuthing	searching for or exploring new information
emotion	non-rational response or intense feeling	textual connection	connections to primary and secondary source information
eyes/sight/seeing	perceiving in a new or fresh way	uncertainty	state of ambiguity or not knowing

Through the reflective and iterative processes of writing and further mind-mapping, I cautiously synthesised the sub-themes into main themes. According to Lindseth and Norberg (2004),

a theme is a thread of meaning that penetrates text parts, either all or just a few. It is seen as conveying an essential meaning of lived experience. In order to capture this meaning of lived experience we do not formulate the themes as abstract concepts, but rather as condensed descriptions. We formulate them in a way that discloses meaning. (p. 149)

Accordingly, I combined the 12 sub-themes into four main themes (see Figure 6) and named each using a condensed descriptive word that captured an essential dimension of my literary travel experience (see Table 5). The four main themes emerged through this process were concretisation, exploration, negotiation, and connection.

Figure 6

Synthesis of Sub-Themes Into Main Themes

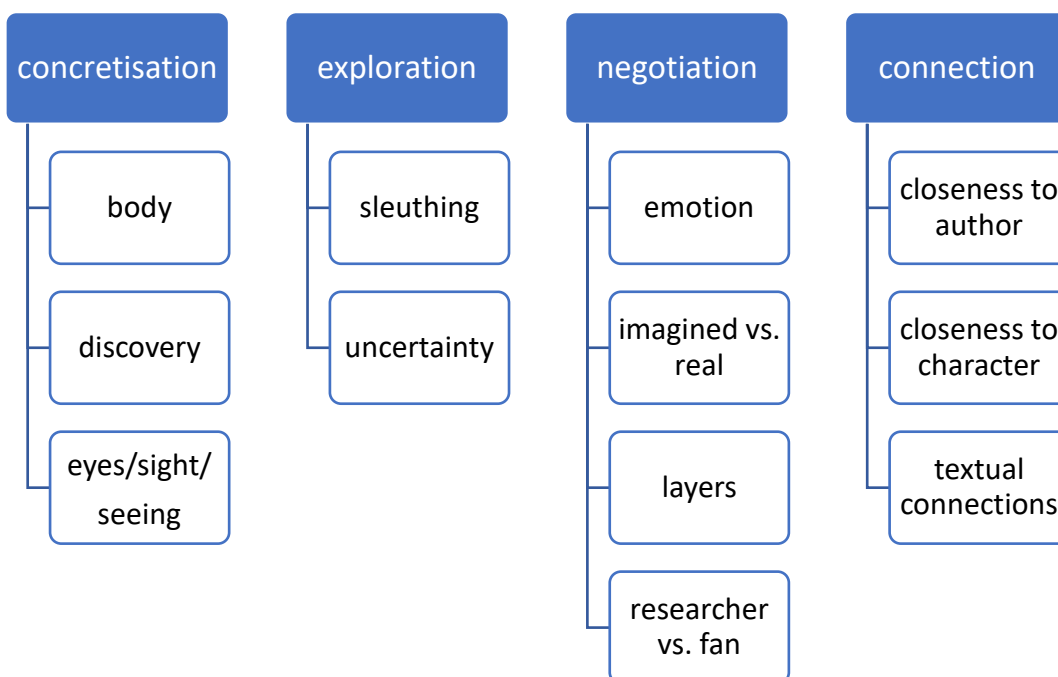


Table 5

List of Main Themes That Emerged From the Data and a Brief Explanation of Each

Main Theme	Explanation
concretisation	filling in of gaps in the narrative and the solidification of understanding
exploration	opening up of possibility and the expansion of understanding
negotiation	movement between opposing or conflicting positions and interpretations
connection	associations with the author, characters, and texts

With these themes in mind, I returned to the transcript and considered how these themes were evident in and related to the individual entries and the text as a whole. Along the way, I wrote and re-wrote around the emergent themes in my reflective research journal (Laverty, 2003; Spence, 2017) and added to the third column of my interaction chart (Suddick et al. 2020).

At this point, I created a visual model of my literary travel experience (Suddick et al., 2020). This model (see Figure 7, in Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion), unified the emergent themes toward a comprehensive whole. In short, the model I created reflected the essence of my literary travel experience as a reader of Munro's *Lives of Girls and Women* (1971/2005) while visiting sites of significance in Huron County in southwestern Ontario.

Lindseth and Norberg (2004) suggested that once the themes of the phenomenon have been identified, the hermeneutic phenomenologist should seek out and consider their findings in relation to related literature. They argued that the researcher should "let the chosen literature illuminate the interview text [transcript] and interview text [transcript] illuminate the chosen literature" (p. 141). Accordingly, I revisited secondary sources about literary travel with which I was already familiar and sought out and found additional sources. I read and re-read this literature with my themes and visual model in mind and entered into a conversation (or

“discourse” [p. 150]) with the related literature wherein I explored how the literature connected to my findings. Reflections about the relationship between published literature and my findings were recorded in my reflective research journal (Laverty, 2003; Spence, 2007).

Organisation and Presentation of Findings and Discussion

Only once I had moved through my hermeneutic phenomenological data analysis and interpretation process did I begin to outline and draft my findings and discussion section. A brief review of several hermeneutic phenomenological studies related to business (e.g., Cope, 2011), education (e.g., Foran & Olson, 2012; Howard, 2012), medicine (e.g., Bynum et al., 2021; Suddick et al., 2021) and tourism (e.g., Curtin, 2006; Del Rosario, 2019; Jamal & Stronza, 2008) suggested there is no one correct way to present the findings of a hermeneutic phenomenological study. Rather, these studies indicated that the themes that emerged during the analysis and interpretation stage needed to inform what I discussed and how that information was organised. Five decisions related to the organisation and presentation of my findings and discussion deserve comment.

First, I organised the findings and discussion section of this study according to the four main themes that characterised my lived experience of literary travel. These were concretisation, exploration, negotiation, and connection. The order of the theme presentation was somewhat, though not totally, arbitrary. I began with the theme of concretisation in order to recognise MacLeod et al.’s (2018) influence on my experience. I then presented the theme of exploration as it contrasted with the theme of concretisation. Finally, I presented the theme of negotiation followed by theme of connection, though they could be presented in reverse order.

Second, I included illustrative quotations from my transcript in each theme section.

Phenomenological research reports “seek to ‘show’ rather than ‘tell’” (Spence, 2017, p. 840) the participant’s experience of the phenomenon. In order to show an experience more fully, Alsaigh and Coyne (2021) encouraged the liberal use of “direct quotes” (p. 6) and Crowther and Thomson (2020) suggested using “rich and varied” (p. 9) quotations. Further, because hermeneutic phenomenologists understand language to be “expressive and ‘co-constitutive’ of experience” (Henriksson & Friesen, 2012, p. 3), my theme sections included discussion of not only what was said in the quotations but also of how it was said.

Third, I used an academic style to share my findings. Spence (2017) claimed that while phenomenological studies should “show rather than tell” (p. 840) the experience, she also argued that “theses and dissertations are, and should be, sustained arguments. Thus, paradoxically, a good phenomenological thesis must ‘show’ and ‘tell’” (p. 840). Accordingly, in this study, I wrote in the first person, used descriptive language, and integrated quotations from my transcript to “show” my experience and I employed a more academic approach to “tell” about the significance of it. In doing so, I attempted to “dwell in the space between a poetic attitude ... and a utilitarian writing style ... to express the lived experience” (Henriksson & Saevi, 2012, p. 76).

Fourth, given my research question focused on my literary travel experience as a reader (rather than, for example, as a consumer or tourist), I discussed the ways specific experiences affected my reading of Alice Munro’s *Lives of Girls and Women* (1971/2005). In each theme section, I considered the relationship between my experience of the theme and my deepened understanding and enhanced appreciation of this text. Through detailed discussions of the text and my reflections as a reader, I showed how, and told in what ways (Spence, 2017), my literary travel experience enriched my reading of *Lives of Girls and Women*.

Fifth, at the end of each theme section, I discussed how my lived experience of the theme connected to the experience of other literary travellers as presented in the related literature (Lindseth & Norberg, 2004). In doing so, I situated my findings withing existing literature and showed how my reader-traveller experience was in keeping with previous findings.

Validity and Reliability

As I wrote my findings and discussion, I consistently returned to the transcript text, interactive chart, and my reflective research journal to ensure that I was expressing my lived experience truthfully and accurately. Creswell and Creswell (2018) stated that qualitative researchers must take steps to ensure the validity and reliability of their findings but suggested that the terms “trustworthiness” and “credibility” might be more in keeping with a qualitative approach (p. 200). In an effort to produce a trustworthy and credible study, I used several validity and reliability procedures.

I accounted for personal bias. I demonstrated reflexivity by articulating and considering how my background (e.g., reading history, investment in the topic, and beliefs about reading) influenced my experience (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Further, Spence (2017) argued that hermeneutic phenomenologists should keep a “reflective journal” (p. 838), wherein they record and reflect upon their preunderstandings of the phenomenon and chronicle the development of understanding. From the beginning of my research process, I have kept a reflective research journal wherein I have questioned and explored my thinking as my understanding of literary travel expanded.

I kept detailed records. In an effort to be transparent, I included specific information about my literary travel experience and my research process in my study. My itinerary, audio recordings outline document, transcript interaction chart, and analysis and interpretation process

were detailed in an effort to leave a “clear decision trail” (Noble, 2015, p. 35) regarding data collection and analysis.

I used “thick description to convey findings” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 200). In order to add to the credibility of my study, I included many transcript extracts that presented thick descriptions of my experience. Doing so allowed the reader to enter the experience and participate in the validation process, which can add to the credibility of the findings (Alsaigh & Coyne, 2021; Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Crowther & Thomson, 2020). I also included the transcript in full as Appendix C.

I used “peer debriefing” to “improve the accuracy of the account” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 201). My peer was a fellow Faculty of Education graduate student, who did not know the particulars of my study prior to his involvement. I asked him to read the transcript of my audio-recording data and provide feedback about what he saw. We met to discuss his observations. By this time, I had a firm grasp on the themes I saw emerging in the data. These themes were corroborated during our discussion. Using this validity procedure helped me check the reliability of my hermeneutic process.

Finally, I compared my findings with those presented in related literature (Gorichanaz, 2017; Lindseth & Norberg, 2004). Lindseth and Norberg suggested consulting related literature as the last step in the hermeneutic phenomenological data analysis and interpretation process. Accordingly, near the end of my data analysis process, I revisited the literature with which I was already familiar and sought out new sources. I then considered my findings in relation to these sources. By situating my findings within and comparing my findings with the existing literature, I enhanced the trustworthiness of my study.

Summary

In this chapter, I presented an overview of my study's methodology—auto-hermeneutic phenomenology. I then provided the context of this study and delineated the methods and procedures I used during the data collection, analysis, and interpretation phases of the research process. Next, I offered an overview of the decisions that informed the organisation and presentation of my findings and discussion. I concluded this chapter by acknowledging the need to ensure validity and reliability in qualitative studies and explained several measures I took to help create a trustworthy and credible study.

Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion

I would try to make lists. A list of all the stores and businesses going up and down the main street and who owned them, a list of family names, names on the tombstones in the Cemetery and any inscriptions underneath. A list of the titles of movies that played at the Lyceum Theatre from 1938 to 1950, roughly speaking. Names on the Cenotaph (more for the first World War than for the second). Names of the streets and the pattern they lay in.

The hope of accuracy we bring to such tasks is crazy, heartbreaking.

And no list could hold what I wanted, for what I wanted was every last thing, every layer of speech and thought, stroke of light on bark or walls, every smell, pothole, pain, crack, delusion, held still and held together—radiant, everlasting.

- Alice Munro, *Lives of Girls and Women*

So ruminates Del, the then 18-year-old protagonist of Alice Munro's *Lives of Girls and Women* (1971/2005), in the concluding moments of her story of becoming. Like Del, I wanted desperately to accurately capture and describe my literary travel experience. Like Del, despite the realization that the hope of accuracy and completeness is crazy and heartbreaking, I tried.

This chapter presents my study's findings and a discussion of them. I begin by situating my findings within MacLeod et al.'s (2018) work and presenting a model of my literary travel experience, which includes the four dominant themes of my experience: concretisation, exploration, negotiation, and connection. I then present my analysis and interpretation of each theme, illustrated through transcript extracts and discussion. At the end of each theme section, I connect the finding to related literature.

Situating My Findings

My experience as a reader of Alice Munro's *Lives of Girls and Women* (1971/2005) while visiting sites of significance related to the author and the text was multi-faceted. Hermeneutic phenomenological methods of data analysis and interpretation revealed four themes that characterised my experience: concretisation, exploration, negotiation, and connection. Accordingly, my experience revealed that MacLeod et al.'s (2018) conceptual model (see Figure 1) of literary travel based on Roman Ingarden's (1973) concretisation theory presented an incomplete picture of my experience as a reader during literary travel.

In their model, MacLeod et al. (2018) indicated that the experience of travelling to literary sites affords the reader with opportunities to fill in textual ambiguities with concrete detail, which the reader then brings back to the text, resulting in deeper appreciation and understanding of the work. My data, data analysis, and data interpretation suggested that such concretisation did occur, but that it was only one of four themes that characterised my literary travel experience. Accordingly, as I moved through the hermeneutic phenomenological process, I created a model (see Figure 7) that reflected my literary travel experience, but that also built upon and extended MacLeod et al.'s (2018).

In the model of my literary travel experience, like MacLeod et al.'s, I have placed the triumvirate of all literary travel—the book, the location, and the reader—at the centre, but I also attached the word “particular” to each. As professor Alison Calder (2010) argued,

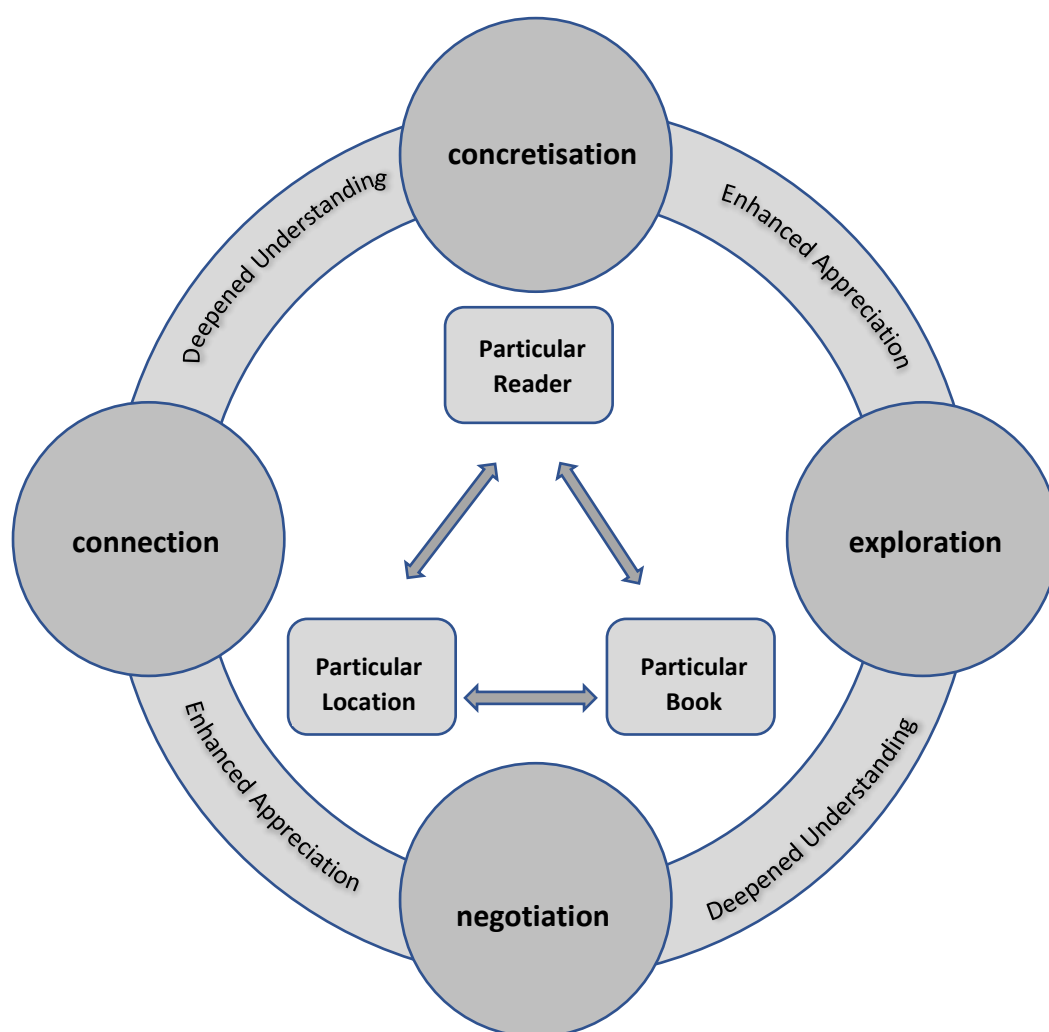
Postmodern conceptions of place suggest that it is composed of simultaneously intersecting complementary and competing forces that shift constantly depending on an individual's relation to them. That relation to place, what place means, is determined by

race, class, gender, and a host of other factors. These factors combine uniquely in particular locations. (p.113)

Further, Rosenblatt (1978) observed that a poem is born from the interplay of specifics: “A specific reader and a specific text at a specific time and place: change any of these, and there occurs a different circuit, a different event—a different poem” (p. 14). Thus, my model indicates that my lived experience of literary travel was born from the interplay of particulars: the particular reader, the particular text, and the particular location.

Figure 7

Model of My Literary Travel Experience



In addition, in my model, I encased these three essential and interacting components of literary travel within an orbit. The orbit represents the totality of my literary travel experience as a reader. Included on the orbit are phrases expressing the lasting effects of my literary travel experience as a reader—deepened understanding and enhanced appreciation of the literary work. Attached to the orbit are each of the four dominant themes—concretisation, exploration, negotiation, and connection—that comprised my experience. The four themes are depicted as four circles of equal size and are situated equidistantly from the centre. This layout illustrates the equal significance of these four aspects of my experience. Moreover, the themes are connected to each other by way of the orbit, which is meant to illustrate that they are interconnected. Though in this chapter each theme is discussed individually, I often experienced more than one theme in a single experience.

My model serves to complement rather than replace MacLeod et al.'s (2018) model. First, as already noted, I have added the “particular” to their suggestion that literary travel is comprised of reader, book, and location. Rather than conceptualising literary travel experiences as universal, my model presents literary travel as particular, with each reader having a unique experience, which may differ even for the same reader based on the source text and literary location. Second, I have added exploration, negotiation, and connection to MacLeod et al.'s concretisation. Rather than conceptualising literary travel as akin to concretisation, my model presents literary travel as akin to the reading process more generally, which is made up of a variety of reading processes including concretisation, exploration, negotiation, and connection.

What follows is a presentation and discussion of the four central themes—concretisation, exploration, negotiation, and connection—of my experience as a reader of Alice Munro's *Lives of Girls and Women* while visiting sites of significance related to the author and the text.

Theme 1: Concretisation

The data suggested that my literary travel included many moments of concretisation, and I have thus identified it as the first theme of my experience. In Ingarden's work (1973) and in scholars' writings about it (e.g., Adams, 1964; Brinker, 1980; Bundgaard, 2013; Kryeziu, 2021; Mitsecherling, 1997) the term concretisation is used in various ways. In fact, Mitsecherling (1997) offers a word of caution regarding one's understanding of the term: "The term 'concretization' has often been employed by Ingarden's commentators and critics—and indeed sometimes by Ingarden himself—in a confusing and inconsistent manner" (p. 160). For the purpose of this paper, and in keeping with MacLeod et al.'s (2018) use of the term, 'concretisation' is understood as "the 'filling out' of that which is given only schematically in the work" (Mitsecherling, 1997, p. 160); that is, concretisation occurs when a reader fills in missing or ambiguous detail related to narrative elements such as plot, character, and setting.

As I visited various sites related to Alice Munro's *Lives of Girls and Women* (1971/2005) in Huron County, "spots of indeterminacy" (Ingarden, 1973, p. 338) were filled in, which resulted in richer understanding of the text as a whole. According to MacLeod et al. (2018), "the bibliophile travels to augment her reading experience - to complete the gaps, solidify the imaginary and ultimately, to bring the lived experience of these fictional settings back into the text" (p. 397). My hermeneutic work with the data suggested that these aspects of concretisation (completion of gaps, solidification of the imaginary, and integration of site experience into the reading of the text) occurred frequently and were a significant dimension of my literary travel experience.

Completion of Gaps

Physically inhabiting and moving through literary and biographical sites afforded opportunities to discover details about some locations that reading about them had not. These newly discovered details filled in aspects of the text that had previously been ambiguous. Sometimes this completion of gaps felt straightforward, while at other times it felt profound. For example, when I saw the outside of The Lyceum Theatre (see Figure 8) for the first time—a place named but not richly described in the book—I discovered its small size, redbrick façade, and blue lettering. At this moment, my image of the structure was filled out without incident. While walking past the theatre for the first time, I commented, “Didn’t expect the Lyceum theatre to be so small. I didn’t actually know what it looked like, but I guess now I do” (Entry 3, Day 1, lns. 5-7). Similarly, when I saw the Wingham Cenotaph (see Figure 9), I quickly and easily filled in my knowledge of what the structure looked like and gave it little more thought. That is not to say I was not delighted to see these structures—I absolutely was—only that I readily integrated new details related to the structures’ visual appearance.

Figure 8

The Lyceum Theatre in Wingham, Ontario.



Figure 9

Wingham Cenotaph, Wingham, Ontario



However, there were other moments where the completion of gaps was more meaningful. For example, when I followed the Maitland River around the perimeter of Wingham (see Figure 10), I gained first-hand knowledge of the river's pervasiveness and variability, which deepened my understanding and appreciation of Munro's multifarious portrait of the fictional Wawanash River in *Lives of Girls and Women* (1971/2005).

Figure 10

Two Views of the Maitland River, Wingham, Ontario



In an after-experience recording, I commented,

It was enlightening to follow the river around town and really see this “little stretch of it”. The little stretch that played such a significant role in Munro’s creative imagination and in Del’s life. Unlike our Red [River], this river is clean and very shallow in spots, and I climbed down the rolling bank and stepped in a couple of times. It’s funny, as I walked past the various parts of the river, my mind was filled with references to various parts in the book. At one moment, I was especially reminded of Ms. Ferris’s sad end, at another of Del and Owen fishing with Uncle Benny, and at still another Caroline’s drowning. The river in real life is multifarious in its depth, speed, and visual appeal. Following it let me

see more fully how it would take on such different tones in the book, and how it would have seemed both touchable and mysterious to Munro. (Entry 8, Day 1, Ins. 32-41)

Evident in this extract, is that physically being at the river allowed for details about the river to be filled out in a way that extended my understanding of it beyond what I had previously understood. As noted in the extract, prior to the experience, I knew this river served as a source of creative inspiration for Munro and I noticed its pervasive presence in the text. Following its crooks and nooks, however, was “enlightening” (ln. 32). Doing so allowed for immersion (both literal and figurative) into this significant literary site, which prompted the completion of gaps and resulted in a fuller understanding of the text.

