

Female Empowerment: A Study of Del Jordan's Character in Alice Munro's Lives of Girls and Women

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Summary:

This research tackles the theme of female empowerment that was significant in the Canadian society in 1940s, and serves as a main theme in the novel. It also argues how the protagonist in the novel *Lives of Girls and Women*, acquires empowerment and identity during childhood and maturation. The aim of the novel is to establish the narrator's principles and attitudes to strengthen and portray the community of females. In this paper, the protagonist's experiences are presented showing hidden and strict attitudes of the whole world around. The empowerment of the protagonist is recognized throughout the changes in her behaviour of how she humiliates sexual experiments and orders imposed on her by men. So, when rejecting the oppression of the male society, Del sets a new way of freedom to her as well as other females in the society. Thus, the protagonist, Del Jordan, achieves female spiritual awakening. Moreover, the research sheds light on how Munro, a new empowered female figure, penetrates the notion of gender in her community. The significant characteristic of the female characters is that they pay attention to their everyday experiences. These characters confront reality and are able to express any event in their voice.

Introduction

The process of giving women the ability to take charge of their own life, make their own decisions, and be treated equally in society is known as female empowerment. Fundamentally, female empowerment is giving women the instruments, assets, and assistance required to go over structural obstacles and fully engage in the political, social, economic, and private spheres. Female empowerment is not only about personal development; it is also a major factor in creating a more just, wealthy, and peaceful world for everybody. Due to societal norms and traditional responsibilities, women have historically experienced discrimination and under-representation in a variety of areas (Abrams, 2018)

Alice Munro, the Canadian writer who was born in 1931, inspired by writing short-stories from an early age. She grew up in a rural environment. She presented more than 100 short stories as well as 14 novels. She won many prizes especially 2013 Noble Prize. So, she gains an elegant honour in literature. Munro sets her journey from a simple rural upbringing girl into a famous literary figure. Her mother's profession was a teacher and her father was a farmer. Munro was interested in reading from the beginning of her life. She became a writer in 1951. She is famous in writing short stories. She is also famous in Canada as well as the English speaking world (Moss, 1977).

In 1968, Munro presents the collection of "Dance of the Happy Shades" and gains the award of Governor General. She was interested in writing stories like "Who Do You Think You Are?" in 1978. Then, Munro produced collections like "The Moons of Jupiter" (1982), "Friend of My Youth" (1990), "The Progress of Love" (1986), and "Open Secrets" (1994). Her themes in writing are concerned with challenges of women, sharpness of everyday life, and humans' complex relationships. So, due to her great reputation and the deep meanings of her writing, Munro is very influential in literature. Her success comes from what she gathers from life throughout her childhood. In addition, her good reputation comes from being a successful contemporary writer (Moss, 1977).

The novelist is considered as a historian of lives of women due to the fact that their problems are always expressed in her works. Munro develops the short story *Lives of Girls and Women*, and succeeds to narrate it in a novel structure. The story of the novel deals with one main character, Del, shedding light on her development physically and mentally. The chapters of the novel trace Del's maturity and transformation into a woman then a writer. According to Robert Thacker, *Lives of Girls and Women*, is: "a feminist cri de Coeur" (Razavi & Beyad, 2020, p.75). Munro shows that women are able to confront the world with no need to the protection of the fairy-tale. She often discusses this notion referring to marriage and gender concepts. In this respect, Munro states that gender is related to a "myth of home and family" (Razavi & Beyad, 2020, p.75). She assures that girls can elevate gender identities.

Munro's creation of young girls in her works shows that these characters represent confused or bewildered girls at that time. The core of Munro's works focuses on the middle-aged women. The successful female characters get rid of the confusion and

the pressure that they face in their life with intense self-consciousness. They always intend to find out themselves and pursue their spiritual freedom. In the novel, Del is portrayed facing traditional gender roles, determining her own way to deal with them. In addition, it is explored that the most important focus of Munro is gender differences. She argues the notion of male vs. female struggle, presenting a real picture of life. Her literary works express many themes as: love, marriage, the connection between inner and outer world. In their coming of age, female characters face trivial life, and they struggle against repression and misfortune. They have the desire to obtain freedom. Munro's female characters live in the Canadian small towns struggle against moral dilemmas and search for their identities (Chang, 2016). Munro's works argue feminist thoughts and how to make the relationship between men and women equal. She was a moderate feminist writer. She was on the side of women just because she witnessed their difficult life experiences. So, she gives her female characters, plentiful self-awareness. Though she is feminist, yet she is not aggressive that she presents peaceful narrative to express women's views (Zhao, 2012).