The idea that literary travel prompted the meaningful completion of gaps underscored many of my experiences; however, it was particularly felt while walking in Munro’s/Del’s footsteps. This idea can be seen in an audio recording I made after traversing the route Munro/Del likely would have followed to get from home at the end of Turnberry Street/Flats Road in Lower Town to elementary school on John Street in Wingham/Jubilee (see Figure 11). Though I previously understood this walk as significant for Del and Munro, I had not adequately considered how this walk could have influenced Del and Munro’s ways of thinking. Walking this route allowed me to see this relationship:

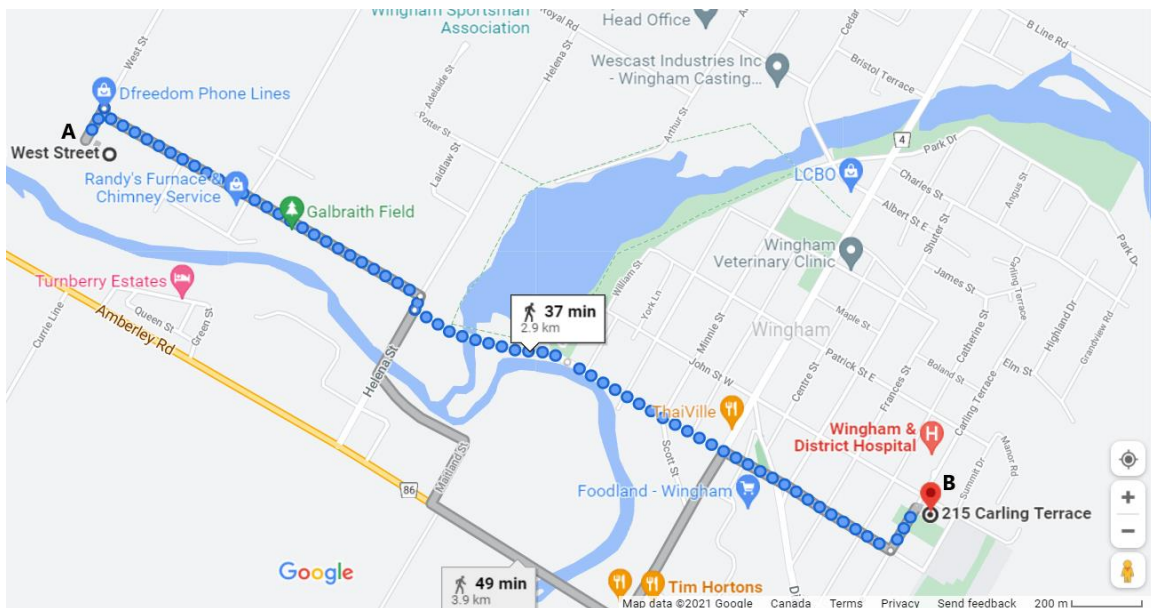
Anyways, this is a long walk [approximately three kilometres] for a young person, real or imagined. And I think one of the things I was struck by was the amount of time this walk would have given Munro in her head. I know this is not a revelation. Thacker says this walk gave Munro a chance to ‘think her thoughts.’ But the time is key. And I think walking this walk helped me see and feel how Del and Munro, who share a propensity for thinking about what lies beneath the surface of things, could think the way they think.

Time is needed to move beyond first thought, and this daily walk gave them time. (Entry 6, Day 1, lns. 12-18).

Walking this route—as opposed to looking at it on a map or reading about it in the text—allowed me to experience physical and temporal space in ways that transcended theoretical understanding. This experience facilitated concretisation as details related to distance and time of the walk were filled in.

Figure 11

Google Map Image of Munro's and Del's Walk From Home (A) to School (B)



Note. Image reproduced from Google Maps in accordance with Google's "Geo Guidelines,"

<https://www.google.com/permissions/geoguidelines.html>. From *Google Maps*

(<https://www.google.com/maps/dir/10+West+St,+Wingham,+ON+N0G+2W0/215+Carling+Terrace,+Wingham,+ON/@43.8906278>). Copyright 2021 by Google.

Solidification of the Imaginary

Moreover, walking this route allowed me to solidify my imagined impression of Munro's and Del's home as being situated in an "in-between" location (see Figure 12). Munro (1981) characterised her childhood home's location as "unusual" (p. 23), further stating in an interview with Allan Twig that "we didn't live in town and we didn't live in the country" (Munro, cited in Twigg, 1981, p. 18). In this same interview Munro claimed that her home was located in a "little ghetto where all the bootleggers and prostitutes and hangers-on lived" (p. 18). Munro's characterisation of her home's unusual, in-between location is echoed in Del's description of her home at the end of Flats Road, which was "not part of town but it was not part of the country either" (Munro, *Lives of Girls and Women*, 1971/2005, p. 8). As I walked from the end of Turnberry Street/Flats Road and into town, I could not help but feel the in-between nature of this site. In an after-experience recording I remarked, "While I walked, I was struck by the strange piecemeal of old and new, of rich and poor, of country and town that she would have seen and had time to think about each day" (Entry 6, Day 1, lns. 20-22). In the same entry, I acknowledged that much would have changed since Munro's days there, but that the location continues to resist being any one thing—it continues to be an in-between place: "the pink-blankets on the windows and the rusted-out cars in the yard alongside the new houses" (lins. 25-26).

In *Lives of Girls and Women* Del grows up in this in-between location, which encourages her to observe the in-between in various aspects of life. Rather than perceiving the world and those who populate it as one thing or another, Del learned early on that the world is far more complex than that—that "lying alongside our world was Uncle Benny's world ... the same but never at all the same" (p. 26). Physically interacting with this site, this road, and this route gave

me an opportunity to “see and actually feel the environment” (Entry 6, Day 1, lns. 24-25), which solidified my imagined view, thus allowing me to “recognize more fully how the material reality of this daily walk might have influenced Del’s and Munro’s view of the world” (Entry 6, Day 1, lns. 80-81).

Figure 12

Turnberry Street, Wingham, Ontario/Flats Road: An “In-Between” Place



This solidification of the imaginary was also evident in a recording I made whilst in Marnoch, Ontario. Marnoch is a hamlet approximately 15 kilometres southwest of Wingham. It was on my itinerary because it was connected to both Munro’s real life and the text. According to Thacker (2011), Munro spent considerable time in Marnoch during her childhood, visiting the home of her Aunt Maud and Uncle Alex Porterfield who was the clerk of the township (see

Figure 13). Thacker also argued that Alex Porterfield served as the “prototype for Uncle Craig in *Lives of Girls and Women*” (p. 63).

In the chapter titled “Heirs of a Living Body,” Del goes to a small neighbouring hamlet to visit her Uncle Craig, and his sisters, Auntie Grace and Aunt Elspeth. While there Del learns about the power and ambiguity of language and the importance of including everyday details in the telling of stories. She also learns about death, for Uncle Craig dies, forcing Del to confront her own mortality. These powerful lessons are set against the backdrop of Uncle Craig’s small township, the piece of the Maitland River that runs through it, and his home.

Figure 13

Two Images of the Hamlet of Marnoch, Ontario. Marnoch Bridge Over the Maitland River (left) and Munro’s Uncle Alex Porterfield’s/Uncle Craig’s Home (right)



Prior to my literary travel, I had imagined this location and sensed its significance in Del’s journey toward adulthood and growth as an artist; however, being in Marnoch served to

solidify these imaginings. Ultimately, I visited Marnoch three times during my stay in Huron County, and each time, my visit felt “monumental” (Entry 15, Day 2, ln.15). In conversation with a local, I learned that the home on the corner of the Marnoch Line and Belgrave Road used to serve as the post office and home of the township clerk, thus confirming this site’s connection to Munro’s Uncle Alex and her fictional Uncle Craig. Standing before Uncle Alex Porterfield’s/Uncle Craig’s home, walking the surrounding gravel roads, and sitting by the piece of the Maitland River that features in this chapter, “Heirs of a Living Body,” gave me a feeling that I was inhabiting a familiar and important place. During my third visit I spent time re-reading the chapter and contemplating the significance of the experience as a reader:

It feels like I am spending time in a place I already know, but it is also allowing me to look at the text with fresh eyes. I am paying attention to details that I have previously glossed over. Fresh eyes is what I have while reading on the banks of the Maitland River. I feel like writing a poem, actually. “On Sitting Down to Read *Lives* Once Again.” (Entry 19, Day 4, lns. 33-37).

This extract showed that my visit to Marnoch resulted in the solidification of the imaginary as the details of the fictional setting were made concrete. Moreover, this solidification process felt profound. My impulse to respond to this experience creatively—“I feel like writing a poem” (ln. 36)—suggested an awareness that direct speech was incapable of capturing this moment’s significance, and that in order to do so, I would need to employ the figurative devices of the poet. That I alluded to John Keats’s sonnet, “On Sitting Down to Read *King Lear* Once Again,” is also significant. As the title suggests, this sonnet chronicles the speaker’s re-reading of a meaningful text. Of further importance, is Keats’s liberal use of metaphors, similes, and other devices of comparison as a way to convey the intensity of this re-reading experience. My

allusion to this poem in situ and my subsequent writing of a poem inspired by it (see page 144) suggested that I experienced the solidification of the imaginary profoundly—in ways that might be more fully expressed creatively.

Integration of Site Experience and the Text

As MacLeod et al. (2018) argued, spending time in literary sites allowed for the completion of gaps and the solidification of the imaginary, which are then brought back to the text. This idea is evident in the previous examples, but one further example will show that concretisation also allowed me to more fully recognise and appreciate Munro's artistic choices. I experienced this enhanced appreciation of Munro's artistry when I visited the town's many churches. Moving from one church to the next made me realise that the geographic positioning of one of the churches had been altered in Munro's fictionalized version of town. While this alteration is, of course, perfectly within her right as a creative writer, moving from one church to the next allowed me to notice the change and contemplate its effect.

In a chapter titled "Age of Faith," Munro presents 12-year-old Del's exploration of the idea of God. As a part of Del's search, she regularly and covertly snuck away from the United Church (see Figure 14) to which her family nominally belongs in order to attend the Anglican Church (see Figure 15), where she hoped to "settle the question of God" (p. 91). Once Fern, the adult with whom Del attended the United Church, entered the building, Del "turned and doubled back across town" (p. 92) in an attempt to get to the Anglican Church before the service began. Though she "was barely in time" (p. 93), she made it. Of significance is the image of Del running back the way she came created by Munro's use of the phrase "doubled back across town." However, as I discovered on my church tour, the United and Anglican Churches are only

about 300 metres apart and, given the house Del lived at this time was west of both, going from the former to the later would not have required doubling back.

During this church tour experience, geographic details were filled in that allowed me to notice a discrepancy between the actual physical layout of the town and its fictional representation. This realisation, or concretisation, allowed me to then examine the effects of this authorial choice as I brought the experience back to the text. As stated in a during-experience recording made during my walking church tour, “What I find interesting about this is ... discovering various embellishments and geographic modifications of or from the ‘real’ gives me a chance to consider the textual detail more closely, and thus think about what it adds to the story” (Entry 28, Day 5, lns. 12-16). Through this experience of walking from church to church, I came to more fully understand Del’s character and Munro’s characterisation techniques. By positioning the churches in such a way that Del would have to “double back across town” to get to the Anglican Church, Munro makes the unseen, seen. That is, the public and physical doubling back allows Munro to reveal through space and movement Del’s private and internal spiritual struggle. This juxtaposition makes Del’s unseen, spiritual quest manifest, generating a curious character willing to sacrifice (energy, time, anonymity) as she explores one of life’s mysteries.

Figure 14

Wingham United Church, 217 Minnie Street, Wingham, Ontario

**Figure 15**

St. Paul's Trinity Anglican Church, 19 John Street, Wingham, Ontario



Connection to the Literature: Concretisation

The occurrence of concretisation throughout my experience is in keeping with the findings in the related literature. Though only MacLeod et al.'s (2018) study explicitly mentioned Ingarden's (1973) concept of concretisation, several other studies indicated that the filling out of textual indeterminacies is a common dimension of literary travel (Lee, 2012; Plate, 2006; Reijnders, 2011). In her study of Harry Potter related tourism, for example, Lee (2012) stated that by visiting literary locations "the tourist is able to concretize a narrative and, in many cases, render tangible the past and the place" (p. 53). Similarly, Reijnders's (2011) study of *Dracula*-inspired-travel to Transylvania in Romania found that "by drinking in Dracula Country, by smelling it, feeling it, seeing it and tasting it, the fans get a livelier and more complete picture ... they have 'come closer to the story'" (p. 242). Moreover, Plate's (2006) examination of walking tours associated with Virginia Woolf's work argued that moving through London, UK, in relation to Woolf's fictional representations "function[ed] as an embodied, analytical tool in the reading and reproduction of literature" (p. 115). These studies, though they did not mention Ingarden specifically, recognized that literature contains textual ambiguities that are filled in during site visits and that, as MacLeod et al. (2018) explicitly stated, these "lived experiences were then fed back into the act of reading the texts and brought them further into being" (p. 396).

Like the participants in the related studies, I found that inhabiting literary locations within Huron County allowed for the acquisition of new knowledge related to textual detail, which was then applied to my reading of *Lives of Girls and Women* (1971/2005). The during and after recordings revealed that, for me, concretisation was a consistent dimension of my experience and resulted in a richer understanding of the text as a whole.

Theme 2: Exploration

Embedded within the concept of concretisation is the minimisation of uncertainty. As textual indeterminacies are filled in and imagined constructions are solidified, *what could be* turns into *what is*. The data showed, however, that in addition to these moments of clarification, my experience also included exploration, where what could be turned into “could be this, or that, or both, or neither.” In these moments, exploration—or the opening up of possibility—took precedence over concretisation. Given the frequency and significance of these exploration experiences, I have identified exploration as the second theme of my literary travel experience.

Many of the literary sites on my itinerary corresponded neatly to identifiable markers (e.g., Post Office, Town Hall—see Figures 16 and 17); however, some of the sites I sought to discover did not. These more elusive sites are sketched out in the text—specific location details such as street names or landmarks are provided—but a direct correlation between those textual clues and the physical world was absent. In these instances, finding exact physical structures (e.g., a house) and geographic locations (e.g., a physical place but not one associated with a structure) proved impossible, but, as my data suggested, the exploration process was valuable in itself.

Figure 16

Former Wingham Post Office. Presently the North Huron County Museum, 273 Josephine Street, Wingham, Ontario



Figure 17

Town Hall, 274 Josephine Street, Wingham, Ontario. Built in 1890: Houses the Council Chamber and Theatre, and Was the Former Location of the Wingham Library (Until 1980)



Exploration of Physical Structures

My itinerary included several physical structures (e.g., homes, places of business) described in the text that I was, ultimately, unable to find; however, the data indicated that exploring possibilities was valuable in itself. My search for the home of one of the text's minor characters illustrated this idea. In "Baptizing" Munro introduces the reader to Jerry Storey, a

classmate with a “brainy reputation” (p. 186) who becomes Del’s pseudo-boyfriend in her final year of high school. Jerry is an interesting foil to Del as he, in all his intellectual nerdiness, “conformed to type, accepting his role in Jubilee, his necessary and gratifying absurdity, with a fatalism, even gallantry, which [Del] would never have been able to muster” (p. 186). In the text, Munro describes Jerry’s home as “half of a double house out on the Diagonal Road” (p. 187). Given this textual detail and the fact that Diagonal Road is a real street in Winham, I thought I might be able to identify Jerry’s house (see Figure 18).

Figure 18

Diagonal Road, Winham. Street Sign (left) and One of the Duplexes on Diagonal Road (right)



As I explored this short (less than a kilometre in length) road, I found several old duplexes that could have been the physical structure on which Jerry’s home was based, but there

was no way to confirm which, if any, of them was indeed Jerry's house. However, as my during-experience recording showed, finding the exact physical structure was subordinate to the opportunities the search afforded:

I am currently searching for what could have been Jerry's house. There are a few possibilities. While I am cruising this road, I am well aware that I am searching for a house that may be completely fabricated, no longer exist, or could be one of many. My response as a reader-traveller is that I don't care. I in no way feel like I am wasting time or on a wild goose chase. As I am looking about, I am also thinking about Jerry's role in Del's life, in her development. ... Walking here, gives me a chance to think about how this character subtly gave Del another anvil against which she could bang herself out, like her mother used to be when she was younger. Jerry and the Nobel Prize comment, Jerry and his suggestion that Del's skill was memorization and the female gift for language and more. So, walking up this road, possibly searching for something that might not exist gives me a thrill and the chance to contemplate a minor character's role in the development of the protagonist more fully. (Entry 28, Day 5, lns. 64-78)

What is important here is that it was the *searching for* rather than the *finding of* elusive physical structures that provided opportunities for thrilling and contemplative textual engagement and reflection. That is, if I had an exact address, I likely would have found the house, taken a picture, and carried on; however, because I had no such clarity or certainty, I took on an exploratory stance which resulted in enriched interactions with both the possible physical structures and various elements of the text.

In this case, my understanding of the text was enriched because the search for Jerry's house gave me the opportunity to contemplate Munro's use of minor characters and characters

who served as foils to Del. Each of the characters in the book, like Jerry, served as an anvil against which Del shaped who she was. While walking up and down Diagonal Road, searching for but not finding Jerry's house, I gained a deeper understanding of how Munro used Del's interactions with these seemingly incidental characters to reveal Del's deep desire to escape the world of Jubilee, with its pretense and limitations. Upon reflection, Del admits,

We [she and Jerry] could not get away from the Jubilee belief that there are great, supernatural dangers attached to boasting, or having high hopes of yourself. Yet what really drew and kept us together were these hopes, both denied and admitted, both ridiculed and respected in each other. (Munro, *Lives of Girls and Women*, 1971/2005, p. 185)

In Jerry, Del found an obnoxious but kindred spirit. Through Jerry, Munro reveals Del's ambitious spirit. And, in my search for Jerry's house, I came to understand Jerry, Del, and Munro's artistry more fully.

Exploration of Geographic Locations

The exploratory stance activated while searching for but not finding certain physical structures was also present when I searched for elusive geographic locations. An example occurred on day three and involved the search for two obscure locations just beyond the town's perimeter. The first literary site was a spot at a river described in the text as near "Third Bridge" (p.220) and "Third Concession" road (p. 224), about "three and a half miles" (p. 224) north-west of town (see Figure 19). This was the location of Del's near drowning by Garnet, her love interest, described in "Baptizing." The second literary site was an off-the-beaten-path location described in the text as near a creek that could be reached by driving "south on the No. 4 Highway and turn[ing] down the first sideroad" (p. 157) (see Figure 20). This is the site,

described in the title chapter, “Lives of Girls and Women,” of Mr. Chamberlain’s inappropriate sexual behaviour.

Figure 19

Bridge Located North-West of Wingham. One of the Possible Locations for Del’s Incident With Garnet French



Figure 20

Secluded Location South of Wingham Off the No. 4 Highway. One of the Possible Locations for Del's Incident With Mr. Chamberlain



Despite several textual clues, Google maps, and time searching, neither location was found with certainty. However, rather than feel discouraged, I found the exploration in itself significant. This idea was evident in a recording I made immediately after this search:

Just got back from a fun sleuthing adventure ... I spent the last couple of hours trying to find both the site of Del's near drowning by Garnet and her walk back and the location of the Mr. Chamberlain debacle. Both of these moments are very disturbing in the book and so I felt a little strange enjoying myself during the search so much. Before heading out, I revisited "Lives" and "Baptizing" and looked on Google maps and gravelroad.com to try and figure out where these events might possibly have occurred. The book gives some

clues, the maps give others, but as I found out, there is no way to be sure. But my goodness, what fun. (Entry 17, Day 3, lns. 1-9)

This after-experience recording suggested that despite being aware “there [was] no way to be sure” (ln. 8) I had found either location, the search was a positive experience. The description of the experience as a “sleuthing adventure” indicated a playful attitude and the repetition of the word “fun” suggested that I enjoyed the process.

In addition to being a lot of fun, searching for locations that ultimately eluded certainty also gave rise, somewhat paradoxically, to meaningful explorations of the text and the area. This idea was evident in this same after-experience recording as discussed above. After searching but not finding the exact location of the Garnet and Mr. Chamberlain incidents, I discussed how failure could be productive:

I found several possibilities, but none of them seemed exactly right. Either they were too far from town, or too close to town, or weren't near a bridge, or didn't come out at Cemetery Road, or what have you. But, some of these same spots would have been exactly right. What I mean is, a couple of sites would have fit the scene or the spirit of the scene perfectly. Of course, I cannot help thinking about Munro's 'not real but true' idea. And that's exactly how I felt while searching. I'm not sure if I found the real spots, but I found several that felt true. (Entry 17, Day 3, lns. 20-25)

Of significance in this extract is my mention of “Munro's 'not real but true' idea” (ln. 24). To clarify, Del says these words in the concluding chapter of the text as she wrestles with “niggling considerations of fact” (p. 231) while constructing her novel. Though Del ultimately abandons this work of juvenilia, the process of planning it helps Del realise that in moving away from factual accuracy, the artist can fictionally represent what is “true” rather than factually present

what is “real”. Similarly, as I searched for indistinct or elusive locations, I found that in the absence of factual accuracy or certainty I began to explore the potential of various sites to be true if not real. That is, geographic ambiguity allowed me to look beyond text-geography parallels, and, in addition, explore how the essence or “spirit of the scene” (Entry 17, Day 3, ln. 23) was reflected in various locations.

Looking for physical locations that reflected the spirit of the fictional scene encouraged me to return to the text. In the case of the Mr. Chamberlain incident, I re-read the related passages with especial attention to atmosphere. Words and phrases I had read dozens of times suddenly took on increased significance: “the countryside I knew was altered by his presence, his voice” (p. 157); “I saw all this as a vast arrangement of hiding places” (p. 157); “down a slope between some hawthorn trees, in bloom, yeasty smelling” (p. 175). While searching and re-reading, Munro’s auditory, visual, and olfactory imagery became meaningful in ways I had not previously recognised. In that moment, Munro’s vivid language choices swirled together and informed my seeing—locations became plausible if they reflected the image Munro creates.

This exploration process did not result in firm answers, but as I said at the end of this after-experience recording, “I’m not sure it matters. Not finding the exact locations gave me a chance to dig into Del, the text, and the area in ways I probably wouldn’t have if the locations were easily found ... I am grateful for that” (Entry 17, Day 3, lns. 40-43). In this experience, and in others like it, exploration—or the opening up of possibility—was meaningful even if it did not, or perhaps because it did not, result in certainty.

Connection to the Literature: Exploration

The delight and significance I found in exploration is echoed in other literary travellers’ reactions as presented in the related literature. MacLeod et al. (2018) and Reijnders’ (2011)

questionnaire and interview data, for example, showed an appreciation of the search amongst participants. One of MacLeod et al.'s respondents expressed the pleasure of exploration: "[I] enjoy the hunt of finding places and identifying them to [my] own satisfaction ... the thrill of discovery" (p. 394, ellipsis in original). Notable here was the participant's inclusion of the word "hunt". For this respondent, identifying literary places in the material world was a part of the delight, but as she herself stated, the "hunt" (or search) was what she enjoyed. Without the exploration process, she would not have experienced "the thrill of discovery." The pleasure of exploration, even when identification of literary sites cannot be achieved with certainty, was also expressed in a comment by one of Reijnders' (2011) respondents:

It's like trying to work out something from clues. . . . To try to work out where these things would be. Where was Carfax? Where was the asylum, as it says in the book? . . . We do not know for sure, but it is certainly interesting to speculate on all these things. (p. 239, ellipses in original)

Reijnder's respondent's comment showed that an important dimension of his literary travel was exploration based on a close reading of the text and deductive reasoning. His comment revealed that a discovery, though not unwelcome, was not the primary source of delight; rather, what made his literary travel "interesting" was that it allowed him "to speculate on all these things." In other words, it was exploration (or the opening up of possibilities) in relation to literary site locations rather than finding sites with certainty that afforded him pleasure.

Perhaps the desire for and appreciation of exploration in literary travel that is evident in my data and in the aforementioned comments is to be expected. Afterall, Laing and Frost (2012) suggest that given the prevalence of journey narratives in literature, literary travellers might be "culturally acclimatised" (p. 1) to expect literary travel experiences that include exploration.

They determined that “books often make a promise to the reader that, if they travel, they too will have adventures and explore the world” and that there is a “need to examine and understand the ways in which books ... influence the general desires to travel and explore” (p. 3).

With Laing and Frost’s (2012) idea in mind, I considered how *Lives of Girls and Women* (1971/2005) might have influenced my desire for and appreciation of exploration in my literary travel experience. *Lives of Girls and Women* does not present travel in a literal sense, but because the book is both a bildungsroman and a künstlerroman it chronicles two important journeys: Del’s movement from childhood to adulthood and from observer to artist. Throughout, Del explores complex topics such as reality, death, knowledge, God, art, desire, love, and truth. Of significance is that as Del confronts each, she resists leaping after certainty and easy answers. Instead, she adopts an exploratory stance and accepts that at the core of life’s big questions lie paradox and ambiguity. Del’s acceptance of inconsistency and uncertainty is evident when, in the final moments of her story, she observes that “people’s lives, in Jubilee as elsewhere, were dull, simple, amazing and unfathomable—deep caves paved with kitchen linoleum” (p. 236). So, while Munro’s book does not depict travel in a literal sense, it certainly depicts journeys and profound explorations. In fact, at the heart of Munro’s text is the idea that even when exploration does not result in firm answers or certainty, it is a necessary and valuable process in itself.

Given this central thematic concern, it seems reasonable to suggest that my expectation of and appreciation for moments of exploration during my literary travel experience was influenced, to some extent, by this specific text. Further, analysis and interpretation of my literary travel experience data suggested that these moments of exploration allowed me to return to the text with fresh eyes. That is, as I combed the text in search of location-related details, I revisited site-related passages with an emphasis on atmosphere—both types of re-reading

resulted in a deeper understanding and appreciation of the text. Exploration may result in the filling in of gaps (concretisation), but the filling in of gaps (concretisation) is not a requirement of exploration. The data showed that exploration was a significant aspect of my literary travel experience and that the search was often as meaningful as the find.

Theme 3: Negotiation

My data revealed that lying alongside exploration were many moments of negotiation, making negotiation the third theme of my literary travel experience. Negotiation is an active process that aims to reach an understanding or compromise between two (or more) conflicting positions. Two significant areas of conflict which required on-going negotiation were evidenced in my data: first, my role as researcher often came into conflict with my role as fan; and second, the material reality of the location often came into conflict with my previously imagined version based on the text. As a result of these conflicting positions, I was often in a process of negotiation. Though negotiating between conflicting positions was arduous at times, the data revealed that it was often within these moments of negotiation that new understanding took shape. I begin this section by presenting my findings related to the negotiation between my role as researcher and as fan. Then, I present my findings related to my negotiation between the material reality and my imagined reality. I conclude by connecting my findings to the literature.

Negotiation Between Researcher and Fan

I set off to Huron County with the purpose of researching my lived experience of literary travel based on an author of whom, and a text of which, I am a fan. Accordingly, right from the start of this project my positions as researcher and fan were intertwined. Prior to my departure, I did not fully consider how these positions might conflict while moving through data-gathering experiences. Rightly or wrongly, I associated *researcher* with reason and emotional detachment

and *fan* with feeling and emotional engagement. I thought that to do good research I would have to keep my fandom at bay and foreground my position as researcher.

Early transcript data revealed that my attempt to control the presence or absence of these positions (and their cognitive or affective associations), despite my desire to do so, was futile. For example, on the first day of my research I visited Munro's/Del's childhood home (see Figure 21) and the road that leads to and away from it, Turnberry Street/Flats Road (see Figure 22). My decision to start my research there was informed by the centrality of this location in both Munro's real life and the text. And, while I anticipated having an emotional response to the location, I underestimated the intensity of that response and overestimated my ability to maintain academic detachment.

Figure 21

Alice Munro's Childhood Home at the End of Turnberry Street, Wingham

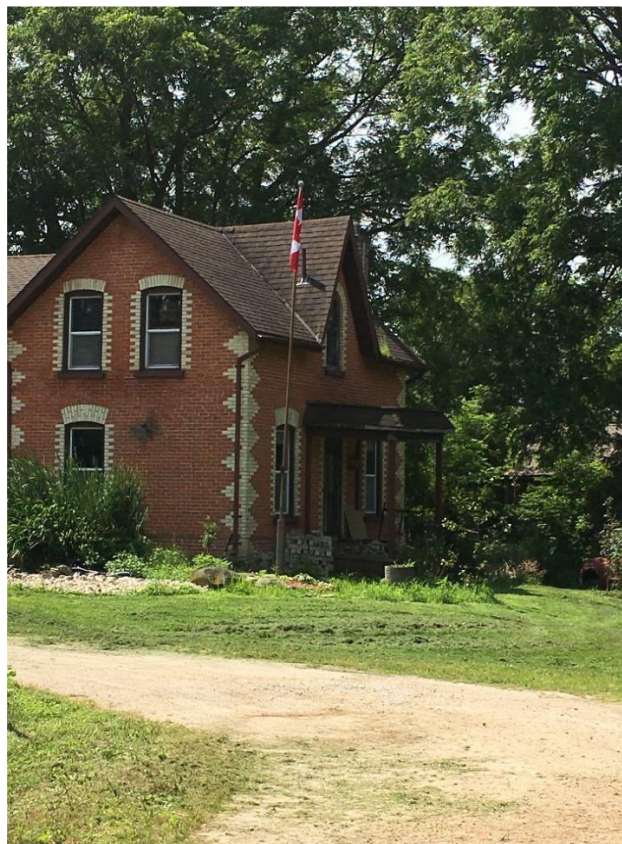


Figure 22*Turnberry Street, Wingham*

The corresponding during-experience transcript entry of this experience showed that despite my initial effort to maintain cool detachment, emotion infiltrated:

[I am] approaching Munro's house or what used to be Munro's house at the end of Flats Road, but which is actually Turnberry Street. Though I have seen pictures, the house is bigger than I imagined, for both Munro and Del. A house where people have lived close to the bone for generations, or something like that, is how Munro describes it. I can see an addition, but even the original structure is larger. As I stand here, I'm thinking of the description from "Flats Road" of Del upstairs while her parents play cards downstairs,

and how the upstairs felt for Del like a different world. I feel like I'm in a different world, actually. I'm going to stop for a second (recording paused). (Entry 4, Day 1, lns. 1-8)

The entry began with description, extra-textual information, and textual connection, indicating my attempt to use an academic, emotionally detached lens to record my experience; however, within moments, reason was overtaken by emotion—"I *feel* like I'm in a different world"—and I paused the recording. Two more false starts are evidenced in the entry, each beginning with a descriptive phrase and concluding with an abrupt pause:

(recording resumed) Following Del's walk or route to school. I am at the end of Flats Road, and I'm about to do Del's walk to the high school. And I will just press pause for a second (recording paused).

(recording resumed) Walking down Flats Road. I don't have a lot of thoughts. Ha.

Doesn't feel like a thinking moment. I feel uncomfortable and slightly agitated, actually.

I'll try later. (Entry 4, Day 1, lns. 9-13)

What I described, in the moment, as discomfort and agitation was, at least in part, fueled by the realisation I was not going to be able to keep my fan-associated emotions at bay and that my plan to be governed by an academic, cool detachment was unsustainable. Rather than integrating my emotional response to the location into my reaction (and the recording of that reaction) and recognising it as valid and important, I paused the recording, artificially suppressing my fan-position emotional response and artificially foregrounding my researcher-position reason.

Being in this location (Munro's/Del's home and attached road) elicited overwhelming emotion. Even after several hours had passed, I was still struggling to explain my reaction to this site: "I don't know what my deal is, but I feel simultaneously delighted, in awe, embarrassed. I don't know why embarrassed. Maybe stunned a little bit. I really couldn't record while walking, I

felt stunned” (Entry 8, Day 1, lns. 7-9). This extract showed that in addition to feeling overwhelmed by emotion as the word “stunned” implied, I also felt “embarrassed” and disappointed by this response. Further, the phrase, “I don’t know what my deal is” suggested frustration at my inability to separate or integrate reason and emotion, or researcher and fan.

Fortunately, as my six-day research-travel experience unfolded, I began to appreciate the various and often contrasting insights my dual position of researcher and fan could offer to my literary travel experience. Though it must be acknowledged that no other location was quite as emotionally charged for me as Munro’s/Del’s house and the attached road, my trip was made up of many sites of significance that evoked strong emotional reactions. However, rather than trying to suppress these emotional responses, I increasingly allowed them to co-mingle with my more academic or intellectual reactions. Rather than attempting to control these positions, I began to negotiate between them, often inviting them to co-exist.

This increasing ability to negotiate between my fan and researcher positions is evidenced in a recording I made on Day 3 while I walked-and-read myself into and through town. I started on a rise on No. 4 Highway (see Figure 23) and walked into town, stopping often to read associated passages from the text. This experience was prompted by a passage in the book:

Jubilee was visible from a rise about three miles away, on the No. 4 Highway. Between us and it lay the river-flats, flooded every spring, and the hidden curve of the Wawanash river, and the bridge over it, painted silver, hanging in the dusk like a cage. The No. 4 Highway was also the main street of Jubilee. We could see the towers of the Post Office and the Town Hall facing each other, the Town Hall with its exotic cupola hiding the legendary bell ... and the Post Office with its clock-tower, square, useful, matter-of-fact. (Munro, *Lives of Girls and Women*, 1971/2005, p. 65)

This was an emotional experience; however, rather than feeling stunned or overwhelmed by emotion and embarrassed by this emotional engagement, I described the experience as “Lovely, actually. Delightful. Complicated. Meaningful. Confusing. Significant” (Entry 16, Day 3, lns. 25-26). This litany of adjectives containing descriptive words associated with both cognitive and affective responses (in tandem with my ability to continue recording throughout the experience) showed that I was able increasingly to negotiate between rather than restrict or emphasise aspects of my fan-self and researcher-self.

Figure 23

View of Wingham, Ontario, From the Rise on the No. 4 Highway



As a result of this on-going negotiation, I came to understand the dichotomy between academic reason and fan emotion as false. Academics can feel passionate about their subjects;

fans can think rationally about theirs. Actively and gradually negotiating between reason and emotion allowed me to learn that I am the type of qualitative researcher who, if I want to do honest work, cannot separate the two, and that it is as a result of these faculties working together that fresh and interesting discoveries may be found.

Negotiation Between Material Reality and Imagined Reality

Another area of negotiation was between the material reality of the location and my previous imaginings of it based on close readings of *Lives of Girls and Women* (1971/2005). I first read *Lives of Girls and Women* when I was a teen, and I have read it numerous times since. Over these re-readings, Munro's detailed descriptions of place in partnership with my imagination allowed me to add layers of detail to my imagined rendering of the book's setting with each re-reading. In my mind's eye, textually significant locations (e.g., Del's house, the Post Office, or the Town Hall) existed not as amorphous, fabricated entities but as firm, real structures, constructed imaginatively but no less "real" than places constructed of brick and mortar. Thus, prior to my travels, the literary places on my itinerary existed as "imagined realities," not literally or materially real but real, nonetheless. Accordingly, I began my literary travel experience with some fear that in coming into contact with material reality, my imagined reality would be damaged: "that in seeing it I won't be able to ... unsee it" (Entry 2, Day 1, ln. 6). However, rather than material reality running roughshod over my imagined reality, as I had initially feared, the data suggested that negotiation between these equally potent realities dominated my experiences. In my experience, the process of negotiation created new understandings of both significant literary locations and the book as a whole.

The negotiation between imagined reality and material reality began early in my literary travel experience. On Day 1, while visiting Munro's/Del's home, my previously imagined home

came up against the concrete house in front of me. In an after-experience recording I commented that during the experience, “I was also struck by a feeling that I was navigating multiple layers. Munro’s house, Del’s house, some other person’s house, my imagined house, the real house, and probably more, all layered on top of each other” (Entry 8, Day 1, lns. 22-24). The word “layer” (and its variations) is mentioned repeatedly in the transcript. Each time, as in this example, the word choice indicated that rather than replacing my imagined reality (e.g., Del’s house at the end of Flats Road), the material reality (the physical house at the end of Turnberry Street) was added onto my imagined one. Though I no longer had my purely imagined reality, neither was that version usurped by the material reality—they co-existed and I had to move between them.

This movement, or negotiation, between imagined and material realities was a persistent dimension of my literary travel experience, and I struggled consistently to articulate what the negotiation felt like. For example, during a stop in front of the Post Office (see Figure 24), during my Day 3 walk-and-read through town experience, I attempted to express what it felt like to have both versions (imagined and material) co-exist:

I feel like I am mapping or layering. What do I mean? My imagined version of this site is meeting the real and I feel like a computer a bit, like my imagined image is being digitally produced and animated while the new one is being layered on top or that my imagined image is encircling the real one. I probably sound like a crazy person, but there is a mental negotiation going on in my mind, that’s for sure. (Entry 16, Day 3, lns. 81-85)

Several words and phrases in this extract show my attempt to express what the process was like. For example, the computer simile, with its associated animation capacity, attempted to articulate the idea that rather than being overwritten, my previously imagined version of the location was brought more fully into being—made more dynamic, more vibrant—as a result of being in the

presence of the corresponding material structure. Further, the word “encircling” in the phrase “imagined image is encircling the real one” emphasised the comingling of imagined reality and material reality, while simultaneously highlighting that I felt like this process was active and on-going.

Figure 24

Wingham Post Office From 1907-1968



Note: The engraved E. R. is in honour of Edward VII. In 1977, the Post Office became the North Huron Museum.

Within this active and on-going negotiation between material and imagined realities, new, additional versions of the location emerged. This idea is evidenced in a recording I made after visiting the Town Hall. The Town Hall houses the Council Chambers (see Figure 25), the Wingham Theatre (see Figure 26), and until 1980, the Wingham Library (see Figure 27):

Not sure if this is actually related to liminal space, but it [my view of the council chambers and the theatre] feels like an in-between or threshold space or even a space of transition.... I am thrust into this space where my imaginings, all of them, are also having to integrate or negotiate with new, material versions of the place. It feels like what is happening is the formation of in-between versions comprised of my imagined view of the place and the real one. These new versions don't fully feel like either. (Entry 26, Day 5, lns. 35-43)

These new versions were made up of details from both the physical location and my previous imaginings of the location. In other words, this new version or versions existed in a space between the material and imaginative realms. I referred to this space as "liminal space" several times in the transcript. *Liminal* is defined as "1. of, related to, or being situated at a threshold; 2. of, related to, or being in an intermediate state, phase, or condition" (Merriam-Webster.com, n.d.). My use of this term showed that when the material reality of a location came into contact with my imagined reality of the same location, new, in-between versions of the location were created. The material location did not dominate, nor did my previously imagined version resist adjustment. Rather, I consistently negotiated between these versions, and it was through this negotiation process that a new understanding of the literary location and, as a result, a deeper understanding of the work as a whole were generated.

Figure 25

Council Chambers in the Wingham Town Hall

**Figure 26**

Wingham Theatre in the Wingham Town Hall



This deepened understanding of the text is evident in my experience with the library. In material reality, the space in the Town Hall that once served as the Wingham Public Library (1890-1980), upon which Munro based the library in *Lives of the Girls and Women*, is now an office space. Though the room remains the same in size and position, it is no longer the library. Given the significance of the library as a place of escape and imaginative delight for Del—"I was happy in the Library. Walls of printed pages, evidence of so many created worlds—this was a comfort to me" (p. 121)—I had imbued the library with a special glow of significance in my previously imagined version of this space. In my mind's eye, the library existed in a spotlight and sparkled with importance. However, in confronting the material reality of the library, the glow, sparkle, and spotlight dimmed a little. In the after-experience recording, I described this dissolution:

I mean, it's no longer a library, so I couldn't, I couldn't look around and think 'holy, look at all these books,' but actually what I did think was, 'holy, this space is really small and really ordinary.' It is much smaller than I imagined and very plain in terms of its shape, a rectangle really, with nothing magical about it. (Entry 25, Day 5, lns. 19-23)

At the end of the same recording, however, I suggested that I couldn't fully abandon my previously imagined version and acknowledged their co-existence: "The library space in real life seemed more like Naomi's library. Plain. But I cannot forget that it was also Del's library which did glow" (Entry 25, Day 5, lns. 35-36).

Through in situ negotiation, a new version of the library emerged in my imagination—it was now an ordinary place while maintaining an extraordinary capacity. This new version infiltrated my subsequent readings of the library sections in the text, and thus allowed me to consider the fictional library in alternative ways. Rather than simply seeing the library as a

beacon of hope or source of adventure for Del, after my literary travel experience, I saw it as an additional example of one of the text's central motifs: the co-existence of the ordinary and the extraordinary.

Figure 27

Former Location of the Wingham Library



In the library example, and in others like it, the incongruity between the material reality of the physical location and my imagined reality of it opened up an opportunity to negotiate a new or revised version of the literary space. This revised version was then brought back to the text, which allowed for a richer, fuller contemplation of significant thematic ideas.

Connection to the Literature: Negotiation Between Researcher and Fan

I am not alone in the struggle to negotiate between fan and researcher whilst completing academic work. This challenge was shared by Professor Montz (2016) as she prepared for and engaged in research (which included literary travel) related to Elizabeth Gaskell and Jane Austen. In her article, she chronicled the struggle between her critic-self and her fan-self,

confessing that in moments of emotion she would deride herself saying, “We as critics are meant to be embarrassed by our overflow of emotions. This is serious work. This is Literature” (p. 58). Montz, however, learned to negotiate between and embrace both her rational and emotional responses, ultimately claiming that “where the critic thrives ... is in those moments evoking both love and critical understanding” (p. 58).

However, not all academics find publicly declaring the shared role of fan and critic in academia, even when they acknowledge its presence, quite as acceptable. This idea is evident in an article written by “Professor Benton” (2006) wherein he discussed the shared role of fan and critic in his work on Walt Whitman. Though the professor freely admits that “scholarship is guided by private feelings and intuitions” (p. 1) and that his “scholarly work gains momentum” when he gives himself “over to the spiritual and emotional impulses that [his] rational self wants to dismiss” (p. 3), the last line of the article noted that “Professor Benton” is a pseudonym for an English professor “at a Midwestern liberal-arts college” (p. 3). The use of the pseudonym indicated that despite effectively negotiating between these conflicting aspects, he dared not publicly admit it.

I confess that while I gradually embraced these conflicting roles during my literary travel experience, I felt a renewed struggle to acknowledge my fan-self and my emotional responses while moving through the data analysis and interpretation process. Dwelling in and interacting with the transcript forced me to confront anew (and repeatedly) the powerful emotions that visiting sites of significance related to Munro and *Lives of Girls and Women* (1971/2005) elicited. At first, I wished that I could delete these moments of emotion from the record, but I ultimately accepted them as reader responses that deserved examination. Again, I negotiated

between reason and emotion to discover that good qualitative research requires the researcher to bring her whole being to the endeavour.

Connection to the Literature: Negotiation Between Material and Imagined Realities

My negotiation between imagined and material realities is consistent with the findings in the related literature (e.g., Anderson, 2014; Anderson & Saunders, 2015; Anderson & Smith, 2019; Lee, 2012; McLaughlin, 2016; Orr, 2018). Of significance is human geography professor Jon Anderson's (2014) work on the "reciprocal relations between page and place" (2014, p. 15). In his book (2014) and articles (2015, 2019), Anderson and colleagues argued that a reader's literary (or imagined) sense of place can influence how a literal (or material) place is perceived as much as a reader's experience of a literal (or material) place can inform how the corresponding literary (or imagined) place is understood. In other words, Anderson recognized the "permeable membrane between literature and geography" (2014, p. 15) as he and his colleagues explored "how lived geographies seep into imagined ones and how imagined ones spill beyond the confines of the page" (Anderson & Saunders, 2015, p. 116).

More specifically, Anderson and Smith's (2019) study of literary travel experiences in connection with Malcolm Pryce's novel *Aberystwyth, Mon Amour* (2001) revealed that literary travellers consistently negotiated between their imagined realities of the book's setting and the material realities presented within the tour of Aberystwyth, a small town on the west coast of Wales. Among other things, in their study they found that this literary travel event brought together participants' "socio-spatial identity; their version of the novel created through imaginative reading; and, the geographies of the literary tour" (p. 5), and that in this bringing-together, the participants began to "entertain a relational 'complex of multiple imaginations and realities'" (p. 13). In other words, rather than simply acknowledging a material location as a

more or less accurate representation of the fictional location created in their imaginations (or vice versa), Anderson and Smith observed their participants “journey into what for them was becoming a ‘real-and-imagined’ world” (p. 13). Anderson and Smith’s use of hyphens to join “real-and-imagined” emphasised that as a result of their participants’ negotiation between material and imagined reality, a new, hybrid world—made up of details from both the material and the imaginative realms—was generated.

Similarly, cultural studies professor, Christina Lee (2018), observed how the negotiation between material and imagined realities, which she calls “actuality” and “virtuality” respectively (p. 62), can be a valuable process. Lee argued that visiting sites of literary or cinematic significance can cause “spatial disjunctures” (p. 62)—a conflict or incongruity between what is and what was imagined—but that these spatial disjunctures are important for they “create spaces of potentiality” (p. 62). It is within these spaces, Lee contended, that the literary traveller takes on a creative role (“like the film-maker,” p. 63), actively negotiating between and adapting actual and virtual details to create “something new” (p. 63).