Munro presents the picture of her girls' characters of how they acquire their identities. According to Munro, gender depends on : myth about a house and family where the parents are committed to their children's moral and spiritual development . The narrator's response to the roles of men and women alludes to her social status. This indicates that Del benefits from a widely held understanding of the generality and order that make up adult society. Childhood, in the protagonist's opinion, cannot be characterized as only a place free from adult responsibilities and corruption (Zhao, 2012). Instead, it lets her an opportunity to understand notions about gender identities.

Moss (1977) mentions: Munro's stunning flashes of point of view transcend time. She is one of the greatest short story authors and has created her own genre of personal nostalgia (p. 56). In the novel, Del acquires her gender identity and tries to re-order the dichotomy of the male and female in her community. As a child, she attempts to change herself into an experienced adult throughout the different features between the mothers and the fathers. Generally speaking, Munro portrays a rural place where gender roles are traditionally and naturally presented. In this community, the father is involved in his work outside home. Whilst, the mother is engaged with domestic duties at home. So, on the one hand, the father always

shows sense of confidence and certainty. On the other hand, the mother is often unsatisfied with her negative lifestyle; and shows tiredness, nervousness, and hysteria. Thus, the hidden points between female and male genders become so clear in this novel.

From a critical perspective, feminist theory viewpoints can also be used to comprehend the idea of female empowerment. Feminist viewpoints emphasize how literature depicts women's quest for freedom and self-definition as well as their opposition to social constraints. Simone de Beauvoir asserts that women's freedom is linked to their capacity to establish their selves outside of conventional social norms (de Beauvoir, 1949). Thus, feminist perspectives on female characters aid in the explanation of how literary works depict women's agency, power, and personal empowerment.

Objectives of the Research

-To examine the character of Del Jordan as a symbol of female autonomy, and empowerment.

-To analyze how the novel emphasizes women's resistance to and societal limitations on them.

Methodology

This study examines women's empowerment in *Lives of Girls and Women* using a qualitative approach based on textual analysis. The primary character, Del Jordan, is the subject of the study, which also looks at her development and identity quest. The study examines how Del challenges social norms and conventional gender roles by closely examining a few chosen passages from the novel. The analysis explains topics of education, self-realization and independence from a feminist perspective.

A Study of Del Jordan's character in *Lives of Girls and Women*

Lives of Girls and Women depicts Del's personal journey from childhood into womanhood in the Jubilee town in Ontario. Munro sheds light on personal experiences, family, as well as Del's relationships with other characters. The novel portrays a powerful picture of the complexities and countless challenges that Del faces during her transition into womanhood. Del's inner growth is shown throughout her experiences of sexuality and search for identity. Her journey, which focuses on social norms, identity, and gender, becomes a universal study.

Barbara Godard (1984) explains that the novelist, examines how women perceive their bodies as the object of their desires rather than the object of men's desires in

Lives of Girls and Women (p. 43). So, it tackles female empowerment as a significant theme. In fact, the novel, *Lives of Girls and Women*, was published in 1971, an era of liberating force concerning female identity. Yet, Del Jordan, the protagonist, lives in quite different time, of 1940s in a conservative place in southern Ontario.

In her fiction, Munro tries to express herself, shedding light on the limitations that she struggles against. Neuman and Kambourelis (1986) express that: a woman writer's language is a language of necessity that exposes her personal reality and is a language of the body. (p. 32). Here, they refer to the reality of girls and women and how they are transformed from phase to another in a real masculine world in which men are engaged with patriarchy. Del's community is full of impervious or impenetrable men who have different kinds of desires imposed on the Jubilee society. As much as her sexual relationships with men is concerned, Heble (1994) comments: The fact that Del does not refer to the penis and that "it" is still a pronoun with a distinct antecedent suggests that reality has been appropriated in some way. (p. 66).

Heble (1994) refers to Del's viewpoint concerning the sexual situation of Mr. Chamberlain's masturbation. When Del's breast is fondled by Chamberlain, she considers this process as: impertinent transgression. so confident in itself. so sentiment-free and authoritative. (p. 177). Thus, Del finds that his penis represents authority, saying: "it did not seem to have anything to do with me" (Munro, 2011, p. 185). For men. There are differences between physical and intellectual submission. Del, who retains her honesty with Chamberlain, enjoys his secretive assaults. Yet, she turns the tables when they are alone at the fields. She is awakened to sexuality and turns into a person who is stimulated by watching naked bodies. The incident of Chamberlain's masturbation is portrayed by Del in clinical terms instead of being amazed or excited at the spectacle she recognizes.