As I moved through my literary travel experience, I consistently engaged in negotiation between imagined and material realities, which produced “something new” (Lee, 2018, p. 63). Not only did I create “new versions” (Entry 26, Day 5, ln. 43) of literary sites mentioned in the text, I also created a new version of the text as a whole. That is, spending time at sites that forced “spatial disjuncture” (Lee, 2018, p. 62) also served to break my habituated way of seeing the text and, thus, encouraged me to explore the text with fresh eyes. As a result, my reading of *Lives of Girls and Women* (1971/2005) was enriched.

Theme 4: Connection

Keene and Zimmerman (1997) maintained that a reader's understanding and appreciation of a text is enhanced through the making of frequent and meaningful connections: text-to-self, text-to-world, and text-to-text connections. As I visited various sites in Huron County, I experienced many moments of connection, making connection the fourth theme of my literary travel experience. I experienced deep and varied connections while visiting sites related to Munro's biography but not necessarily related to this particular text. Additionally, given the autobiographical nature of this text, many sites on my itinerary evoked author and text connections simultaneously.

Connection to Author

Literary biographer, Jackson Benson (1989), claimed that "discovering an author as a unique individual" is necessary "before we can fully comprehend an author's writings" (p. 108). During my time in Huron County, I visited a number of sites that did not explicitly relate to *Lives of Girls and Women* (1971/2005), but which allowed me "to reach out to recognize [Munro's] uniqueness" (p. 108). The data showed that, somewhat paradoxically, in coming to more fully perceive Munro as a unique individual (as someone separate and distinct from me), I felt an increased connection to both her and the text.

This idea was evident in my visit to the North Huron Museum's Alice Munro exhibit (see Figure 28), housed in what was once the Wingham Post Office. The small exhibit contains, among other things, various artefacts related to Munro's early writing career such as her old writing desk, typewriter (see Figure 29), and fountain pens (see Figure 30). Seeing these objects, many of which are now antiquated, reminded me that Munro began writing in a time very different from mine. Her experience as a woman writing in the 1960s would have included

challenges not felt by most female writers in the 21st century. This confrontation with an aspect of Munro's biography increased my understanding of Munro as a unique individual, whose writing life would have been influenced by the unique challenges associated with the period in which she wrote. At the same time, however, visiting the exhibit facilitated deep connection to Munro. In an after-experience recording, I commented on the intensity of the feeling:

Sitting at Munro's old desk, my fingers on her old typewriter, felt mystical. I hate to say it, because I know I'm going to sound like a flake, but it felt a little magical or even spiritual. (Entry 21, Day 4, lns. 50-51)

The word "spiritual" in this extract was not hyperbolic. In that moment, my heart rate increased, my ears rang, and I felt outside of myself—I seemed to enter another domain, a domain I do not fully understand, but that felt quasi-religious.

Figure 28

Alice Munro Exhibit Located at the North Huron Museum, 273 Josephine Street, Wingham

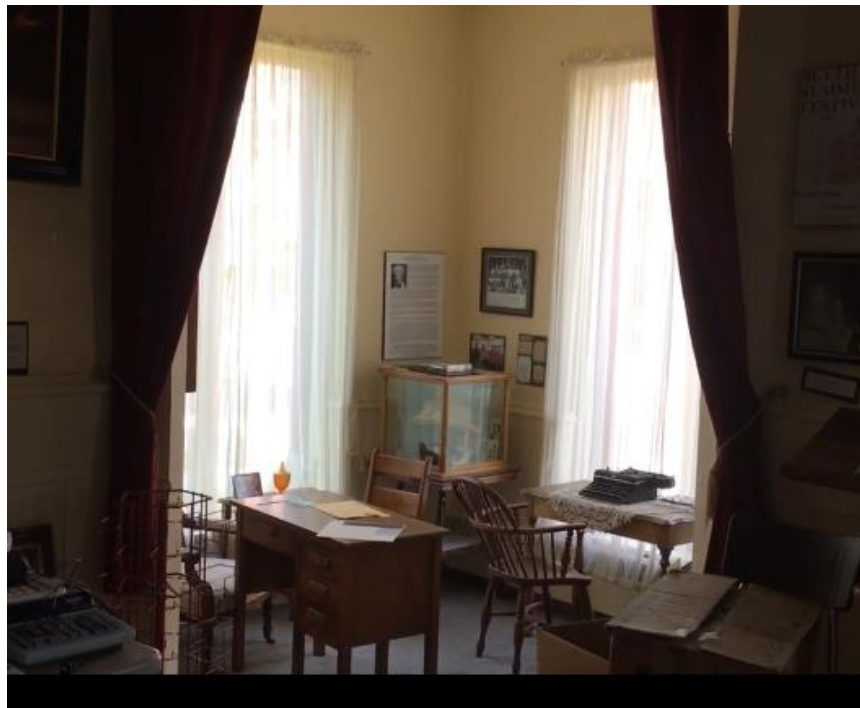


Figure 29

Alice Munro's Royal Typewriter



Figure 30

Alice Munro's Fountain Pens From Her School Days



I experienced a similar feeling of intense connection at the Alice Munro Literary Garden (see Figure 31). The quaint garden chronicles Munro's publication history, with the title and date of each work engraved into separate steppingstones along two converging paths. At the convergence is an archway, under which is the largest stone, marking Munro's 2013 Nobel Prize for Literature. The location's content and layout made Munro's long and successful writing career physical, which allowed me to walk metaphorically back through Munro's writing history.

Through my interactions with this literary site, I was able to consider who Munro was (e.g., where she was living, whether she was still married, whether her children were toddlers or teens) at the time of each publication whilst simultaneously paying tribute to the writer whose work has had such a profound impact on me:

I'm sitting in her garden, a place built to honour her, and I feel close to her. Each stone, each book, gives me a chance to honour her, think back to who she was when she wrote each one, who I was when I read them. You know, I do feel very much like I did in the Munro corner. I feel that this place, sitting here, it feels like a spiritual moment, and for the record, I'm not a spiritual person. I feel a sense of hush, a calm, quiet connection. A chance to contemplate and pay respect. (Entry 31, Day 6, lns. 5-10)

My use of phrases such as "calm, quiet connection" and "contemplate and pay respect" to describe this experience intimated that in this location I possessed an attitude of reverence toward and a feeling of communion with Munro. Though I am wary to equate my literary travel experience with religious experience, my data suggested that these locations fostered a transcendental connection with Munro.

Figure 31

Alice Munro Literary Garden, Wingham, Ontario



Like the exhibit and literary garden, visiting Alice Munro's former home in Clinton, Ontario (see Figure 32) provided an opportunity for connection. Clinton is approximately 35 kilometres south of Wingham, and Munro lived and wrote there from 1975 to 2019. Visiting this site gave me the opportunity to think about Munro as a unique individual and also draw parallels between Munro's life and mine. In an after-experience recording, I attempted to articulate this duality:

I must admit that while standing in front of the house, I imagined Munro and Fremlin in their writing spots, loving each other and their work. I saw Munro, in mid-life, working hard, struggling but succeeding at what she loved to do. I marvelled that that was the place where Munro wrote so many of her books, some of my favourites, *Progress of Love* and *Open Secrets*, just there in that little house, around my age, writing. Gives me faith, actually. (Entry 12, Day 2, lns. 12-16)

While standing in front of this home, I envisioned Munro in her late 40s, sitting at her desk in front of an upper storey window, struggling, as Thacker (2011) suggested she often did, to adequately express life's mysteries. Alongside this recognition of Munro's uniqueness, however, was a moment of personal connection. Embedded in this extract and, more specifically, in the phrase, "Gives me faith, actually," are the unsaid parallels I drew between my life and Munro's (circa 1975) while standing in front of her former home. Being there allowed me to consider Munro as a unique individual but also as a woman with whom I connect.

Figure 32

Alice Munro's Former Home (1975-2019) in Clinton, Ontario



These site-inspired author connections have deepened my appreciation of *Lives of Girls and Women*. As Benson (1989) contended,

It is our sense of a writer, a person, behind the text that gives the text its meaning One of the most important functions of literature is to provide evidence that in our thoughts and feelings we are not alone. A machine might say the words, but we would know that the machine lies. A real author behind the writing encourages belief and trust, the kind of trust that is necessary if literature is going to challenge us to expand our sympathy and understanding in difficult ways. (p. 109)

My time spent at sites related to Munro's biography but not explicitly connected to the text (e.g., the Munro exhibit, the literary garden, her former home in Clinton) allowed me to develop a deeper sense of Munro as an individual—as a real, living, breathing person behind the words on

the page. From this recognition, emerged a deep feeling of connection to the author. From this connection, a deeper appreciation of the text was born.

Connection to Text and Author Simultaneously

Given the autobiographical nature of *Lives of Girls and Women* (1971/2005), many sites on my itinerary elicited a connection to the text and author simultaneously. The data showed that these connections often arrived unbidden and with force. Ignition-related diction such as “rapid-fire connections” (Entry 3, Day 1, ln. 7), “firecrackers going off” (Entry 16, Day 3, ln. 51), or “spark plugs firing” (Entry 26, Day 5, ln. 46) were used to describe the sudden and powerful connections to text and author that being in certain locations activated.

As many critics, and Munro herself, have noted, Del’s world was based on Munro’s world (McIntyre, 2013; Munro, 1998; Simonds, 2016; Staines, 2016; Thacker, 1984/2016, 1988/2016, 2011), and, thus, it is unsurprising that I consistently felt connections to both the author and text at the same time. For example, while I stood on the stage of the Wingham Theatre, I thought simultaneously of Del’s performance as peasant dancer in her school’s production of the *Pied Piper* (described in “Changes and Ceremonies”) and of Munro’s performance of the same role in the same Operetta in 1944 (Thacker, 2011, p. 75). Or, while I drove around Huron County’s countryside (see Figure 33), images of Del’s encyclopedia-selling country travels with her mother (described in “Princess Ida”) emerged alongside Munro’s comments that she “loved that countryside more than any other” (cited in Thacker, 2011, p. 275).

Figure 33*Huron County Countryside*

Many locations took on a dual significance—I saw sites as a link to Munro and as a link to Del simultaneously. Reality and fiction merged, and I felt connected to both at one-and-the-same time. A during-experience recording of my visit to the location where the Wingham and District High School once stood (see Figure 34) showed this parallel connection:

The original building is no longer here, the radio station CKNX sits on the site now and the new high school stands just to the left. Nonetheless, standing where the building once stood, thinking of the picture of it in Thacker’s book, of the article about the school’s history in the Clinton Times. I cannot also help but think of Del and Naomi’s increasing division as Naomi headed to the third floor, the commercial program, and Del stayed downstairs in the academic program. Of course, I am also thinking about Munro’s

academic journey at the same time. Her struggles at home, Miss Boe, her determination to get top marks. And then there is Del's isolation as she pushes to excel. Both women's persistence and desire to carve out a 'self-created self.' I feel it, I feel their longing for independence and success. (Entry 28, Day 5, lns. 42-51)

This extract showed that while I stood at a site related to both the author and the text, I recognised the location's dual significance and, thus, the location prompted both author and textual connections. Moreover, these site-induced-connections were personal. I was not only reminded of textual or extra-textual details (text-to-text connections), but I was also connecting to Del and Munro on a personal level: "Both women's persistence and desire to carve out a 'self-created self.' I feel it, I feel their longing for independence and success" (lms. 49-51). These personal connections—text-to-self connections—allowed me to more fully understand and appreciate the text. In places like the former site of the high school, and others like it, I felt Del's and Munro's struggle to become someone beyond the ready-made roles prescribed by society.

Figure 34

Former Site of the Wingham and District High School; Now the Location of the Region's Radio Station, CKNX



This struggle to break free from the confines of a narrow-minded community is chronicled in Thacker's (2011) biography of Munro and in "Baptising," the second-to-last chapter of *Lives of Girls and Women*. As Munro and Del moved through adolescence into young adulthood, they confronted their communities' oppressive and cynical question: "Who do you think you are?" (p. 181). Rather than giving in to expectation, both pushed back: "I was not going to be able to do it. No" (p. 181). Prior to my literary travel experience, I understood, on a cognitive level, the courage that such independence would require. However, standing on the site of the high school where Munro once stood, where Del once stood, allowed me to feel rather than understand their bravery. This personal connection allowed me to engage with the text and

with information about Munro in ways hitherto unknown—I began to relate to both on a personal level in new ways.

These simultaneous text and author connections also occurred, unexpectedly, in locations I had initially associated strictly with Munro’s biography. Several of these unexpected, simultaneous text and author connections happened on a day I had labelled in my fieldnotes as “Day 2—Munro Biography Day.” In a before-experience recording, I indicated that I thought the day would afford opportunities to connect with the author: “I expect today to be about filling out or putting the skin on my understanding of Munro’s biography” (Entry 9, Day 2, lns. 12-13). The day’s itinerary included driving around Huron County and visiting what Thacker called “Munro’s postage stamp of the earth” (cited in Foran, 2009, September). My route included stops in the small hamlets of Belgrave, Marnoch, and Blyth and in the towns of Clinton and Goderich. In addition, I visited three cemeteries (Wingham, Brandon-Belgrave, and Blyth Union) where I spent time at the gravesites of several of Munro’s family members.

It was at these cemeteries where I felt the unexpected, simultaneous connection to both Munro and *Lives of Girls and Women*. For example, at the Wingham cemetery, while standing at Munro’s parents’ (Anne E. Chamney and Robert E. Laidlaw) gravesite (see Figure 35), I felt compelled to pay respect to Munro’s parents and Del’s parents too (Entry 10, Day 2). Similarly, finding Munro’s Uncle Alex Porterfield’s grave at the Brandon-Belgrave cemetery (see Figure 36), allowed me to recognise and celebrate the fictional Uncle Craig: “I can’t help thinking I am also visiting Uncle Craig’s grave” (Entry 10, Day 2, lns. 14-15). Though the locations visited on this day did allow me to connect with Munro—evident in after-experience recordings when I said, “I feel like Munro’s little shadow today” (Entry 13, Day 2, lns. 11-12) and “I really do feel

like I have walked in Munro’s footsteps today” (Entry 15, Day 2, ln. 1)—they also allowed for unexpected connections to the text too.

By visiting these locations, I was granted an opportunity to connect to Alice Munro’s history, to connect to her protagonist’s struggles, and to connect to the symbiotic relationship between Munro’s real life and her fictional construction of it—all at the same time. More significantly, my literary travel allowed me to connect to the world of the text in a personal way, which opened up an emotional rather than cognitive understanding of both the author and the characters in her fictional world.

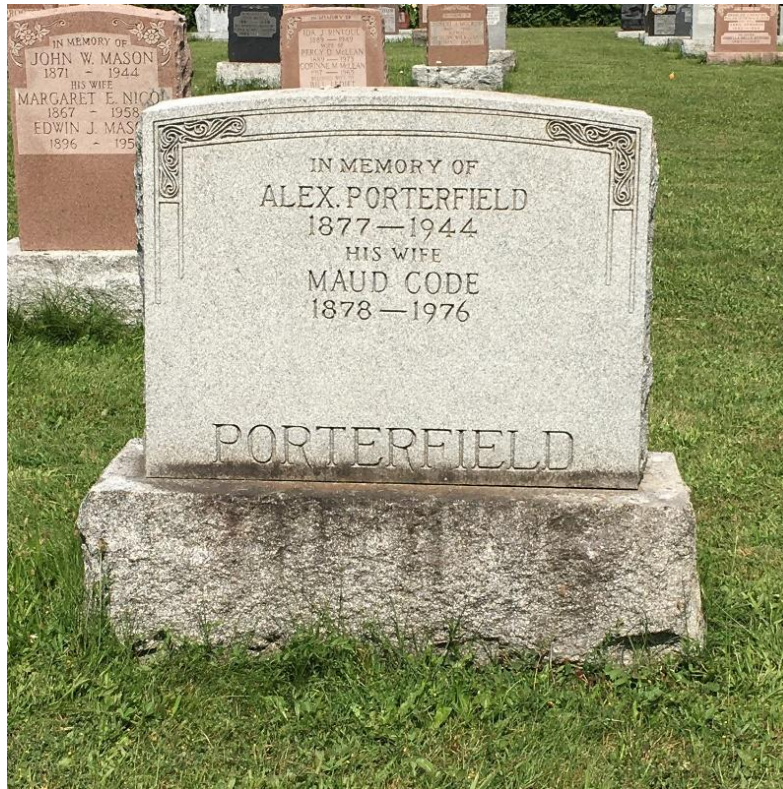
Figure 35

Wingham Cemetery: Headstone of Alice Munro’s Parents, Anne C. Chamney and Robert E. Laidlaw



Figure 36

Brandon-Belgrave Cemetery: Headstone of Alice Munro's Uncle Alex and Aunt Maud Porterfield

***Connection to the Literature: Connection***

That literary travellers desire and experience a sense of connection to authors and their creations is well-documented in the literature (e.g., Brown, 2016; Montz, 2016; Orr, 2018; Reijnders, 2011; Robinson, 2002). Visiting literary sites connected to biographical details, such as authors' homes (e.g., MacLeod, 2021), gravesites (e.g., Brown, 2016), and monuments (e.g., Magner, 2020), in addition to real-world locations that correspond to fictional constructions (e.g., Gothie, 2016), offer readers the opportunity to minimise the distance between themselves and the creator and the created. In her discussion of literary travellers' "search for connection" (Orr, 2018, p. 253), Orr argued that these types of sites act as "conduits" (p. 250) for fans desiring

connection with authors on a personal level. Further, Reijnders (2011) described how being at a literary location gave his respondents “the feeling that they were making a ‘connection’” (p. 242) to the text; an idea he supported with one of his study’s participant’s comments: “It is not so much that you are reading something, which is a separate thing from you. [Being there] you can almost imagine yourself being in the novel” (p. 242). Evident in this comment is the idea that for some readers, literary travel blurs the line between reader and author or between the reader and the fictional creation. This blurring enables the literary traveller to experience an enhanced sense of connection to both.

As the data indicated, my literary travel experience provided me with moments of profound connection to both Alice Munro and to the characters in her fictional world. Walking in Munro’s and Del’s footsteps, standing on the stage where they once stood, and staring at a site like the high school that played a key role in both of their becomings, minimised the distance, if only temporarily or figuratively, between me and an author I admire and a literary work I cherish. The minimisation of distance allowed me to develop a heightened sense of personal-emotional connection with the author and the text. This connection was then infused into my reading of *Lives of Girls and Women*, enriching and enhancing my understanding and appreciation of it.

Summary

In this chapter, I presented the findings of my study. I began by situating my findings within MacLeod et al.’s (2018) work and offered a model of my literary travel experience. The model visually represented the four themes of my lived experience of literary travel as a reader: concretisation, exploration, negotiation, and connection. I then, in turn, outlined and discussed each of the four themes. Throughout this chapter, I also illustrated my lived literary travel

experiences with excerpts from the transcript of my audio recordings created in situ and photographs taken at various locations visited during my time in this literary landscape. At the end of each theme section, I connected my findings to the related literature.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

In this chapter I remind the reader of the purpose of this study and the research question that guided my exploration. I then present an overview of my research context and methods. Next, I provide a summary of my findings and my reflections on them. From there I acknowledge my study's limitations and make recommendations for further research. I conclude the chapter and the thesis with a few closing remarks.

Restatement of Purpose and Research Question

The purpose of this qualitative self-study was to explore the experience of reading and being a reader within sites of literary significance. More specifically, the following question guided my research: What is my experience as a reader of Alice Munro's *Lives of Girls and Women* while visiting sites of significance related to the author and the text?

Summary of Research Context and Research Methods

In order to investigate my research question, I travelled to Huron County in southwestern Ontario and visited literary sites related to Alice Munro and her book, *Lives of Girls and Women* (1971/2005). These literary sites included towns and hamlets, such as Wingham and Marnoch; geographic features, for example, the Maitland River; buildings, including the Post Office and Town Hall; landmarks, like the Wingham Cenotaph and the Fair Grounds; and, rural landscapes, such as the land between Wingham and Goderich. Most of literary sites connected to both Alice Munro and *Lives of Girls and Women*, though some did not. Some sites related to biographical information more explicitly, such as Munro's former home in Clinton and the North Huron Museum Alice Munro exhibit. Using systematic self-observation (Gorichanaz, 2018; Rodriguez & Ryave, 2002), I documented my reactions as a reader-traveller in my reflective research journal and interval audio-recordings. In total, I created 33 interval audio recordings: seven

before-experience, 15 during-experience, and 11 after-experience. Using an auto-hermeneutic phenomenological approach (Lindseth & Norberg, 2004; Suddick et al., 2020), I analysed and interpreted the data and identified four main themes characterised my literary travel experience as a reader: concretisation, exploration, negotiation, and connection.

Summary of Findings by Theme

In the next section, I summarise my findings by theme. I begin with concretisation, followed by exploration and negotiation, and conclude with connection.

Concretisation

As MacLeod et al.'s (2018) study suggested, my lived experience of literary travel included concretisation. That is, as I visited sites of literary significance, “spots of indeterminacy” (Ingarden, 1973, p. 338) in the text were filled in. Concrete information about minimally developed details—such as the way a particular building looked or the distance from point A to point B—was acquired, which allowed for the completion of gaps. Moreover, as I acquired concrete details related to various sites, my previous imaginings of the sites were solidified. This new knowledge and solidification were then taken back to the text, which resulted in a fuller understanding of the book and an enhanced appreciation of Munro's artistry.

Exploration

In contrast to the certainty that concretisation provided, my lived experience of literary travel also included exploration—an opening up of possibilities rather than a clarification of them. There were moments in my experience when finding exact physical structures and geographic locations proved impossible. Rather than feel discouraged, I found the search process exhilarating and meaningful. The elusiveness of some literary sites forced me to look beyond text-geography parallels, which encouraged a return to the text with renewed attention to

Munro's narrative elements (such as her use of foil characters) and descriptive details. As a result, I contemplated various literary locations and the text as a whole in more complex and nuanced ways.

Negotiation

Throughout my literary travel, I consistently experienced negotiation within two areas of conflict: first, between my role as researcher and my role as fan; second, between the material reality of the location and my previously imagined version. I found that it was often within this negotiation process that new or expanded understanding developed. Through the negotiation between my role as researcher and my role as fan, I came to understand the dichotomy between academic reason and fan emotion as a false one. Further, through the negotiation between material reality and my imagined reality, new and additional versions of the literary sites emerged that brought together elements of both. As I integrated these new real-and-imagined versions of various literary sites into my reading, my habituated ways of seeing the text were disrupted. This disruption allowed for a renewed contemplation of several of the book's thematic concerns, which resulted in a deepened understanding and enhanced appreciation of the work as a whole.