In her relationship with Garnet French, a similar pattern is displayed. Del surrenders to Garnet's advances when she feels comforted concerning her sexual tension. But, when abusing her as he desires, she reacts with violence. She also encounters any power of men over her in order not to be a victim. She wants to show her own cleverness in every movement act or conduct. Whilst, Garnet is conscious enough to know that Del lacks real submission. This is the reason behind his forcing her into the act of baptism. This belongs to the fact that though suppressors try their best to suppress others, there would be enough courage to

rebel against them. In many situations, Del feels that she has to restrain from showing her feelings for being mostly unable to protect herself. When being awry in her sexual relationship with Jerry Storey, Del feels furious. When facing patriarchal request to be in a friendly way, she chooses the way of obedience. Del makes love or sex with Jerry and she is mute in her relationship with him. She looks like a woman of flesh. Anyway, the novel portrays a woman who controls her own life, yet it shows fatalism. So, women try to fight against patriarchy, and should submit at the same time. Thus, the certain thing in a woman's life is her eventual demise (Chang, 2016).

Women who refuse to be under the control of men's authority are described as evil in Del's society, and they: can seem to be both beneath and above the realm of cultural hegemony from some perspectives, but in reality, it is just outside of it (Ortner, 1972). So, a woman's desire is to be independent from the culture that she lives in. Moreover, Del, the typical heroine for Munro, is involved in femininity. Del's Aunt Elspeth and Antie Grace represent respectable female whose focus is on the routine of their houses and gossiping. She considers that her uncle's wife, Nile, is unnatural and criticizes her as an unnaturally impeccable that: The aunt has failed to grasp the idea that gendered identity is not an inherent trait of women, as seen by her exaggerated femininity (Chang, 2016). Del is really troubled by them as well as Naomi, her friend, when she adheres to the rigid standards. Whilst, at the Dance Hall in Gay-la episode, Del tries to laugh and dance to appease the demands of her male partner.

Del notices the monsters of Jubilee or those models of women who encourage the rules of society. Gillbert and Gubbar (as cited in Razavi & Beyad, 2020) refer to a writer woman as a monster, a sexually-defected and immoral. In addition, Cinda Gault (as cited in Razavi & Beyad, 2020) expresses: Addie's affiliation with the traditional male facts narrative (p. 78) portrays her as a man. Moreover, the kind of society Del lives in, makes her lose a portion of her identity. She claims that as I stared at the moon, I wanted to ponder about the universe and I wanted men to love me (Munro, 2011). So, it seems that Del feels terrified of sex. She is shy from clarified sexuality.

When selling encyclopedias with her mother, Del feels complacent or self-satisfied. For most members of her society, knowledge is "just oddity". Del's search for knowledge is an anomaly or irregular in her community. Moreover, in Munro's writing, sex is compulsory to young girls, as it mixes danger and mystery. For Del,

sexuality is alluring, yet it is dangerous. So, she feels fascinated as well as disgusted. She regards normality as in the following: Stretched over such shamelessness is the skin of ordinary looks. such all-consuming lust bursts (Munro, 2011). Thus, Dell is depressed due to the brochures in Fern's bedroom and the town prostitutes. She also regards her sexuality as unfaithful or treacherous. Anyway, she can overcome the unhealthy sexual experiments and appreciate sensual and bodily knowledge.

After sexual experiments, Del wakes up to be a writer. When writing a novel, Del tries to reflect what she watches as well as her experiences in life. When returning back to Jubilee, She looks to her surroundings in a different way than before. Del, in her epilogue, expresses her personal experiences. She re-understands human lives as: dreary, incredible, and incomprehensible deep caverns with kitchen linoleum flooring (Munro, 2011). The part of Caroline's Gothic tale is significant throughout her evolution as a writer. It enables her to behave correctly with the restrictions of social system which are imposed on her and other women. When sitting with Marion's brother, Bobby Sherriff, Del desires to record things only, and her obsession for this is: "voracious and misguided" (Munro, 2011, p. 198). Del would reserve: Every last thing, every layer of thought and speech, every light touch on walls or bark, every pothole, every agony, every illusion, all of these things are held motionless and remain bright forever (Munro, 2011). Del sees that Jubilee includes old-fashioned inhabitants, and conservative issues. This place also influences the whole world with its germ of life. There, it is strange for a woman to write or express her feelings. Whereas men are so empowered that they can write freely.