Connection

My literary travel experience included connection to Alice Munro, the characters in *Lives of Girls and Women* (1971/2005), and to the work as a whole. Various sites related to biographical detail helped me to recognise simultaneously Munro's uniqueness—as someone distinct from me—and connect to her on a personal level in new ways. Similarly, due to the autobiographical nature of the book, many literary sites allowed me to connect concurrently to the author, the characters, and the text. These connections minimised the figurative distance

between me, the author, the characters, and the text, which facilitated a heightened appreciation for Munro and an enriched understanding of her literary creation, *Lives of Girls and Women*.

Reflections on the Findings

As I moved through the research process, I reflected on the extent to which my literary travel experience was akin to or an embodiment of my reading process. After contemplation and reflection, it seems plausible to suggest that there are parallels between the processes I engage in while reading and the themes of my literary travel experience. That is, concretisation, exploration, negotiation, and connection are key features of both.

As reader response theorists argue of all readers, when I read a literary text, I join the author on an adventure into another world co-created by the author's choices and my imagination. Using my prior knowledge and experience, I actively and imaginatively fill in details that are missing or ambiguous in the text. This process of concretisation allows me to be a co-creator in the creative process and helps me to form rich understandings of the work. As MacLeod et al. (2018) suggested, this theory is an apt way to conceptualise literary travel. After all, when I visited Huron County, I gained new knowledge and experience which I then used to fill in spots of indeterminacy within *Lives of Girls and Women*, which deepened my understanding of the text. However, my reading involves other processes in addition to concretisation; while I read, I also explore, negotiate, and connect. Sometimes these additional reading processes help me to fill in gaps, but often they operate independent from or alongside of concretisation.

While I am reading, I also explore. I inquisitively approach new characters, settings, and conflicts, questioning their possible importance and exploring their possible significances. With characters, for example, I explore their motives, façades, delights, and troubles. Sometimes this

exploration reveals a truth that lies beneath their surfaces, other times the characters remain enigmas. For me, the author's artistic choices guide my exploration, with literary devices such as symbols, imagery, and metaphors swirling into patterns, which I eagerly follow as I romp through this unknown but explorable land. I feel delight while exploring possibilities, and this delight exists whether my explorations yield clarification or not. Similarly, when I was in Huron County, I felt pleasure whilst in the pursuit of illusive literary locations. I found the search thrilling, and I used Munro's artistic choices to guide this exploration. Like the exploratory stance I bring to my reading, I brought an inquisitive attitude to my literary travel. I found the exploration of possible literary sites as rewarding as the identification of them.

Further, while I read, I consistently negotiate between conflicting ideas and impulses. This is hard work. Afterall, it is easier to immediately understand and have this initial impression confirmed. When I am reading attentively, however, honouring not only my initial reactions but also what the author is up to, I actively negotiate between my immediate responses and the complexities being crafted through the author's choices. As new details emerge, I layer them onto my previous conceptions and negotiate a fuller, more nuanced understanding. Likewise, throughout my literary travel experience, I consistently negotiated between my previously imagined version of locations and the material reality before me. I did not resist integrating new information, nor did I fully abandon my previous imaginative constructions. Rather, through negotiation, I created new versions of literary locations, which were comprised of the real-and-imagined. Moreover, when I read, I negotiate between affective and cognitive responses. I certainly read with my heart; I become emotionally involved with the events, characters, or conflicts. However, I also read with my mind; I pay attention to what the author is doing and how these artistic choices are informing my reactions. This type of negotiation between the heart

and the mind was also consistently felt while visiting sites of literary significance. Though I initially tried to keep my emotions out of the experience, I realised this was impossible and unproductive. I came to understand that in order to take in the experience fully, I needed to negotiate, like I do when I read, between my affective and cognitive responses.

Finally, when I read, I make plentiful and varied connections between my world and the world presented within the work. I make connections between myself and the characters: between my life experience and theirs, my nature and theirs, or my beliefs and theirs. I also make connections between my society and the setting depicted, observing similarities and differences in terms of social mores, politics, or culture. Further, I make connections between texts. A passage or a phrase in one work will invite connections to other literary works. This might be the result of allusion or other such authorial choices, but often these connections happen unbidden and with force. For me, reading is intertextual—as I am immersed in one literary world, I cannot help but connect to others. These text-to-self, text-to-world, and text-to-text (Keene & Zimmerman, 1997) connections facilitate personal and critical engagement with the work and, thus, allow for deeper immersion into the reading experience. Much like the dominant position connection-making plays in my reading process, connection was a significant feature of my literary travel experience. As I visited author and text related sites, I made connections to Munro, her characters, Wingham, Jubilee, *Lives of Girls and Women*, and various other fictional and non-fictional texts.

My reflections suggest that there are parallels between my reading processes and the dominant themes of my literary travel experience. For me, both activities involve/d concretisation, exploration, negotiation, and connection. Prior to my literary travel, I had read *Lives of Girls and Women* several times. As I read, I filled in ambiguous details with prior

knowledge and experiences. I explored various characters or themes. I negotiated between conflicting ideas and impressions. Further, I made connections to the characters, their world, and other works of literature. As a result of these reading processes, I felt like I understood and appreciated Munro's work. However, visiting sites of significance related to Munro and the text re-activated these reading processes and allowed me to break my habituated views of the text and allowed me to see it anew. Through site-induced moments of concretisation, exploration, negotiation, and connection, I now have a deepened understanding and fuller appreciation of Alice Munro's *Lives of Girls and Women*.

Limitations

While the findings of this study offered insight into my lived experience of literary travel as a reader, this study has limitations. The findings of the study are not generalizable. The study's auto-hermeneutic phenomenological methodology precludes conclusions about literary travel as a reader beyond my own experience. Further, my own experience of literary travel might be different if I were to visit a literary location related to a different author and text. However, given MacLeod et al.'s (2018) claim that more in-depth accounts of the lived travelling experiences of readers are required for further research, my study contributes to the on-going dialogue by offering a detailed and personal telling of one reader's lived experience.

Because the hermeneutic phenomenological approach does not have single, formalised method for data analysis and interpretation (Lavery, 2003; Neubauer et al., 2019; Sloan & Brown, 2014), this study employed a data analysis and interpretation process which was synthesised and adapted from methods used in several hermeneutic phenomenological studies. The work of Suddick et al. (2020) and Lindseth and Norberg (2004), in particular, proved invaluable as I created a method for working with my data. While I believe my process was

methodologically sound in that it maintained phenomenological principles of openness and reflexivity and applied the hermeneutic circle of understanding (Laverty, 2003), I do not suggest that my data analysis and interpretation process was the only correct way of working with the data. The use of alternate hermeneutic data analysis strategies, such as “Three levels of data analysis” (Crowther & Thomson, 2020, p. 4) or “Six-steps of hermeneutic phenomenological analysis” by Ajjawi and Higgs (cited in Bynum et al., 2020), would necessarily yield different results.

Though I have taken steps to create a trustworthy study, a potential threat to validity in this and other qualitative studies is researcher bias. Unlike transcendental phenomenology, the hermeneutic phenomenological researcher does not bracket off presuppositions; rather, the researcher’s lifeworld is recognised as a force to be recognised and reflected upon throughout the research process (Laverty, 2003; Neubauer et al., 2019; Suddick et al., 2020). Accordingly, as I moved from the formulation of my research question to data collection to the writing of my findings, I reflected in my reflective research journal (Spence, 2017) and, later, in my interaction chart (Suddick et al., 2020) about how my positionality and theoretical assumptions were influencing factors. In chapter 3, I was transparent about how these factors may have influenced how I interpreted the data.

Moreover, as both the participant and the researcher of this self-study, the risk of bias was further increased. Accordingly, I asked a peer to review my transcript and report what he saw as dominant ideas (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). His report supported the themes I saw emerging in the data; however, I recognise that an alternate peer reviewer might see things in different ways. My peer analysis yielded results that supported my analysis, but an alternate peer reviewer might not. In order to ensure transparency and invite the reader into the validation

process (Alsaigh & Coyne, 2021; Crowther & Thomson, 2020), I used direct quotations from the transcript in my findings and discussion chapter and I have included the transcript of my audio-recordings as Appendix C.

Recommendations for Further Research

The study of literary travel which foregrounds the traveller-as-reader could be enriched through the gathering of additional first-hand accounts from participants who are not the researcher. Future studies based on bibliophiles' in situ descriptions of their literary travel experiences, which are then analysed and interpreted through a hermeneutic phenomenological lens, could extend and enhance our current understanding of this phenomenon.

Further, repeating this qualitative self-study of literary travel in terms of research design (methods for data collection, transcription, and data analysis and interpretation) but based on a different author and text might afford a fuller understanding of the relationship between the lived experience of literary travel and the particular text. I wonder to what extent and in what ways my lived experience of literary travel would be different had I chosen a different author and work.

Moreover, repeating the study in terms of research design and context (literary travel to Huron County to visit literary sites related to Munro and *Lives of Girls and Women*) but with a different reader might yield an enhanced understanding of the significance of the particular reader in the lived experience of literary travel. I wonder how a different reader's lived experience of literary travel related to Munro would be similar to or different from mine.

Finally, given MacLeod et al.'s (2018) pioneering study which created a bridge between literary theory and literary travel, it seems that the study of literary travel from a reader's perspective might be enriched through the use of other literary theories as conceptual models. One possibility is literacy expert Judith Langer's (1995) concept of "envisionment building" (p.

15). Envisionment building, Langer contended, is “an activity in sense making, where meanings change and shift and grow as a mind creates its understanding of a work” (p. 14). As opposed to Ingarden’s (1973) emphasis on filling in details and completing gaps during the reading process, Langer’s concept of envisionment building recognises reading as a journey rather than a destination. The understanding of the phenomenon of literary travel could be enriched through the application of other literary theories as conceptual models.

Concluding Remarks

Crowther and Thomson (2020) stated that a hermeneutic phenomenological study “does not aim to create a robust theory, solve problems or to determine fixed conclusions, rather it aims to reveal, enhance and extend understanding of a human experience as it is lived” (p. 3). Accordingly, in this thesis I did not offer a comprehensive theory of literary travel or a conclusive, universal claim about its relationship to reading; rather, I presented an account of my lived experience of literary travel to Huron County in southwestern Ontario to sites related to Alice Munro and *Lives of Girls and Women* (1971/2005). Having said that, the analysis and interpretation of my data revealed that, for me, literary travel allows for the physical enactment or embodiment of several of my reading processes, including concretisation but also exploration, negotiation, and connection. Thus, my experience supported MacLeod et al.’s (2018) conceptualisation of literary travel as concretisation but also suggested that alongside the filling in of gaps, my time in Huron County afforded opportunities to attend to aspects of Munro’s life and the text that extended my previous interactions with the text. As I shared my lived experience, I commented on the thoughts and feelings I had while engaging in the phenomenon of literary travel and I offered my understanding of what it meant to be this reader-traveller.

Visiting Alice Munro's homeplace and the world depicted in *Lives of Girls and Women* (1971/2005) provided an opportunity to inhabit Munro's and Del's world—I walked where they walked, stood where they stood, and saw what they saw. This immersion and subsequent reflection have allowed me to illuminate my theoretical understanding of literary travel and deepen my understanding and enhance my appreciation of Alice Munro's *Lives of Girls and Women*:

On Sitting Down to Read *Lives* Once Again

O Sources theory-tongued with proven facts,
 Objective Tempter! Lord of scholarship!
 Leave theorising on this book led trip,
 Shut cited pages, and thine reasoned tracts:
 Adieu! For once again the interacts
 Betwixt submission and creation's way
 Must I burn through; once more humbly survey
 The bitter-sweet of these Munrobian acts.
 Chief Poetess! and Huron river song,
 Revealers of our universal need,
 For when the want of comfort I do long,
 Help me to ponder how to 'scape the creed,
 And when I am downtrodden in the mire,
 Give me Athena's shield to fight for my desire.

Note: After "On Sitting Down to Read *King Lear* Once Again," by John Keats, 2009, in Jeffrey N. Cox (Ed.), *Keats's Prose and Poetry*, W.W. Norton & Company.

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Appendix A: Permission to Use MacLeod et al.'s Conceptual Model



Nicola MacLeod <N.E.Macleod@greenwich.ac.uk>
Tue 3/9/2021 6:08 AM
To: Anne Hanson



Dear Anne-Marie,

Many thanks indeed for your email - it's heartening to know that our research has struck a chord with you and we're more than happy for you to use the conceptual model. I would be interested in hearing how your work develops in this area and what method you're planning to use.

With all best wishes for your studies,

Nikki

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Appendix B: Permission to Use North Huron Township's Self-Guided Tour Brochure



Denise Lockie <DLockie@northhuron.ca>

Fri 11/26/2021 2:43 PM

To: Anne Hanson



Hi Anne,

So good to hear from you!!!!

I hope you and your family are doing well. I want to thank you for your donation to the Wingham and District Horticultural Society.

You have permission to use the map or any other information from the Self-Guided Tour Brochure.

Take care and have a wonderful weekend.

Denise 😊



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Appendix C: Transcript of Audio Recordings

Audio Recordings Transcript

Audio Recordings Made July 21-28, 2021
Huron County, Ontario, Canada

My Experience as a Reader of Alice Munro's *Lives of Girls and Women* While Visiting Sites of
Significance Related to the Author and the Text

Transcript Created Using Otter AI
Manually Edited for Accuracy, Completeness, and Clarity

by

Anne-Marie Hanson

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DAY 0 – JULY 21, 2021: TRAVEL DAY

Entry 1, Day 0:

Before experience – Travel Day

- 1 I'm just waiting for my cab and I am about to begin my literary travel research. I'm heading to
- 2 Wingham, Ontario, via Calgary, and I should get to London at about three o'clock this afternoon.
- 3 Then I'll drive to Wingham. So this is how it begins.
- 4 I feel ready and excited. Packed and prepared to go. I really do not know what I'll discover about
- 5 myself as a reader of *Lives* but I am thrilled to spend the next six days in all things Munro
- 6 related. This really is a dream come true. I cannot wait to dive into Del's world and explore my
- 7 reactions. If the reader response theorists and the biographical theorists are right, this experience
- 8 should enrich my understanding of the text, if only because I am having new experiences and
- 9 learning about the author. I am eager, however, to see what else happens, or what this process
- 10 feels like. I am also a little nervous. I don't want to lose the affection I have for Munro and *Lives*.
- 11 Cab's here. Got to run.

DAY 1 – JULY 22, 2021: TOWN: FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Entry 2, Day 1:

Before experience – Day's plan

- 1 Day one. This morning I am heading to Flats Road and Del and Munro's house. I am going to
- 2 pause on the way to record my first reaction to the town proper. I feel a mix of emotion actually.
- 3 Very eager but also a little tentative. This place, road, and the house are central to Del and
- 4 Munro's development and the location feels huge in my mind. I'm afraid of two things actually.
- 5 That it won't live up to my imagination, like it won't feel in reality the significance it is in my
- 6 mind. And, that in seeing it I won't be able to, to quote Madison, unsee it. Feels like a big day.

Entry 3, Day 1:

During experience – First reaction to town

- 1 Wow! I am at the corner of Victoria and Josephine and can see the Post Office and Town Hall
- 2 from here. My first impression is that these buildings do dominate the space, so on the whole,
- 3 confirmation of my previous imaginings. Feels like I am entering the setting of the book and I
- 4 feel alert to every detail. The Lyceum Theatre, the little shops, Diagonal Road, the cenotaph. Yep

5 – this is the town in the book, there’s no denying that. This is “town,” *the* town. Didn’t expect
 6 the Lyceum theatre to be so small. I didn’t actually know what it looked like, but I guess now I
 7 do. Rapid-fire connections to textual detail. I can’t stop smiling. I feel sheepish delight. “The
 8 arrangement that only an outsider could see.”

Entry 4, Day 1:

During experience – Munro’s/Del’s House, End of Turnberry St./Flats Road

1 Approaching Munro’s house or what used to be Munro’s house at the end of Flats Road, but
 2 which is actually Turnberry Street. Though I have seen pictures, the house is bigger than I
 3 imagined, for both Munro and Del. A house where people have lived close to the bone for
 4 generations, or something like that, is how Munro describes it. I can see an addition, but even the
 5 original structure is larger. As I stand here, I’m thinking of the description from “Flats Road” of
 6 Del upstairs while her parents play cards downstairs, and how the upstairs felt for Del like a
 7 different world. I feel like I’m in a different world, actually. I’m going to stop for a second
 8 (recording paused).
 9 (recording resumed) Now following Del’s walk or route to school. I am at the end of Flats Road,
 10 and I’m about to do Del’s walk to the high school. And I will just press pause for a second
 11 (recording paused).
 12 (recording resumed) Walking down Flats Road. I don’t have a lot of thoughts. Ha. Doesn’t feel
 13 like a thinking moment. I feel uncomfortable and slightly agitated, actually. I’ll try later.

Entry 5, Day 1:

During experience – Maitland River

1 The community trail is on the west side of town and it follows a piece of the Maitland River. I
 2 am chronicling the walk with pictures and will talk about it more tonight. But one quick
 3 comment is that being here certainly reinforces the dominance of the river in the book. Thacker
 4 talks about the town being encircled by the river and even this short walk emphasises that. I feel
 5 a strong desire to capture each bend and bank.

Entry 6, Day 1:

After experience – Homes, Roads, Walk to school

1 Thoughts on Flats Road, well first the house. I couldn’t really talk about it when I was there this
 2 morning, and I still don’t feel like I am able to do my experience justice. The location is just so
 3 loaded with significance. Where both Munro and Del begin, really. I still don’t think I can talk
 4 about this particular moment properly.

I'm actually going to talk about Del's walk to school and Munro's walk too. I can talk about that a little more easily. The high school and the elementary schools were and still are very close—just around the corner, so my walk followed the path Del/Munro walked from grade four to and through high school. My route: In *Lives*, from the end of Flats Road, down Flats Road, Town Road and in reality, the route is from the end of Turnberry, Turnberry, Helena, Victoria. I'll need to write the specifics down soon. I am going to describe my walk and all of things I found important and interesting along the way. This might be long.

Anyways, this is a long walk for a young person, real or imagined. And I think one of the things I was struck by most significantly, was the amount of time this walk would have given Munro in her head, and subsequently doubt in her head. I know this is not a revelation. Thacker says, this walk gave Munro a chance to "think her thoughts". But the time is key. And I think walking this route helped me see and feel how Del and Munro, who share a propensity for thinking about what lies beneath the surface of things, could think the way they think. Time is needed to move beyond first thought, and this daily walk gave them time. I think I now better understand how such a young mind could begin to form these observations, and then the complications of these observations. While I walked down Flats Road, I was struck by the strange piecemeal of old and new, of rich and poor, of country and town that she would have seen and had time to think about each day.

And, you know, I think you could read Munro and Del's life stories and think it unlikely that a young person would think these complicated, nuanced thoughts. But when you see and actually feel the environment, the pink-blankets on the windows and the rusted-out cars in the yard along side the new houses, you realise how seeing that mixed view of things everyday might encourage a way of seeing the world that an in-town or out-of-town home place would not. I mean, of course, it is in Del and Munro's character, nature, to notice the environment and then use the walking time to think about it. Right, other people could have walked the same walk everyday and not thought the way they did, but if you have the propensity to think in such a way, the time and the location's characteristics allow for that to flourish and gives the space to explore various thoughts.

It's also interesting that the walk, it's like in several pieces, and in each of those pieces it's a different feeling, or different environment. So like, for example, when you're standing at the end of Flats Road and you see, I mean it's no longer gravel but if you see this sort of straight stretch, and the various neighbours that inhabit the area and the diversity, there still is a sense that this stretch is populated with unusual people, maybe no longer "bootleggers and hanger-oners" but there are still houses like the one with the pink blanket hanging in the window and another with dilapidated cars in the yard. There are also now new houses being built. To be sure, when I was walking down this road, I felt an atmosphere of piecemeal.

And then you turn and another feeling emerges. And it's like this very short little piece, Helena street. It is just a few steps along Helena before you turn again onto Victoria street, but even in that few steps, it's like this bridge. It isn't literally a bridge, but it feels like this little connector cable or something that's connecting one realm to the next. I know that sounds like hogwash and maybe it is. I felt different feelings in each of the little sections of this walk, and I am layering

46 these feelings onto one another. My rational mind is aware that I am likely infusing and layering
 47 the location with my previous imaginings of this place. And, maybe I am, but that's what it feels
 48 like, small, little realms of distinct atmosphere being infused and layered.

49 And then you turn again, left --on Victoria street, and then you walk and you, you really do feel
 50 like you're shucking off or putting on a different vibe as you head into town and. And it's like,
 51 now, maybe my view is clouded, because of Munro/Del's description of that, of the way Del's
 52 mom would take on different personas in relation to whether she was on Flat's Road or town.
 53 And so there's that too, I am reading the book into the place as much as I am reading the place
 54 into the book. Anyway, as I was walking I felt a change in mood and atmosphere, also a change
 55 in pace too. And so, as I walked into town, I experienced three different atmospheres, but three
 56 different paces too, and I find this actually reflective of or reflected in Munro's style, in that it
 57 does sort of have a slow burn. I'm wondering if I will be more able to see the material or the
 58 physical places manifested in her writing.

59 There was also this feeling like I was swimming around in layers of time. Historical past and
 60 present, my past view of this literary location, how these pasts and presents are banging into each
 61 other or flowing over or into each other. Out on Flats Road, I was struck by the mailboxes, I'm
 62 not sure if others would be. But in seeing them, I was reminded of the word palimpsest. On the
 63 old mailboxes names are painted, and then painted over and then painted over again with new
 64 names. And beside the old, metal mailboxes, there are new plastic ones. So, these seem to be
 65 markers of time, both on the old ones and between the old and new ones. I really don't know
 66 what the mailbox situation would have been like in Munro/Del's day but today they are a
 67 physical reminder of layers of time. Layers is another word that I am constantly thinking. When
 68 seeing these mailbox layers, I found something fascinating in it.

69 Anyways, as I continued to move forward toward Victoria Street, I approached the edge of town.
 70 I was, of course, reminded of Munro's characterisation of it. It felt surreal to stand there. From
 71 there I walked down Victoria Road to school. I found myself asking, Where did she turn? To the
 72 end of Victoria then left onto Carling Terrace or did she turn on Catherine St. or even Princess
 73 St. or even mainstreet, and then up John St. a little? And even as I asked those questions, I
 74 wondered who I meant, Munro or Del? And, I now as I am thinking about it, I am wondering if
 75 the answer would be the same and if it matters. The walk regardless of the particularities of the
 76 route is about 4 km, not really that long, but a long walk for a little kid and a long walk if you
 77 had to do it two times a day to get to and from school. Anyway, it gave her, ha, both Del and
 78 Munro, plenty of time to think and, as I felt, many different feelings along the way. Flux is
 79 another word that keeps popping into my head. There are many moments of flux in this walk.