As much as spiritual awakening of female empowerment is concerned, Del chooses writing instead of love and this is a triumph to be free in her life that: in a state of stagnation, with a funeral marked by imaginative failures, resistance to change, and even regression (Munro, 2011). Though Del is accompanied with others in her journey, yet, she is alone in her thoughts. Accordingly, Howells (2024) explores that Del's romantic relationship has validated her feeling of loneliness. while enlightening her about the painful inconsistencies between truth and illusion as well as the exquisite rhythms of her own body. (p. 46). Del makes use of her relationship with men to be better in understanding life as it really is, and to be a free writer as well. The reader can notice the complex development of a young child into a sensitive woman artist. The nobility existed in Del is clarified throughout her transformation into a woman and a confident writer. Del is so strong that she

struggles against the conventions of the society that she lives in every day. She faces a patriarchal society, which is superficially neat. Yet, she notices violence, disorder, and strangeness in this kind of society. Del tries to understand the relation between harsh reality and superficial notions , between genders, and between visible and hidden sense (Howells, 2024).

It is worth mentioning that Munro creates the character of Del as an innocent and vulnerable child, her knowledge is limited and it needs safety. Her concept of innocence is not that kind of a child being perfect by adults who attempt: to teach the child and preserve the qualities of innocence (Kincaid, 1992). Rather, Del discloses that she is unable of describing persons and events that are at the very edge of representation, particularly in terms of language (Heble, 1994). She is unable to express the events around happen to her. Yet, she is able to describe everything like the confusing events that are not understood. Del is different from other young girls who follow their fathers blindly and encourage the masculine society unintentionally. Then, these girls can see the changes of the dialectic between experience and comprehension, between the past and the present (Duncan, 2011).

Del focuses on the character of her mother as an interesting woman in Jubilee. The name of the mother, Ada, is mentioned in the beginning of the novel, then it is mentioned as the mother. This refers to her role as a woman which is worth-mentioning. Munro makes Del write about her mother naming the chapter as "Princess Ida". Ada is interested in Alfred Tennyson's poetry as it refers to women's freedom and empowerment. Ada publishes: letters advocating for women's rights and education (Munro, 2011). Del writes more about her mother's personality in the novel as: I believe that women's and girls' lives are about to change. Yes, we are responsible for making it happen. Up until recently, women have been more connected to males than domestic animals. (Munro, 2011). Here, Ada empowers women's rights. She thinks of a better future. She is obsessed with scientific knowledge and this leads to a kind of life that is free from the ignorant surroundings, or the routine imposed on women's lives. So, to some extent, Del is inspired by her mother's thoughts. For Del's mother: "knowledge is warm and lovely" (Munro, 2011, p. 73). She cares about science fiction and reading articles to discuss. In Jubilee, Ada is named as: "encyclopedia lady". She avoids her mother's path of religion when prefers the Bible on feeding her poor family that: Ada purposefully

selected a different route from her own mother, whom she hates for using all of her inheritance to buy bibles rather than providing for her family's needs (Munro, 2011). Ada cares about knowledge and ignores the social customs existed in Jubilee. Del gradually understands her mother's personality that she sells encyclopedias to gain her living. For Jubilee people, an independent woman in her work is disdainful and scornful and: She needs to go on the road, so she doesn't have much time to iron (Munro, 2011). So, Ada is regarded as an abnormal woman in Jubilee. According to people there: It is impossible to teach women how to play (Munro, 2011). However, Ada's pursuit for her interests and self-esteem inspires Del so much.

It is clear that Munro presents the character of Ada as a positive role model because the latter like to achieve something different in her life. She tries to change the traditional issues of being a wife and a mother only. In return, Del adopts her mother's consideration for intellectualism and independence. However, Ada feels frustrated with her life, and she: "Had all her stories got turned to frizz.. after all.. to end up with just her just Del 's mother in Jubilee?" (Munro, 2011, p. 90). Ada is not contented with her living in the town of Jubilee that is: The final residence she desires (Munro, 2011). In consequences, people there also accept her hardly or scarcely. Ada tries to escape into fantasies to think about distinct future, that: when the land would be permanently confined and subdued, and when cities like Jubilee would be supplanted by concrete domes and mushrooms (Munro, 2011). So, she doesn't accept her reality but imagines a better future for all. In fact, Mr. Chamberlain wants to impress Ada by talking about his visit to Florence which is significant in her encyclopedic knowledge, Ada says: You were in Florence, my mother repeated, both happy and perplexed. (Munro, 2011). Temporarily, Ada expresses her admiration to the man who abuses her daughter and betrays her friend, Fern.

To state the matter in a different way, Del becomes Ada's representative for achieving her dreams. When judging her daughter's relationship with Garnet, Ada says: You've fallen head over heels for a boy. You and your intelligence. Will you spend the rest of your life in Jubilee? (Munro, 2011). This means that Ada expresses her fear for Del to repeat her fault of living all her life in Jubilee. Del's reject for such an outcome is when she refuses her friend's offer to live her life in a way he wants. So, when leaving the Jubilee town to live different life and to renew the old issues, Del meets Ada's expectations of escaping Jubilee to succeed in her life.

Munro portrays Aunt Elspeth and Auntie Grace as other mothers for Del. They are not interested in Del's mother encyclopedic knowledge. They also look down on her business. Their thoughts are opposite to Ada's when regarding men and their significance, that: They laughed at men's labor, but they also held it in the highest regard. And they would never, ever interfere with it; the distinction between men's and women's labor was the most obvious (Munro, 2011). The Aunties consider the notions of leaving the town as silly. They are totally satisfied with Jubilee's values. They also care for Uncle Craig for being the writer of Jubilee Chronicle. They embody the traditions values of their town in a humorous manner that they have no other way of accepting their reality as it is.

For Del, the aunties who are funny during her childhood, are not enjoyable when she grows up. Del gradually perceives that: The older they grew, the more weak, admirable, and inhumane their building seemed. They told the same stories and performed the same gags (Munro, 2011). So, they do not develop their thoughts and values. Del's mother chooses a world of dreams and science to develop herself as well as her daughter. Yet, the mother figures, the aunties, happily accept the social norms and obey them. In Uncle Craig's account, the aunties tell jokes, gossip, and memorize past events. Del understands them as well as her mother. So, she is able to appreciate and records reality of women and society.

Patriarchy refers to the male-dominated society and its control for women. It colonizes females in a society. Oakley (2016) points out that: "gender is a matter of culture" (P. 69). Therefore, the patriarchal culture institutionalizes gender. In this respect, Munro is called realist and super realist as she defends women rights against patriarchal culture. She records miserable or unfortunate circumstances of girls and women's lives. Del is an irritable child who: becoming a clever, maladjusted adult who is disillusioned (Bowering, 1979). Munro presents a photographic vision in this novel that provides us: with the idea that we might visualize the entire patriarchal universe as a collection of pictures of the oppression of girls and women (Munro, 2011).

Basically, in societies, gender discrimination is instituted by environment, parents, relatives, and neighbour. In these societies, boys are considered as superior whereas girls are inferior. This idea is influential for people. Munro (2011) argues that: Since our sex organs are on the inside and theirs are on the outside, and because we are better at controlling our cravings than they are, the girl is to blame. A boy is

powerless to stop himself (P. 148). However, women are oppressed in the male controlling society. They miss their equation with men that they cannot raise their voice. They are regarded as subjects and enslaved citizens. However, they have the potential power to revolt against such thoughts. Accordingly, Bouchier (1983) explains that: Fear of pregnancy, fear of hell, and fear of social humiliation have traditionally governed women's sexuality. More and more detailed knowledge about sexual matters dispelled the ignorance that resulted from these sanctions as they lost their effectiveness. (p. 26).

Del is involved in social, religious, and sexual issues. She confronts knowledge, love, sex, power, and belief in God. So, as an inferior subject, Del has to be powerful enough to set things right in her life. Del changes into a conscious girl throughout her personal experiences. She understands and accepts herself. The heroine begins her positive advance of understanding things well as an outcome of experiences of sex. This determines her awareness. Moreover, the society which respects a boy rather than a girl, expects that Del spends her time working with her mother in the house. She is also expected to be submissive to the customs and traditions imposed. Intellectualism is specialized for boys only. So, when reading a section by a New York psychiatrist concerning female and male ideas, Del is hysterically annoyed. In this respect, It is mentioned that: The boy considers the cosmos. its vastness and enigma. "I have to wash my hair," the girl thinks. After reading this. I had to set down the magazine because I was so furiously upset. (Munro, 2011, p. 150).