80 So, as a reader, this walk made me feel or see or recognize more fully how the material reality of
 81 this daily walk might have influenced Del's and Munro's view of the world, which then is setting
 82 off firecrackers in my mind about how this material reality is reflected in her writing style.

Entry 7, Day 1:

During experience – Lyceum Theatre

- 1 I'm currently standing in the wrecked, destroyed, fragmented Lyceum Theater, and it's pretty
- 2 crazy. Shocking that when I saw the Lyceum this morning, I had no idea that this was its
- 3 condition. It looked and looks perfectly fine and intact from the front.
- 4 Standing here, I feel like I am in some bygone era, some relic of the 1940s. What a shame this
- 5 building is in shambles. According to our server, it is likely to be demolished. The front of the
- 6 building is intact but the inside and the roof are completely destroyed. Shock at its complete
- 7 destruction is my primary feeling at the moment.
- 8 The Lyceum theater is a place of distraction for Del and it is one of the puzzle pieces that come
- 9 into view when she describes the town. It will be lost soon, for the town folk and for Del. I'm
- 10 reminded of Wagner's question about whether or not literary places should be preserved or left to
- 11 decay. Wow, no roof but you can see the painting design on the wall and oh, I'm now looking
- 12 through the windows into the foyer. It's dark but you can see the outside doors and papers on the
- 13 wall. God, what a mess. Man, standing here makes me feel connected to Munro and Del and sad
- 14 too, knowing the importance of this building in their lives. I guess that is another reaction, I feel
- 15 fortunate to have seen a place that played a role in Munro's imagination and is a location in
- 16 *Lives*. In the nick of time, it seems.

Entry 8, Day 1:

After experience – End of Day 1 reflection

- 1 Okay, so let's just do a quick recap here today. I started off by taking a drive around, just to get
- 2 oriented and record my first impressions, and then I parked and walked out to the end of Flats
- 3 Road to Del/Munro's house, walked her route, and walked up a little bit of West Street, and then
- 4 followed the Maitland River via the community trail, and then walked through town (Josephine
- 5 Street, Diagonal Road, John Street, Elementary School, high school, the radio station etc).
- 6 I guess I'm going to spend a minute talking about some of the emotions I felt today. I'm just
- 7 going to pause and start again. So, I don't know what my deal is, but I feel simultaneously
- 8 delighted, in awe, embarrassed. I don't know why embarrassed. Maybe stunned a little bit. I
- 9 really couldn't record while walking, I felt stunned. What is my reaction as a reader, is the
- 10 question right? And I'm not sure I know how to answer that. Not sure I can answer that, yet, and
- 11 so I need to remember that I'm not trying to analyse yet, just record fool. At this point, I'm
- 12 delighting in the process, but I am struggling to be objective and fully in the moment at the same
- 13 time.
- 14 I talked about my feelings walking the route down Flats Road quite a bit already, but I have
- 15 another comment about Munro's house. I don't think, I mentioned it. When standing there in

16 front of the house. I felt like I was encroaching on someone's life. And I felt like I was intruding.
 17 I felt like I was an intruder. And I'm not sure why. Why? Because it is private property. But it
 18 was more than that, I also felt like I was intruding into Munro's life, knowing that she is an
 19 incredibly private person. In addition to all of the other thoughts and feelings I was having, I was
 20 also haunted by the thought that Munro is an incredibly private person. I wondered if she would
 21 disapprove of my project.

22 On top of feeling like an uninvited guest and disappointing Munro in a way, I was also struck by
 23 a feeling that I was navigating multiple layers. Munro's house, Del's house, some other person's
 24 house, my imagined house, the real house, and probably more, all layered on top of each other.
 25 The same was true for the Flats Road too. It felt too much to process, actually. I think that was
 26 part of my feeling of being stunned.

27 Taking in town felt different. As I marched around town, I felt like everything was anointed,
 28 everything had a feeling of being special or significant. I also felt very aware that I was likely
 29 imbuing significance into the place. I also felt at various times like I was not participating, it felt
 30 like I was an observer of myself, observing Munro, observing the town, house, road, and I felt
 31 about five steps removed from the moment.

32 Spending time in and around the Maitland river was also really cool. It was enlightening to
 33 follow the river around town and really see this "little stretch of it". The little stretch that played
 34 such a significant role in Munro's creative imagination and in Del's life. Unlike our Red, this
 35 river is clean and very shallow in spots, and I climbed down the rolling bank and actually
 36 stepped in a couple of times. It's funny, as I walked past the various parts of the river, my mind
 37 was filled with references to various parts in the book. At one moment, I was especially
 38 reminded of Ms. Ferris's sad end, at another of Del and Owen fishing with Uncle Benny, and at
 39 still another Caroline's drowning. The river in real life is multifarious in its depth, speed, and
 40 visual appeal. Following it let me see more fully how it would take on such different tones in the
 41 book, and how it would have seemed both touchable and mysterious to Munro. It's really cool
 42 when you're here to see really indeed how the Maitland river does surround this place, and
 43 following the bends of it made me feel like I was a part of Munro's world. Maybe this has to do
 44 with it being natural and less affected by time and change. I'll have to think about that. I touched
 45 the water and thought of that cheezy Heraclitus quote about not standing in the same river, but in
 46 reverse. Though different water, it is the same earth beneath it. That's pretty neat. I feel silly. So I
 47 think we're going to leave it there.

DAY 2 – JULY 23, 2021: MUNRO BIOGRAPHY DAY

Entry 9, Day 2:

Before experience – Day's plan

1 All right. This is day two—Munro's biography day. It's about seven in the morning. Before the
 2 day starts, I want to quickly record the agenda and some pre-experience thoughts. The goal for
 3 today is to travel what Thacker calls Munro's "postage stamp of the earth". Basically, I'm going
 4 to romp about Huron County and try to get a feel for Munro's "homeland," the county, and the
 5 small towns that dot it – Marnoch, Blyth, Clinton, Goderich and maybe Kincardine. Along the
 6 way, I plan to stop at three cemeteries, though one is right here in Wingham, so the Wingham
 7 cemetery, the Brandon-Belgrave Cemetery, and Blyth Union Cemetery. I feel eager to locate the
 8 graves of Munro's family members. I think that doing so is a way to see how deep her
 9 connections are to this county and, in a way, pay my respects to her origins, or maybe what I
 10 mean is, pay my respects to the people who made her who she is. I have created a small
 11 genealogy tree of Munro's family (her Dad's side) or I'd never keep them straight. I am also very
 12 excited to really look at the rural landscape around here. I expect today to be about filling out or
 13 putting the skin on my understanding of Munro's biography. I am also looking forward to
 14 finding Marnoch because Thacker says that Munro's Uncle Alex and Aunt Maude lived there
 15 and that Uncle Alex was the "prototype" for Uncle Craig.

Entry 10, Day 2:

During experience – Cemeteries

1 *Wingham Cemetery*

2 9:00 am - In the Wingham Cemetery now. Found the Laidlaw's grave. I know the grave is
 3 Munro's parents, not Munro, thank goodness, ha, but standing in front of it does make me feel
 4 more connected to her. I feel that going to her parents' grave is a way to show respect. Doing this
 5 is a way to pay homage, perhaps to Munro and Del's parents. I feel grounded to both somehow.
 6 Also, something I didn't expect, I am seeing the last names of characters, Mundy, Beecroft, for
 7 example, and the mausoleum is here too. So even this more biography moment is connected to
 8 the text. Seems silly because according to Greg everything in the author's life affects the writing.
 9 Being in this graveyard does support this point. It all feels a bit much. (recording paused)

10 *Brandon-Belgrave Cemetery*

11 10:40 – (recording resumed) Stopped at Marnoch. Quickly got out and headed down to the
 12 Maitland River, saw a man fishing. I was reminded of Uncle Benny, though obviously at a
 13 different piece of the river. Right now I am at the Brandon-Belgrave cemetery, standing in front
 14 of Alex and Maude Porterfield, Munro’s uncle and aunt’s gravesite. I can’t help thinking I am
 15 also visiting Uncle Craig’s grave. It also feels wrong to be recording here. But I found them and
 16 am glad I did. There is also a Chamney grave here that I want to look into. (recording paused)

17 ***Blyth Union Cemetery***

18 11.20 – (recording resumed) Woah. I am walking through Blyth Union Cemetery. So many
 19 Laidlaws. I am literally hunting for all the Laidlaws and finding most of the ones Thacker
 20 mentioned. So much history here. I wish I would have taken better notes on Munro’s family tree,
 21 I find myself snapping photos of gravesites that I will cross-reference with Thacker later. I have
 22 found William Cole Laidlaw and Sara Code Laidlaw (Munro’s paternal grandparents), Thomas
 23 and Margaret Laidlaw (paternal great grandparents), James Laidlaw (engaged to Sara but
 24 married Ada O’Dell, so I guess James would be Munro’s paternal great Uncle) and more.
 25 Munro’s roots are here, that’s for sure. As a reader of Munro, these grave visits show me just
 26 how far Munro’s roots to this place go. Deep down into the soil of this place, for sure.

Entry 11, Day 2:

After experience – Cemetery visits and meeting local

1 While at the Blyth Union cemetery I met a local named Mr. Govern (pseudonym). He saw me
 2 wandering around for a long time, obviously searching. I was having trouble finding James
 3 Laidlaw’s plot and he approached me asking if he could help me find something. He is a
 4 character, just shy of his 80th birthday, and has a dog named Misty. He takes care of putting
 5 flowers on the veterans’ graves and tends his loved ones’ plots. Because of his role as the person
 6 to put flowers on the veterans’ graves, he has done a lot of local history, discovering more and
 7 more unacknowledged veterans’ graves. I was immediately struck by Mr. Govern. I found his
 8 appreciation for the past and his preservation of it in the present, admirable. He told me about his
 9 love of history, and when he did I asked him about Marnoch, the bridge, and the house at the
 10 corner. To which he said that the house on the corner was, indeed, the post office. Yikes, that
 11 means the house I saw when I stopped at the Marnoch bridge and Maitland River section would
 12 have been the Porterfield’s house and by extension Uncle Craig, Auntie Grace and Aunt
 13 Elspeth’s house in “Heirs of the Living Body”. When I first passed the house, I laughingly
 14 thought, “hey, maybe that’s Uncle Craig’s house”. It’s a big house on the Marnoch line, and so
 15 now I need to go back. Very exciting and I am going back for sure.

16 Mr. Grovier also gave me a little lesson on bridges. Always read the signs, they say when they
 17 were built, but this information refers to the current structure not what preceded it. I asked him
 18 about all of the bridges in the area, there are so many given the winding and multi-pronged
 19 nature of the Maitland River, and he said that all of the bridges that are there now, were there
 20 when he was a youngster. Not the same structures, of course, but that they were all the same

21 bridges in terms of location then as now. The bridges are not new in there presence just new in
 22 their construction.

Entry 12, Day 2:

After experience – Munro’s grandparents’ former house in Blyth and Munro’s former house in Clinton

1 So I just saw both Munro’s grandparents house in Blyth and Munro’s former home in Clinton.
 2 They are only about 15 minutes apart, so I thought I would record my reactions to both at the
 3 same time. Of course, the house on Drummond St. in Blyth is an old, sandstone bRon house with
 4 nothing remarkable about it. I felt very little. I wonder why? Maybe I am on overload. Maybe I
 5 don’t have any pre-travel associations with the location. Jumped out and took a picture, but that’s
 6 about it.

7 Munro’s Clinton house on 160 FredRon Street was different, or my reaction to the house was
 8 different. It looked like a house Munro would live in. I have seen pictures of it before, so I knew
 9 what it looked like, but seeing it in person confirmed for me that it is perfectly suitable. Ha! Well
 10 maybe not perfectly suitable, it was a bit sweet looking, with the little white porch. A house with
 11 a bit of mystery, though certainly not ostentatious, would be perfect. Also, my reaction to the
 12 house, I must admit, while standing in front of the house, I imagined Munro and Fremlin in their
 13 writing spots, loving each other and their work. I saw Munro, in mid-life, working hard,
 14 struggling but succeeding at what she loved to do. I marvelled that that was the place where
 15 Munro wrote so many of her books, some of my favourites, *Progress of Love* and *Open Secrets*,
 16 just there in that little house, around my age, writing. Gives me faith, actually.

17 The process of reconciling my imaginings with what is materially true feels similar whether I am
 18 reconciling a previously imagined biographical detail with a concrete artefact, like Munro’s
 19 Clinton house for example, or if I am attempting to reconcile a previously imagined fictional
 20 detail with a corresponding concrete artefact. Reconciling might be the wrong word because it
 21 suggests finality, negotiating might be the better word. Whether taking in material places or
 22 objects connected to Munro’s life or the fictional word she created from them, the process feels
 23 the same and it feels like an active negotiation of layers—lots of layers.
 24

Entry 13, Day 2:

During experience – Goderich

1 I’m sitting having lunch in the town circle or square area of Goderich. I wanted to go to Bailey’s
 2 (Munro’s favourite restaurant according to Foran), but it is now a pizza place. I thought I would

3 feel this passage of time, or really the losses that result, more often. I'm okay with this loss. The
 4 beach from "Going to the Lake" is just down the road from where I am and I am struck by how
 5 quaint this little place is. A busy afternoon ahead. About to head to the Huron County Museum—
 6 I am hoping to get some insight into the history of the region, county, and I hope to get into the
 7 Huron Historic Gaol. According to the website, the museum just reopened this week, but the
 8 Gaol is still closed. I am going to ask, though. Also planning to do the Tiger Dunlop Heritage
 9 Trail, short about 3 km, and see where the Maitland River enters Lake Huron. The trail also goes
 10 over a walking bridge or old rail bridge called the Menesetung Bridge. Woah! Menesetung! One
 11 of my favourite stories. More crazy feelings right now, I am living life. I feel like Munro's little
 12 shadow today, peeking into her past, becoming saturated in her roots and, of course, the land.

Entry 14, Day 2:

During experience – Huron County Museum, Goderich, ON.

1 The museum is what I expected, I am getting a sense of the history of Huron County especially
 2 its settlement time. Lots of connections between Thacker's description of the settlement of the
 3 area and Munro's ancestors and the maps and early life depicted here. Spending time here and
 4 this whole day, really, is putting some of Thacker's info or other biographical detail into context
 5 and feels like I am putting skin on the details of Munro's history.

Entry 15, Day 2:

After experience – End of Day 2 reflection

1 What a day. I really do feel like I have walked in Munro's footsteps today. Much of what I did
 2 and saw today was supposed to be biographical rather than about the novel, though as I am
 3 learning this is a false distinction. After the museum, I did the Tiger Dunlop Heritage Trail,
 4 which was a lovely walk after quite a bit of driving around today. I really appreciated seeing
 5 where the Maitland entered Huron and again reading a little about Dunlop gave me a fuller sense
 6 of the early days of the area. Walking of the Menesetung Bridge and seeing the Maitland called
 7 that struck a chord and as I walked the trail, I spent quite a bit of time thinking about
 8 "Menesetung" – what a great story. I can't help but feel like the narrator, especially after today,
 9 trying to piece together or round out my vision of Munro. Am I grasping or uncovering or
 10 making up? Does she like grape jelly? I think its grape. Does it matter? I'm really not sure, but I
 11 am definitely interested. It's interesting to watch my reactions. Seriously, thinking about
 12 Menesetung while I am literally searching for Munro, her past, her characters, her setting, is
 13 ridiculous. So many connections.

14 Driving around the county, taking pictures of and thinking about the land felt very important, but
 15 hanging out at Marnoch and especially going back after dinner, felt monumental. I need to go

16 back again during the day or earlier in the day. I know I have already been there twice, but
 17 neither time was for long enough. I need to sit in that space, take it in without rushing.

18 I finally remembered to take a picture of “town” from the highway (No. 4), and of course I heard
 19 Adie say, “yonder lies the metropolis” while I did it. So cool. Also, that I took this picture at the
 20 end of the day, and while I wasn’t selling encyclopedias or with my mom while she did, I did
 21 just return from a day of “going on the road”. Spending time here is causing my head to ache.
 22 Every two seconds, I am connecting to *Lives*, other stories, Thacker details. It’s a bit exhausting.
 23 Fun and mentally exciting, but a bit of a brain workout. I am really looking forward to tomorrow,
 24 I am going to walk from the motel into town and record my thinking as I do. I am going to
 25 stop at certain spots and read passages, a bit of a walk-and-read into and through town if you
 26 will. I’m meeting the Community Engagement Co-ordinator for Huron County on Sunday and
 27 she is giving me the official tour of town then, but I want some time before that to walk around
 28 town with *Lives* in my hand before then. I feel like it will be a bit surreal.

DAY 3, JULY 24, 2021 – DIVING DEEPER INTO THE TEXT DAY

Entry 16, Day 3:

Before/During experience – Walk-and-read through town

1 *Reading on the No. 4 Highway*

2 I am currently walking down highway number four from the Wingham motel to Wingham – the
 3 motel is about 2 km from town and I thought I would walk and record my thinking as Town
 4 grows closer. This is the plan for the day. Walk, read and visit sites. I’ve got my book in hand
 5 and plan to sit and read sections at various places. Okay, so I am on the rise or a rise that Del
 6 describes, though she says it’s three miles out of town on the No. 4, but I am closer than that.
 7 Other than that, how she describes it is exactly right. I can’t stop here or I might get run over by
 8 a semi, I’ll pause and get to Tim’s then record again. (recording paused)

9 *Reading by the Alice Munro Sign*

10 (recording resumed) At Tim’s now, just took some pictures of the Wingham sign and the
 11 Birthplace of Alice Munro sign. Hilarious that the Tim’s sign is in the background of every shot.
 12 Got my book out and I am sitting on the grass in front of them. I am about to read from “Princess
 13 Ida”:

14 “Jubilee was visible from a rise about three miles away, on the No. 4 Highway. Between us and
 15 it lay the river-flats, flooded every spring, and the hidden curve of the Wawanash river, and the
 16 bridge over it, painted silver, hanging in the dusk like a cage. The No. 4 Highway was also the
 17 main street of Jubilee. We could see the towers of the Post Office and the Town Hall facing each
 18 other, the Town Hall with its exotic cupola hiding the legendary bell (rung for wars starting and

19 ending, ready to ring in case of earthquake, or final flood) and the Post Office with its clock-
 20 tower, square, useful, matter-of-fact. The town lay spread almost equidistantly on either side of
 21 the main street. Its shape, which at the time of our return would usually be defined in lights, was
 22 seen to be more or less that of a bat, one wing lifted slightly, bearing the water tower, unlighted,
 23 indistinct, on its tip. My mother would never let this sighting go by without saying something.
 24 ‘There’s Jubilee,’ she might say, or, ‘Well, yonder lies the metropolis’”. Page 65.

25 Hmmm. What is it like to read while walking and sitting in the setting? Lovely, actually.
 26 Delightful. Complicated. Meaningful. Confusing. Significant. It is a far more complex feeling
 27 than “playing” which a couple articles described it as, “playing Anne”, I don’t feel at all like I’m
 28 playing. The description does not include for example this Tim’s and there is also this urge to
 29 delete it from this strange mental mapping process, but of course that’s impossible. I think
 30 because I am so very cognizant of my process, I am resisting or forcing myself to try to
 31 accurately integrate everything but I wonder if I weren’t studying this if I would just ignore what
 32 doesn’t fit in. I’ll read one more passage then head in:

33 I loved the order, the wholeness, the intricate arrangement of town life, that only an outsider
 34 could see. Going home from school, winter afternoons, I had a sense of the whole town around
 35 me, all the streets which were named River Street, Mason Street, John Street, Victoria Street,
 36 Huron Street, and strangely, Khartoum Street...and books in the library and mail in the Post
 37 Office and pictures of Olivia de Havilland diversions, frail and bright, woven together—Town!

38 Page 66. Yep. Let’s see. (recording paused)

39 *Reading on Josephine Street*

40 (recording resumed) I’m now walking down Josephine Street, just passed Victoria Street,
 41 heading toward John Street. Thinking about the part about the intricate arrangement, and oh, I’m
 42 going to sit for a second. I want to read the section when Del’s talks about walking the streets.
 43 Here it is. “It was glory I was after, walking the streets of Jubilee like an exile or a spy, not sure
 44 from which direction fame would strike, or when, only convinced from my bones out that it had
 45 to”. Page 134-135. Hmm. I am imagining myself as Del, or perhaps as a young me, and I feel a
 46 sudden desire to protect them from life’s harshness. I feel a little emotional at the moment, but
 47 way more capable of doing this now than when I walked Flats Road for the first time. I mean,
 48 this walk and read through town feels important, but I got this now. Moving on. (recording
 49 paused)

50 *Reading on Diagonal Road*

51 I’m now at the corner of Diagonal Road and John Street. Little firecrackers are going off in my
 52 head, I am thinking about textual details related to these roads, Jerry’s house on Diagonal Road,
 53 the fair grounds at the end of it, Del’s walking with Jerry or maybe Naomi up and down John
 54 Street after school. The bank, god this building is gorgeous, grand, actually like the Post Office
 55 and Town Hall. I think there is only one reference to the Bank and that is when Del is walking to
 56 find out her exam results. Its funny, that in looking at that huge building and I guess the building
 57 that used to be the Wingham Advance Times building, I feel, I guess I would describe it as

58 melancholy, but I know I am inscribing the way Del felt while she passed it on to it right now. “I
 59 would walk downtown between nine and ten o’clock. I would walk as far as the *Herald-Advance*
 60 building, look in their front window, and walk home. I was waiting for the results of the
 61 departmental examination which I had written in June. The results would come to us by mail but
 62 they always came to the paper a day or so in advance, and were taped up in the front window...I
 63 knew I had done badly in those exams. I had been sabotaged by love, and it was not likely I
 64 would get the scholarship which for years I and everybody else had been counting on, to carry
 65 me away from Jubilee.” Page 232. Hm. This is interesting. Transference of feeling. Right now I
 66 am looking at these buildings, I need to remember to take a picture of the Homegrown building,
 67 and they look like sad places. I feel a bit silly admitting this, but it is true that I am reading Del’s
 68 sadness into the location. I am layering the physical location with Del’s emotions. Next stop the
 69 Post Office and Town Hall. (recording paused)

70 ***Reading in front of the Post Office***

71 (recording resumed) Now I’m standing in front of the Post Office and looking at the Town Hall
 72 across the street. God, I can’t look at the Post Office without thinking of Fern posing for the
 73 picture in front of it in front of a huge snow arch and the beginning of “Lives”. Let’s have a read.
 74 “The snowbanks along the main street got to be so high that an archway was cut in one of them,
 75 between the street and the sidewalk, in front of the Post Office. A picture was taken of this and
 76 published in the Jubilee *Herald-Advance*, so that people could cut it out and send it to relatives
 77 and acquaintances lining in less heroic climates, in England or Australia or Toronto. The
 78 redbrick Clocktower of the Post Office was sticking up above the snow and two women were
 79 standing in the archway to show it was no trick.” Page 134. These buildings do dominate the
 80 physical street, their towers are grand, I can see why they engraved themselves into Munro’s
 81 imagination. As I look at them, I feel like I am mapping or layering. What do I mean? My
 82 imagined version of this site is meeting the real and I feel like a computer a bit, like my imagined
 83 image is being digitally produced and animated, while the new one is being layered on top. Or,
 84 that my imagined image is encircling the real one. Both exist. I probably sound like a crazy
 85 person, but there is a mental negotiation going on in my mind, that’s for sure. The Lyceum
 86 theatre is here too, of course. Going to cross the street. (recording paused)

87 ***Reading in front of the Town Hall***

88 (recording resumed) And now I am sitting on a bench in front of Town Hall. So much happens
 89 there. I really hope I can get inside. The Town Hall, and all that is in there or was in there, the
 90 library, the theatre, the Council Chambers, the place she meets Garnet. So many textually
 91 significant places, so many moments of discovery for Del, and Munro too, of course. To read all
 92 of the related passages would take quite a bit of time, but I need to read parts of “Changes and
 93 Ceremonies” while I sit here, that’s for sure. One of my favourite scenes takes place just inside
 94 this building. “The Town Hall stage behind me seemed bright as a bonfire, lit by such fanatical
 95 devotion. Devotion to the manufacture of what was not true, not plainly necessary, but more
 96 important, once belief had been granted to it, than anything else we had.” Page 123. And, so
 97 many more, but I am going to walk back to the motel now. As I head back, I’m going to ponder a

98 feeling that keeps cropping up. Maybe I am over intellectualizing, but I keep thinking about the
 99 concept of liminal space, which I think is where I am. This walk-and-read into and through town
 100 experience has made me feel like I am in this weird in-between space again. Reading the words,
 101 while sitting in the world of the text is a wonderfully strange place to be.
 102

**Entry 17, Day 3: After experience – Searching for Garnet bridge and Mr. Chamberlain’s
 route**

1 Just got back from a fun sleuthing adventure. I didn’t record during the search because I needed
 2 to focus. I couldn’t record, drive, and take in what I was doing and seeing at the same time. I
 3 spent the last couple of hours trying to find both the site of Del’s near drowning by Garnet and
 4 her walk back and the location of the Mr. Chamberlain debacle. Both of these moments are very
 5 disturbing in the book and so I felt a little strange enjoying myself during the search so much.
 6 Before heading out, I revisited “Lives” and “Baptizing” and looked on Google maps and
 7 gravelroad.com to try and figure out where these events might possibly have occurred. The book
 8 gives some clues, the maps give others, but as I found out, there is no way to be sure. But my
 9 goodness, what fun. I felt like a detective tonight, using clues from the text and the maps, and, of
 10 course, deduction.

11 Okay, so first Garnet. The text gives several details that I pursued. Third bridge, third concession
 12 road, the river, the track, Cemetery Road and Del’s walk into town, past the cemetery. Just as a
 13 quick side note, a rather brief but intense storm blew into the area tonight and while I was
 14 exploring various bridges outside of town, my phone sent out a very startling alarm. I had just
 15 entered an area with a tornado warning. Very creepy backdrop for my creepy location hunting,
 16 that’s for sure. Anyway, I know that Del’s Garnet Baptising event happened out of town (around
 17 three miles out of town) and that it was north of Town. The map shows that there is no Third
 18 Concession Road, but there is a second and a fourth, so that’s where I started, in that general
 19 direction. Driving around, looking for a bridge and a section of a river where Del had her near
 20 drowning experience. I found several possibilities, but none of them seemed exactly right. Either
 21 they were too far from town, or too close to town, or weren’t near a bridge, or didn’t come out at
 22 Cemetery Road, or what have you. But, some of these same spots would have been exactly right.
 23 What I mean is that a couple of sites would have fit the scene or the spirit of the scene perfectly.
 24 Of course, I cannot help thinking about Munro’s “not real but true” idea. And that’s exactly how
 25 I felt while searching. I’m not sure if I found the real spot, but I found several that felt true.

26 This feeling followed me as I explored Del’s walk back into town. Munro writes that Del walked
 27 down Cemetery Road, which I think is now called or is officially called Holmes line, and she
 28 cuts through the Cemetery before she walks into Jubilee and repossesses the world. I started my
 29 walk back into town there. I basically plotted a southwest running route that she could have
 30 walked from Cemetery Road to her house on William St. She could have just followed the river,
 31 but considering she mentions the houses and streets etc., my route was less direct. I have no idea
 32 if this was her actual route, but I went for it.

33 It cleared up a little during the Mr. Chamberlain part of my search, but not totally. The wind
 34 slowed down which was good. This search would seem to be easier given the description of
 35 where Del and Chamberlain went. Chamberlain drove south on the No. 4 Highway and turned
 36 down the first sideroad, then a little track heading toward the creek. I looked at various possible
 37 first side roads, but because I don't know exactly where town ended then, I can't be sure which
 38 one it was or even if it still exists. Several of them lead to the banks of the river, but not a creek.
 39 All of these possible places seemed plausible. I guess the short of this is that my findings are
 40 inconclusive. I'm certainly in no way positive about either location or her walk back. I'm not
 41 sure it matters. Not finding the exact locations gave me a chance to dig into Del, the text, and the
 42 area in ways I probably wouldn't have if the locations were easily found. I deepened my
 43 knowledge of both. I am grateful for that.

DAY 4, JULY 25, 2021 – DIVING DEEPER INTO THE PLACE DAY

Entry 18, Day 4:

Before experience – Day's Plan

1 Real quick. This morning I am going back out to Marnoch to finally sit down by the river. I want
 2 to read a little of "Heirs" while there. At 12:00 I am meeting Community Engagement Co-
 3 ordinator for Huron County and the Cultural Development Officer for Huron County. We are
 4 going for lunch first before we go to the Post Office or now the North Huron Museum. The Post
 5 Office has a Munro display, which I am eager to see, and then she will take me on a tour of town.
 6 The Cultural Development Officer is also the Huron County Rep for the Alice Munro Short
 7 Story Festival, and I am looking forward to meeting with him. I talked to the Community
 8 Engagement Co-ordinator last night and she can not get us in to Town Hall. I cannot explain how
 9 disappointed I am. I'm going to try to make the most of this day anyway. Off to Marnoch!

Entry 19, Day 4:

During experience – Marnoch (Uncle Alex/Craig's house)

1 I am back in Marnoch sitting down by the river that I believe Del and Mary Agnes walked along
 2 during Del's visit to Uncle Craig, Autie Grace, and Aunt Elspeth's house. I realize I am
 3 completely blending fact and fiction here. But, considering Mr. Grovier's suggestion that this

4 house was indeed the post office and considering Uncle Craig's house had "once been a Post
 5 Office" and that he was the clerk of the township and that the real Porterfields had lived in
 6 Marnoch and that Uncle Craig was based on Alex Porterfield, I feel like I am in the right place.
 7 Can't be certain, I know, but I feel close. Sitting here at the edge of the river, knowing the house
 8 is up the bank behind me, feeling like I am in the world of "Heirs" and right beside Del. Going to
 9 pause and read a little from "Heirs".

10 We went down the road and along the river bank. In the heat of dry stubble fields, cracked creek-
 11 beds, white dusty roads, the Wawanash river made for a cool trough. The shade was of thin
 12 willow leaves, which held the sunlight like a sieve. The mud along the banks was dry but not
 13 dried to dust; it was like cake icing, delicately crusted on top but moist and cool underneath,
 14 lovely to walk on. I took off my shoes and walked barefoot...along the edge of the water, on
 15 both sides, were carpets of lily leaves spread out, and here and there a yellow water lily, looking
 16 so pale, tranquil and desirable that I had to tuck my dress into my pants and wade in among the
 17 sucking roots, in black mud that oozed up between my toes and clouded the water, silting the
 18 leaves and lily petals.

19 Page 42. Look where I'm sitting, here on this same bank it seems. I see the dead cow, not really
 20 of course, but I see how there could be one found along here. I think the reason this scene both
 21 the one before me and the corresponding one in the book strike me so powerfully is that this is
 22 the chapter where the reader really gets to see Del's fascination for language, for words – "Day-
 23 ed Cow" and their power, either it is first seen or it first emerges. Also, I'm thinking of the
 24 Aunts' language and its layers. Like those layers and that what they said was not said explicitly,
 25 that the meaning of their words was within the layers of their language. That when Del listened
 26 to them, she had to negotiate between the layers of their speech to understand what was there.
 27 I'm doing that too.

28 And Uncle Craig's one-eyed version of story. "Heirs" and this country location and the extended
 29 family and their differences allow Del to see the differences in how language is used and the
 30 importance of words. And, of course, the dead cow and then Uncle Craig's death do give Del an
 31 opportunity to confront death. The setting of the story and its associations. Arg, I'm analysing
 32 again. What does my experience while reading this chapter in Marnoch, at the river side, across
 33 from Uncle Craig's house feel like? It feels like I am spending time in a place I already know,
 34 but it is also allowing me to look at the text with fresh eyes. I am paying attention to details that I
 35 have previously glossed over. Fresh eyes is what I have while reading on the banks of the
 36 Maitland River. I feel like writing a poem, actually. "On Sitting Down to Read *Lives Once*
 37 *Again*"

Entry 20, Day 4:**Before experience – Meeting with Local Representatives: Community Engagement****Coordinator and Cultural Development Officer**

1 Just a quick recording as I drive to meet with the Community Engagement Coordinator and the
 2 Cultural Development Officer. I am super excited to talk with and learn from them. The former
 3 mentioned that the latter doubts that he'll be able to offer much. This seems crazy to me. He is
 4 one of the Alice Munro Festival Planners and he is born and raised here, how will he not offer a
 5 lot to think about. Quick change of plans. Going to the Alice Munro exhibit first, then lunch,
 6 then tour. What a day!

Entry 21, Day 4:**After experience – Local Representatives, Munro exhibit, Post Office, Tour**

1 I've just recently got back from my meeting and tour. I'm just going to take a peek at my notes so
 2 I get their titles right. Okay. Dana Lacker (pseudonym) is the Community Engagement Co-
 3 ordinator for Huron County and Ron Saxton (pseudonym) is the Cultural Development Officer
 4 for Huron County. Dana lives in Wingham and Ron lives about an hour away in Exeter at the
 5 south end of the county. I was shocked and felt very grateful when I discovered he drove all that
 6 way just to meet with me. Thanks to Dana, of course. Ron is also the person in Huron County in
 7 charge of planning the Alice Munro Festival of the Short Story.

8 Chatting with them was so fun. They both have respect for Munro and Munro's desire to keep
 9 her person out of any sort of celebration for her. Ron said repeatedly that with Munro it is always
 10 about the writing not her. He sounded somewhat frustrated by this, but he never said so. The
 11 Festival was originally going to be called The Alice Munro Festival, but apparently Munro
 12 insisted that it be called the Alice Munro Festival of the Short Story and that it was to be a
 13 celebration of the short story form and the area, not Alice Munro. Ron talked a lot about the
 14 festival, its history, how it works, and some of the recent changes due to covid. He talked about
 15 some of the guest speakers, including Thacker and Simonds, and when I talked a little about
 16 Simonds' work, he said he had her email and that she would likely be willing to talk to me.
 17 That's pretty neat. Anyway, Ron was also a treasure trove of information about the history of the
 18 County, with a heavy focus on the social mores of the area and how past ways of being continue
 19 to inform how people operate and think today. Like the sort of Scotch Presbyterian pride in
 20 property. When I asked him about the immaculate homes in the area, he talked about the pressure
 21 to upkeep your home around here. You do not want to be seen as the generation or family
 22 member that let the family home go to ruin. He also talked about the roads. They are amazing
 23 around here, even little county roads are perfect. Roads and homes are markers of pride. They

24 deserve money and attention. I could have talked to him all day. He also provided some
 25 interesting insight into the sale of Munro's home in Clinton and some great stories about
 26 babysitting Albee while working at the Blyth festival. What was so cool about meeting with
 27 them is that they both are so connected to the place and understand the ethos, or maybe its the
 28 telos, of the place. This connection to the ethos of the place is what I didn't get from reading
 29 Thacker. Or, not as fully as I now understand it.

30 I told Dana that I've been here a few days prowling around and so she said, "Okay, well, what
 31 questions do you have or where or what do you want to see?" So cool. We of course went to the
 32 Museum, which is the former Post Office and the Alice Munro exhibit is in there. Wow, hair on
 33 end experience. The post office is now officially closed to the public and it will take 3.4 million
 34 dollars to restore it or make it enterable. I cannot remember what council is trying to acquire a
 35 new space to house the Munro exhibit, though Dana mentioned it. If they find a space and move,
 36 they will also have to relocate the Munro Literary Garden that is immediately to the right of the
 37 Post Office. Breaks my heart that, like the Lyceum theatre, this old building is in disrepair and
 38 that there are no funds to restore it. Roads and homes get all the money. Ha. And, though there is
 39 some support for Arts and Culture around here, I'm thinking of the Blyth Arts festival and
 40 Munro's festival, restoring old buildings that have no practical purpose seems low on the list of
 41 priorities. Reminded of Munro's comment about "reading as something to be outgrown" and
 42 Del's recognition or dawning awareness of the importance of theatre against the backdrop of
 43 pragmatism. Being here and spending time with these two locals showed me loud and clearly
 44 that some of this anti-culture sentiment is still alive and well.

45 While at the museum, a little Munro corner, really, I felt very overwhelmed. Munro's writing
 46 desk, her old typewriter, her old fountain pens, a travel trunk, a hat displayed in a glass case,
 47 with a medal that I did not ask about and am kicking myself. Dana told me to go sit at Munro's
 48 desk and she'd take a picture. That felt very strange, I felt like a fawning fan, and needed to fight
 49 the urge to devolve into one. I was reminded of Wagner's aura comment, and I can understand it
 50 now. Sitting at Munro's old desk, my fingers on her old typewriter, felt mystical. I hate to say it,
 51 because I know I'm going to sound like a flake, but it felt a little magical or even spiritual. Arg. I
 52 hate feeling that feeling. I took lots of pictures and tried to chronicle everything in there. From
 53 the bookshelf with her works, to the cheesy poster boards chronicling her life. This place is not
 54 enough for Munro. It just isn't. And, I'm not one of those fans who would never be satisfied.
 55 Munro's corner, in a small, totally light-exposed, corner of a condemned or near condemned
 56 building, just not right. At all.

57 Though Dana said I could have all the time I wanted, I felt rushed. My own doing, I know, but
 58 Dana was really just standing there watching me, so it felt a little awkward. There were scrap
 59 books full of newspaper clippings, that I could have spent the day reading through, so I snapped
 60 as many pictures of the pages that I could and followed Dana out, feeling grateful to have gotten
 61 a chance to go where few people will ever get to see again, disappointed in the state of the place,
 62 delighted to have had the chance to sit at Munro's desk, a little embarrassed about my delight.
 63 Two other quick comments about the Post Office/ North Huron Museum. It was in complete
 64 shambles, organization and cleanliness wise, for which Dana profusely apologized. Another is

65 that there is also a little space for Harry Boyle, which is so cool, considering how important that
 66 interview with him was for Munro. The Boyle display is not in connection to the Munro display.
 67 Also there is a little tribute to Agnes Reid, and includes one of his paintings. So there are at least
 68 three artists that this immediate area produced, and it would be a shame if the town/area gave up
 69 on celebrating them.

70 And so, after all this, she told me to hop in her truck and she proceeded to drive me around town,
 71 looking at all the spots in the Munro guide, telling me little details along the way. Munro's fall
 72 on her bike on John st., and the history of the radio station and Wingham's and Munro's
 73 connection to radio, for example. I shared a few details that I knew too but I really let her take
 74 the lead and tried to take in rather than show off whatever knowledge I have.

75 There was another amazing part of the afternoon. After we had done the stock stops, she asked
 76 me where or what else I wanted to see. I pulled out my book and read the Garnet section first,
 77 and asked if she knew where third concession was. She was thrilled to go on this little adventure,
 78 or she acted that way! We had a blast, looking at the text together, trying to discover Garnet's
 79 place and others like Chamberlain's route. She took me to a little bridge about three miles out of
 80 town and we recreated the route that Del could have walked back into town! This was so fun.
 81 Just like the other day, I loved discovering these places, finding them, and probably making them
 82 up. I don't care. It was pure joy.

83 Before we parted, she told me about this woman named Verna who I would have loved to meet,
 84 but who was away on holiday. Verna is the Munro expert in town and, for some odd reason, I
 85 couldn't quite figure out why she had it, she has the third of Munro's Nobel Prize Medals in a
 86 safety deposit box. Dana said she could coordinate a meeting via zoom with Verna, and she
 87 offered to take a picture with the medal and send it to me. Just one more thing about Dana, a
 88 couple of times I was reminded of the article, ah who wrote it, was it Montz? I'll check later,
 89 about the keepers of heritage/tourist sites related to Montgomery. There were three types of sites,
 90 oh I won't get into it, later, but it felt, at times, that Dana was acting as the "guardian" or keeper
 91 of this place, and some of the stories she told seemed a bit large, and some were just factually
 92 incorrect. This doesn't bother me at all, I found it fascinating to watch.

93 What a crazy fun day. Oh yes, one more crazy thing. Dana got us access to Town Hall and she is
 94 taking me there tomorrow morning at 10am! What the heck. I'm not going to sleep!

Entry 22, Day 4:

During experience – Driving in the countryside from Wingham to Blyth

1 Driving to Blyth for dinner, just stopped at St. Augustine, one of the towns mentioned in the
 2 book that has a corresponding place in geography. It was mentioned only in passing in
 3 "Baptizing" as one of the towns that people came from to attend the Revival Meeting. I forgot to

4 mention earlier that I asked Dana about Jericho Valley and described it. She said there isn't a
 5 town named that or anything close to that around here. But, she did say that Teeswater fits the
 6 bill. Maybe I'll check it out another day. Just hopped out for a picture. Now I'm recording some
 7 footage of the landscape. I want to watch it all and chat about it later. The countryside is
 8 beautiful, flat with rolling plains, if that's a thing. Lots of hay bails and corn. Perfect roads

Entry 23, Day 4

After experience – End of day 4 reflection

1 What a day. I don't know how much energy I have left. I just want to make a brief comment on
 2 the landscape. I feel saturated in it. I have driven so many roads around this county that I feel
 3 saturated in Munro's landscape. The country scenes that she would have seen on every drive she
 4 ever took as child growing up here. Del too, the roads she would have seen "going on the road"
 5 with her mom. I feel like I know them now, too. Not like a resident, of course, but certainly more
 6 than just reading about it. Munro described the region as "absolutely Gothic". I need to think
 7 about that a little more. Does this area feel Gothic geographically? Not sure, but I do see great
 8 power or force in this place. Foran talks about the landscape and Munro's prose style. I want to
 9 revisit that article and try to put some detail on to his ideas or come up with some of my own. He
 10 says something like, if Munro's paragraph was a landscape it would look like these country
 11 roads, or something like that. I want to think about and later write about that. I have taken lots of
 12 video and pictures and I need to sit with them and think about the relationship between her style
 13 and the land. I'm also thinking of that article on Munro in Literary Geographies and the Moraine
 14 as symbolic. I haven't seen any moraines here, but lots of rolling hills, pop up towns, hay, corn,
 15 lots of vastness. There are certainly connections between the geography and her prose style, but I
 16 need still time to think about it, I'll write about them later.

DAY 5, JULY 26, 2021 – WINGHAM: UP-CLOSE

Entry 24, Day 5:

Before experience – Day's plan

1 I am meeting Dana today to go to Town Hall. I really can't believe it. Of all the locations or
 2 experience I was looking forward to, the Town Hall is among the top, maybe only surpassed by
 3 Flats Road. Hm. What am I thinking as a reader? I am afraid that that irritating uncomfortable
 4 feeling will return but I'm super excited. I'm full of anticipation and I feel a little nervous for
 5 some reason. Not sure what I'm nervous about. I am going to try to record at least one during-

6 experience-audio wandering through it, but I am having trouble recording while I am
 7 experiencing. It seems to interfere with my being present in the moment. I'd like to talk to Greg
 8 about this. I'm going to take some time this morning to re-read bits of "Changes and
 9 Ceremonies" and "Baptizing". I want my imagination full before it's adjusted or put to work.
 10 There's something in that, you know. I feel possessive of my previous imaginings or something
 11 like that. I think I said this before, but it's like I don't want to be in a position to unsee the
 12 material location if my reaction is a negative one. I think there's something there, and while this
 13 is a true response, I am also ridiculously excited. A few things to do before 10:00, breakfast and
 14 key houses. Jerry's House on Diagonal Road; Munro's grandparents'/Del's aunts' house on
 15 Leopold; Munro/Del's house on William St/River St.; Naomi's house, don't know where).

Entry 25, Day 5:

After experience – Town Hall Library

1 I am recording three separate audio recordings right now. Just got back to the motel from visiting
 2 the Town Hall. It was amazing. This first one is about the Library, then I'll talk about the
 3 Council Chambers, then I'll talk about the Theatre.

4 It felt very frenetic, not because of Dana but because of my own mind. So when we arrived,
 5 Dana knocked on the door and no one answered, then she made a few calls, no one answered. I
 6 had to walk away, pretending to admire the near by mural. I was mentally preparing to be
 7 disappointed. And then, finally, someone answered the door. The Town Hall still functions as the
 8 Town Hall and is the place of municipal business, but due to covid, it is closed to the public for a
 9 few more days. Anyway, I think I audibly cheered when the door opened, but I know my heart
 10 was pounding.

11 As I entered the building, I'd describe the feeling as hyper-alert, so alert to detail. And, you
 12 know, we walked in, and everything had changed but Dana explained the changes, and explained
 13 what renovations had been done in terms of the front entranceway and why, right, because
 14 originally it was not wheelchair accessible, it was not designed with disability in mind. And so
 15 things have been changed all over the place. But the places in that building, remain in the same
 16 spot.

17 And so when you enter, immediately on the right is the quote unquote library, but it's now office
 18 rooms. Even if with this change, it was really neat to look inside, because, first of all, the library
 19 is, of course, central to Del and her growing up and her development as a writer. But, I mean, it's
 20 no longer a library, so I couldn't, I couldn't look around and think 'holy look at all these books',
 21 but actually what I did think was, 'Holy, this space is really small and really ordinary.' It is much
 22 smaller than I imagined and very plain in terms of its shape, a rectangle really, with nothing
 23 magical about it. This plainness caught me off guard. I have always imbued a little sparkle it. It
 24 was such a place of refuge for Del, a place of excitement, a place of mystery. And you could see

25 how a voracious reader would, you know, at the beginning, look around it, I don't know how
 26 many hundreds of books would have been housed in there, but to a new reader, it would seem
 27 like a limitless supply of adventure. But just the physical size of the room, which I would say is
 28 just a bit bigger than, about the size of a full-size garage is how I would describe it, and it would
 29 come to seem very small quite quickly if you are a lover of words. But Del talks about the
 30 significance of the library. And you can see how it would be this place of refuge. If not in the
 31 books, in the temperature. This old building has rad heat and thick walls, so it has this coolness
 32 to it and, I expect, a damp-warm feeling in the winter. And, of course, I could not stop thinking
 33 about Del's, "I was happy in the Library. Evidence of so many created worlds—this was a
 34 comfort to me" and the weight of Library for Naomi. For Naomi, the Library was boring and in
 35 need of spicing up by reading spicy sections of books. The library space in real life seemed more
 36 like Naomi's library. Plain. But I cannot forget that it was also Del's library which did glow.

Entry 26, Day 5:

After experience – Town Hall Council Chambers

1 So, I'm still thinking about the town hall. And now I want to talk about the council chambers. So
 2 once you've looked to the right into the library, you go straight ahead a few paces and see the
 3 council chambers. As Dana said, they are in exactly the same spot as they have always been, and
 4 on the door it still says council chambers. It is a larger space than I was anticipating, I was
 5 thinking of it being quite small. There are a couple of reasons why the council chambers are
 6 important. One, because that's where Addie, Del's mom, goes for her Great Books Club meeting
 7 in "Princess Ida". And so, being there gave me a moment to see how she would, you know, walk
 8 into town. Go up the stairs of town hall, walk by the people invariably sitting there, which they
 9 were today and every time I have passed by, anyway I could fully imagine her walking past the
 10 bench sitters, walk the stairs and head to the council chambers. I could see how she would feel a
 11 little bit elite and how going to this space could give a feeling of being elite. It's interesting, I felt
 12 very attuned to it, because I felt elite, just having access to these places. And that is a really good
 13 feeling, where you feel like you are deservingly privileged or something. I'm not proud of this
 14 feeling, but it is what I felt while approaching and in the Council Chambers. Anyways, as I was
 15 staring at the council chambers and looking into it made me understand what Del's mom was
 16 after, right, that feeling of, I don't know how to say it, of being important. Even though, of
 17 course, she wasn't and I'm not either.

18 Also, the council chambers comes up in "Changes and Ceremonies" during the operetta, The
 19 Pied Piper because it was also the place where the kids got changed in. Munro described the
 20 sheet being hung down the middle but that the boys and girls could see each other changing, and
 21 it is a moment where lines are being crossed and boundaries were being broken.

22 Underscoring this place, the council chambers, and the chapter, there is a feeling of very early
 23 sexual awakening. A charged time. It was just really crazy to think that this was the same room,
 24 that both the live, Munro, we know that she was actually in Pied Piper, and also Del in the Pied
 25 Piper inhabited.

26 Just a quick comment in terms of the physical layout of the place. I thought for sure the council
 27 chamber room had moved because in the book it's described as being underneath the theatre
 28 stage, and I could not believe there was going to be a theater above where I was standing. But,
 29 indeed, there is. Indeed there is. And so, I'll talk about that in the next clip but in the theater, and
 30 you get access to the stairs and the stairs from back of the stage above you lead you down to the
 31 council chambers. So being there felt like little spark plugs going off. It's like, wow, this is
 32 actually the place.

33 It's a crazy feeling. When I am confronting two or more versions of a space or place at the same
 34 time, its my mind having to quickly process and sort the various versions of the same place in a
 35 single moment. Not sure if this is actually related to liminal space, but it feels like an in-between
 36 or threshold space or even a space of transition. Standing there in the council chambers and in
 37 the theatre, man. I mean, the locations are spaces that come up several times in the novel and
 38 have various significances. So even before seeing these locations, I had various versions of the
 39 places in my mind, so I'm not saying that my previous imaginings were simple constructions or
 40 anything. But now, I am thrust into this space where my imaginings, all of them, are also having
 41 to integrate or negotiate with new, material versions of the place. It feels like what is happening
 42 is the formation of in-between versions comprised of my imagined view of the place and the real
 43 one. These new versions don't fully feel like either. Bringing these versions together or
 44 negotiating them feels like work, and it is uncomfortable or overwhelming sometimes. Just to be
 45 clear, I love it, but it requires mental energy. Long and rambling entries these are. In a nutshell,
 46 awesome, mental work, liminal space, spark plugs firing, textual connections.

Entry 27, Day 5:

After experience – Town Hall Theatre

1 Third clip and this will be my last one about Town Hall, this one about the theater. Wow. I think
 2 the theater and Flats Road, and the Maitland river, I think those three spaces or places are the
 3 most anointed feeling, for lack of a better word. Being in theater, even just thinking about it, I get
 4 goosebumps. It felt like I was in a place, like I did with Flats Road, of Munro's birth. Right, and
 5 Del's birth. Both places felt like places of origin, birth places. On the Flats Road, I was stunned
 6 into silence. But the theater felt like a miniature version of the same but I think because it is
 7 several days in I was better able to think and function while there.

8 You know, this is where Del witnesses, Miss Ferris' commitment to, I forget exactly the
 9 quotation, but to the things that had no practical use, arg., or devotion to what was not plainly
 10 necessary, or something like that. And little Del, though she doesn't say it explicitly, sees the
 11 value in that. She sees the value in artistic creation and production, and the attention to detail,

that was a part of Miss Ferris. I feel that potential, that energy in there. But also while I was there, I couldn't help but think about the end of that story, and simultaneously sit with the knowledge that Ferris' belief comes at a cost, and that Del ultimately chooses it too. And I think that the, the allure to create, the creative process, was awakened in that space and wrestling with this allure and her recognition of its simultaneous beauty and danger came after. And so the Town Hall feels infused with kind of a naive optimism, or a naive wonderment, or determination, maybe is a better word, I think. It is true in the story anyway, and it felt true in that place.

And, when I was walking down the stairs, the back stairs to the council chambers, I felt like I was entering a strange realm or, if I stop being flaky for a second, like I was entering a place that was textually significant, and so I was granting to the space significance. But, the space is significant and as a reader, I felt that significance. Entering and walking down the dark staircase to the Council Chamber felt like I was entering Munro's deep cave, stepping away from the surface or kitchen linoleum of life, though the stage is hardly surface. But entering that stairwell felt like I was making the metaphor concrete somehow, like I was or the experience was an embodiment of the concept. Once you get down to the council chamber propriety or the regular rules and roles fall away a little. I realize that the events that happen in the chamber are not huge in the scheme of life, but it was Del's first exposure to the breakdown of various lines.

But it's interesting also that Munro makes this little dark spot in the council chamber because that's also the place where, you know, the city did and does business. So physically, the theatre (and its connected areas) feels thematically significant and complex, and being there gave me a chance to physically move through that complexity. The stage is performance, literally of roles; the back stair case, a path to the Chamber, which is a world of both breaking down and of maintaining boundaries, civilized business, roles. A connection between the surface and the underbelly of life is present in the space. I am reminded of the little stretch on Helena st. between Victoria and Turberry road. Another figurative bridge between realms. And, think of all the bridges in the book, actually I need to look into this, there are several at least. I'm getting off track, but again I now see, bridges – real and figurative – that I had not seen or paid attention to before.

On top of this, the back of the theatre, the railing where Del met Garnet was neat to see. The stage is juxtaposed against the back of the theatre beside the booth that controls the business of the stage. There, in that spot, Del lets her lust take over, or maybe lets her curiosity take over, or her desire for connection take over. I don't think it insignificant that Del's first real romantic connection begins in the theatre. Being there allowed me to look at those passages with fresh eyes and wrap up the real, material space in my imaginings. I'm not sure what the result is but I sure do feel like I am adding layers to my previous imaginings and seeing more layers in the text.

Entry 28, Day 5:

During experience – Rolling commentary while documenting various locations

1 *Churches*

10:00 am I'm on a bit of a slow speed adventure. Currently driving and walking to various locations that I haven't previously captured on audio or video, though I have seen them all. I am visiting every church in Wingham that Munro mentions in "Age of Faith," capturing photos and videos. I'm currently in front of the Anglican Church, thinking about Del's religious quest and questioning, and her exploration of the theatrical in religion. Like every small town I have driven thorough, Wingham has an array of churches, literally feels like there is one on every corner. I'm just taking a second to try to get into Del's head as she made her way into this church, so questioning, so whip-smart. I'm imagining her sneaking away from the Baptist [United] Church to this Anglican one, though I think she says she has to cross-back through town, though that isn't the physical route necessitated by the real geography of the town. As a reader. Hm. I am noticing interesting creative liberties, like the change in the locations of the church. What I find interesting about this is that, like examining a draft version of the text in order to identify and analyse changes between draft and published versions, discovering various embellishments and geographic modifications of or from the "real" gives me a chance to consider the detail more closely, and thus think about what it adds to the story, characterization etc.. In this case, if the churches described in the story were geographically positioned as they are in reality, Del would not have had to cross back across town. In fact, she just needed to continue walking 300 metres from the Baptist [United] church on Minnie, up to John, across Main St. to the Anglican church. So I am now beginning to see the geographic changes (makes it seem like more work) as a way to emphasise Del's curiosity in the reader's mind. I'm fascinated by these creative liberties and wish I could record them all and analyse them. This church trek is also giving me another chance to step more fully into the character or explore her in fresh ways. It's neat to stand here and imagine Del doing the same. (recording paused)

Cenotaph

2:30 – (recording resumed) I'm at the cenotaph, corner of Diagonal Road, called Veterans Road at this little strip, and Josephine. I am looking at the cenotaph, which is mentioned. I think Del talks about the old men sitting on benches around it and other locations. This is still the case, almost every bench I pass by has one or two older, usually guys, sitting on it. Spending a few minutes at each of these spots seems to be adding a little glitter on to my previous imaginings, not that something is coming into view that wasn't there, but that what was there is now a bit brighter or shinier. Foregrounding the physical or setting is what is happening, I think. I am looking at the book, characters, events etc. through a setting, or place-based lens. (recording paused)

John Street and High School

2:45 – (recording resumed) Walking and driving up and down John St., paying attention to John St. Hill, and taking in the high school. John St. comes up several times, but at the moment I am thinking of the scene where Del and Jerry walk here after their fiasco, a few days later and how in that moment, this road was a bit like a known, predictable canvass on which they could re-write the fiasco into something safe and funny. I have walked or driven up this road many times over the last few days, and its start of getting that predictable feeling even for me.

The high school is or was at the top of John Street. Heading there now. The original building is no longer here, the radio station CKNX sits on the site now and the new high school stands just to the left. Nonetheless, standing where the building once stood, thinking of the picture of it in Thacker's book, of the article about the school's history in the Clinton Times. I cannot also help but think of Del and Naomi's increasing division as Naomi headed to the third floor, the commercial program, and Del stayed downstairs in the academic program. Of course, I am also thinking about Munro's academic journey at the same time. Her struggles at home, Miss Boe, her determination to get top marks. And then there is Del's isolation as she pushes to excel. Both women's persistence and desire to carve out a "self-created self". I feel it, I feel their longing for independence and success. Textual connections abound as I stare at this site. The original site of the CKNX radio station is now the Salvation Army store, which I will head to soon. (recording paused)

Gayla Dance Hall

3:15 – (recording resumed) I am driving up to the Gayla Dance Hall, or what I am reasoning to be the location of the Gayla Dance Hall, though it is the Royal T Gas and Convenience now. The guide references two excerpts from *Dear Life* that mention the Royal T Dance Hall. But it could easily be called the Gayla Dance Hall in *Lives*, "Baptizing". The location is right, "half a mile north of town", just at the furthest end of Josephine Street before you leave town for real, and considering the description of Del and Naomi's walk to the Hall during "Baptizing" this seems like a plausible place. More sleuthing. Fun. (recording paused)

Diagonal Road, Jerry's House, and Fair Grounds

3:30 – (recording resumed) Diagonal Road, End of Diagonal Road - "Jerry lived in half of a double house out on diagonal road." From "Baptizing" page 187. I am currently searching for what could have been Jerry's house. There are a few possibilities. While I am cruising this road, I am well aware that I am searching for a house that may be completely fabricated, no longer exist, or could be one of many. My response as a reader-traveller is that I don't care. I in no way feel like I am wasting time or on a wild goose chase. As I am looking about, I am also thinking about Jerry's role in Del's life, in her development. He was her first awkward relationship, of course, and the 2nd section of "Baptizing" is full of descriptions of their walks (behind her house on River street to the bend in the Wawanash River and back) and her disastrous walk home across town! I've tried to figure out this route. Walking here, gives me a chance to think about how this character subtly gave Del another anvil against which she could bang herself out, like her mother used to be when she was younger. Jerry and the Nobel Prize comment, Jerry and his suggestion that Del's skill was memorization and the female gift for language and more. So, walking up this road, possibly searching for something that might not exist gives me a thrill and the chance to contemplate a minor character's role in the development of the protagonist more fully. (recording paused)

End of diagonal road. There is a sign that actually has diagonal road and diagonal road, snapped a picture. I am now looking for possible locations of the fairgrounds, which come up in "Baptizing" and are supposed to be located at the end of Diagonal Road. I have found two

possibilities, both would work. Yes, there is something in that comment as well. Because I can't be certain, not with the information I have, and because the fairgrounds are a very minor detail in the book (where Garnet takes Del to watch baseball), I feel less compelled to pin point an exact location. (recording paused)

BA Station and Mrs. McQuade's

4:00 – (recording resumed) I'm going to start with a quotation, "There was a house in Jubilee with three prostitutes in it. That is, three if you counted Mrs. McQuade who ran it; she was at least sixty years old. The house was at the north end of main street, in a yard all run to hollyhocks and dandelions, beside the B.A. service station." Page 135 from "Lives of Girls and Women". I am filming what I suspect may have been both the B.A. service and Mrs. McQuade's place. I have no proof of this, only that I am at the north end of Main Street in front of a building that looks like it could easily have been a gas station at one point and right beside it is a sandstone house that could easily have been a house of ill repute in the 1940s. I am embarrassed to admit how much fun it is to revisit the text for textual clues and make educated guesses from there. Of course, I have no certainty that I am correct, but I love the process. (recording paused)

Red Front Grocery and Brunswick Hotel

4:15 – (recording resumed) Ok. I have just gone to what the guide suggests is the Red Front Grocery store from "Princess Ida" and to the Brunswick Hotel from "Baptizing". It is so cool to see the fire escape ladder or one like it that Del would have climbed down to escape Clive. Also, it what was once the Red Front Grocery store is now Bella's Pizza, but the structure remains intact. I'm running late now, so I am coming back here tomorrow to investigate this a little more.

DAY 6, JULY 27, 2021 –REVISITS AND REFLECTIONS

Entry 29, Day 6:

Before experience – Day's plan

- 1 I am going to spend this last day revisiting places wherein I want to spend time thinking and
- 2 reflecting. I also want to go back to the Brunswick Hotel and the Red Front Grocery to explain
- 3 my thinking and document the discovery. I'd like to find a quiet place by the Maitland River.
- 4 The Alice Munro Literary Garden is also a must for today, as is another walk down Flats Road.
- 5 I'd also like to end today walking West Street, because I think that is the road that Munro walked
- 6 where she found the copy of Tennyson in the abandoned Cruikshank house. I'll leave it there.
- 7 This line was added to allow for the continuation of page numbers.

8 This line was added to allow for the continuation of page numbers.

Entry 30, Day 6:

During experience – Red Front Grocery

1 I'm in front of what used to be the Red Front Grocery. Though a very minor setting, it is a neat
 2 place in the book, mentioned in "Princess Ida." Del's Uncle Bill took her there when he came for
 3 a visit. The story is fascinating for its complication of Addie, but this store and Del's trip to it
 4 and I suppose also to McArter's Bakery, which I cannot find any evidence of, with Bill is also
 5 neat because, it reminds me of Gatsby. Driving from their place in town to the store and then
 6 during the shopping, Del says that the experience made her see the place in a different way. She
 7 now saw it as run-down and poor, or something like that. I guess, what fascinates me as a reader
 8 is how this trip and seeing these material locations is also making me see the work anew. Ha.

Entry 31, Day 6:

During experience – Alice Munro Literary Garden

1 Sitting alone. Slowly. At the Alice Munro literary garden. I sat down to read *Lives* once again. I
 2 really do need to write about this experience creatively somehow, just for myself. This trip has
 3 been wonderful. You know, I feel guilty that it hasn't been more arduous, I suppose. What is
 4 going to be arduous will be in figuring out how to write about all of this. But I do feel closer to
 5 Munro. I mean, especially right now, here, I'm sitting in her, Alice Munro's, literary garden. I'm
 6 sitting in her garden, a place built to honour her, and I feel close to her. Each stone, each book,
 7 gives me a chance to honour her, think back to who she was when she wrote each one, who I was
 8 when I read them. You know, I do feel very much like I did in the Munro corner. I feel that this
 9 place, sitting here, it feels like a spiritual moment, and for the record, I'm not a spiritual person. I
 10 feel a sense of hush, a calm, quiet connection. A chance to contemplate and pay respect.

11 This whole experience, just knowing where she comes from, knowing I suppose in a way that is
 12 more than just, not just, but in an additional way to words on a page. And I say that without
 13 minimizing the significance of words on a page.

14 It's surreal. Like I kind of feel like I found a sweet spot, and I wish it were to never end. It's, it's, I
 15 feel honored that I've had the chance to do this. I feel so grateful that I've had that chance to do
 16 this. Like I never want to stop doing this. And I don't mean, I mean, learning, and learning about
 17 all of what I'm trying to do here. Inhabiting this weird liminal space between reality and
 18 imagination, learning about Munro and diving deeper into her writing, learning more about
 19 literary travel, learning about how to be a good researcher, learning how to be better student, and
 20 note taker, and audio recorder.

21 I'm an old lady. And yet I feel on the cusp of something. So fresh and it's fantastic. And it's
 22 interesting, I mentioned, I just mentioned my age, but I wonder what role age has to play in my

23 experience here. I wonder if I were 25, if sitting here in this literary garden would matter so
 24 much to me. I could analyse it. But would I feel it like I feel it. Also, as a 47-year-old, I suppose,
 25 you know, I'm within the age range that Munro was when she was realizing her potential. No, I
 26 mean when Munro was being acknowledged for her potential. I'm not comparing Munro's
 27 potential to mine, no, just that I feel old often, and that perhaps, in this case, at this moment, my
 28 age is a strength. Where I am in life, my advisor, all of this contributes to my appreciation of this
 29 experience.

30 Gratitude is a word I feel, and anxiety about not wasting this opportunity to say something
 31 important. I feel stress too, sitting here is an effortless way to honour her, except in the emotional
 32 energy that I'm expending. Ha. I'm not a big feeler, so it's, it's a bit overwhelming. So, I guess it
 33 is not nothing, not effortless. I want to create something that I know nobody will read but that
 34 Munro would be pleased with. My desire to capture every slab on her list of publications and
 35 every slab in her list of awards is, I think, just like a sliver of insight into the detail that Munro
 36 wanted to capture or Del. I get that now too. I want to capture every detail, every street name,
 37 every, you know, I wish I could quote it off the top of my head. Insert quotation here. Ha. Yeah,
 38 that's what I want. I want to get this thesis right, not for fame and glory, but really out of a
 39 feeling of honour and respect for Munro.

Entry 32, Day 6:

During experience – Sitting by the Maitland River

1 I wanted to make sure to take the time to sit by the Maitland River as near to the spot I think is
 2 depicted in the opening line of the book. I think the exact spot is on private property, so I am
 3 sitting on the bank that I got to via Helena Street. I entered behind the site of the old Lower
 4 Town School and walked along the bank to the point where I am now. I am, of course, thinking
 5 about Munro's words in Ross' article. Something like, "this river and this little stretch of it will
 6 provide whatever myths or adventures you want. This ordinary place is sufficient, everything
 7 here is touchable and mysterious." Ross says that this little piece of the river that Munro found so
 8 magical is the stretch behind and around her father's farm. So, though I'm not exactly there, I'm
 9 there enough. Yes. Walking all around this town and over and under its five bridges, approaching
 10 the river from various points, putting my hands into the water whenever I could. I have tried to
 11 connect to the river or at least notice it and pay attention to it often. Is everything here touchable
 12 and mysterious? Well, both the river, this town, and Huron County on the whole seem touchable
 13 enough, as in ordinary or common place. However, all parts, including this river, certainly feel
 14 and have felt very mysterious to me. I think mysterious, here, means not totally knowable. Yep. I
 15 have gotten to walk in Munro's and Del's footsteps and experience these not totally knowable
 16 places. I know them way more now than I did a week ago. I think, too, that I know the book
 17 better now too. No, I do know the book better, that's for sure. But do I know any of them fully?
 18 Nope. Thankfully, they still remain a little mysterious to me.

Entry 33, Day 6:

During experience – Walking down West Street

1 So here I am, walking down West Street. This is the road at the end of Flats Road or in reality at
 2 the end of Turnberry Street. It is beautiful and so peaceful. All I can see for miles is a gravel
 3 road, curtained by large trees, and telephone wires, to be honest. I can see why, despite her walks
 4 to school each day, Munro chose to go for leisure walks here, on this road.

5 I think I cut the section from my proposal that mentioned Munro's walking down this road, not
 6 sure about that, but Thacker certainly mentions that Munro loved this road. Got to find that
 7 quotation. But, if I am remembering correctly, Thacker says that when Munro was growing up
 8 here the road was unnamed, but that it is now called West Street and that she loved it. Yes, I
 9 think he used the word loved. I also recall Thacker saying that the Cruikshanks' house or their
 10 abandoned house was along this road, and in that abandoned house Munro found a collection of
 11 Tennyson's poetry. I don't see any abandoned houses now, but I can imagine having a mind
 12 filled with Tennyson, walking in this quiet place, twisting, and creating something fresh out of
 13 both this place and Tennyson's words. Of course, right now I am thinking of "Princess Ida" and
 14 Tennyson's "The Princess," obvious allusion and parallels. Allusion.

15 I feel like the whole book is an allusion to this place. Is that a thing? Echoes or references to
 16 place is probably more correct. But, just like I take great delight in discovering and looking into
 17 allusions in the works I'm reading, I have loved searching for connections between the material
 18 and the imagined and contemplating how doing so has affected me as a reader of *Lives* over the
 19 last six days. I feel like this literary travel journey has given me the opportunity to embody or
 20 make physical what it feels like to identify and discover allusion. Like allusion, literary travel
 21 allows for layers of meaning to emerge that are not necessarily necessary to understand the plot
 22 or character etc., but if contemplated can add layers, dimensions, complexity and more to the
 23 original work. Allusion or inter-textual references and literary travel have a lot in common, and
 24 now my mind is going crazy thinking about the parallels. I'll stop there for now, so I can enjoy
 25 this beautiful walk.