For Ada, life will be positively changed for the side of women that: The lives of women and girls are about to alter. Indeed. But we have to make it happen. Up until now, women's only relationship has been with men. Really, we don't have any more lives than domestic animals (Munro, 2011). When growing up alienated with her family on a fox farm in the Flats Road, Del describes this place as: not included in the town and: not included in the nation either. We were in a house that was as cramped and quiet as a boat at sea (Munro, 2011). She explores that she lives in a deep social alienation in that uncivilized world. For her mother, it is the last place that she can live in. Whenever she is asked by people about the place of her living, she answers: near the Flats Road's end (Munro, 2011).

Ada also shows her opinion about Del's cousin, Ruth McQueen that she fears emerging from her own burrow (Munro, 2011). Ruth refuses a scholarship for her cleverness and prefers staying at home instead of joining college. For Jubilee people,

a girl who is ambitious, is considered fool and being laughed by people. The kind of self-respect that they have, prevents them to follow new ways offered and: People in the countryside prefer it when others decline offers of marriage, jobs, opportunities, and money (Munro, 2011). Therefore, Ruth McQueen quits college for the social conventions that form her life. Ada's work of selling encyclopedias, poses for her mobility, independence, and her rationality. She is regarded as eccentric by neighbour. Sometimes, even Del feels ashamed of her mother's behaviour as being rejected while spreading knowledge. Ada is frustrated with Jubilee people who are dominated by rural male-society. She longs for a new life away from the limitations imposed on women (Rasporich, 1990).

There is a hidden refusal for the life of women as traditional with no path to knowledge. Uncle Benny's wife, Madeleine is an example for that. Madeleine who enters the Flats Road's life, escapes this life leaving her family of a husband and a daughter. She rages and treats them brutally. Though Madeleine's threat of cracking a stove-lifter to harm Del, the latter is attracted with curiosity for such resistance to social expectations. For Del, it doesn't matter that Madeleine is a dangerous disturbing woman, she finds in her, signs of victory. Moreover, Madeleine gives up the restrictions of sex, women's dependence on men, and submission. For Del, Madeleine is a good model of female to fight against the social traditions and social norms. Though she is not an ideal model, yet she embodies the kind of revolt against the authority of society to achieve her freedom (Rasporich, 1990).

Del is deeply engaged with the notion of flesh and nakedness. She is preoccupied with the idea of sex related to human degradation. Del feels degraded by the strong image of Mary Agnes, her retarded cousin, raped by four boys when they took off her clothes, leaving her in the cold mud. The sexual oppression of men is violent and refers to the deprivation of human dignity. In a sexual experiment, the individual loses control and that weakens the integrity of the humans. However, Del is somehow fascinated with Mr. Chamberlain's naked body and sees that as an overwhelming powerful process, that A man in the nude. His marble object, which resembles a drooping lily petal, is hanging on him for everyone to see (Munro, 2011). Quietly, Del's interest in his body, leads to imagining her awakening sexuality.

When talking about wartime years in Italy, Chamberlain portrays the situation of girls who are sold to soldiers. He exploits Del's body by rubbing her breast and

thighs amidst the family. This act makes Del imagine things wildly. Del secretly tries the gown of her mother, imagining that she is an Italian girl satisfying her desires of carnality. Though her disgust of sex is overcome by her desire and curiosity, yet she quickly expresses that sex is: A moment of madness. like a dream. brutal. disdainful discovery in a world of respectable looks (Munro, 2011). For Del, the flirtation of any girl is forbidden and shameful. It is irresistible and dangerous as: It was the transitional phase. a link between what was feasible and what wasn't. recognized and typical behavior. and the enchanted, beastly deed that I could not fathom (Munro, 2011).

Del is shocked by the way in which Chamberlain behaves as he wants to practice sex with Del. She expresses that his organ or penis: appeared foolish and brutal, raw and ugly-colored like a wound, and to me it was fun, and vulnerable (Munro, 2011). So, Chamberlain who enjoys showing himself to young girls, is damaged by Del as a petty man aims to seduce her sexually. Del finds her way of freedom with Jerry Storey who has an eccentric motivation in reading and learning. Intellectual curiosity makes Del differ from other ordinary girls who follow internalized conventions. So, her relationship with Jerry is based on mutual intellectualism. Yet, in fact, Jerry feels disgusted of girls as he regards them inferior and he believes in female's biologically determined inferiority. This conviction is familiar in Jubilee and is perplexed in Del's mind saying: To be honest, he informed me that I had an excellent memory. a typical feminine aptitude for language, comparatively poor cognitive skills, and virtually no ability to think abstractly. (Munro, 2011). The force of superior knowledge is artificial to Jerry and he: "looks ahead to prodigious catastrophe. Soon, too" (Munro, 2011, p. 165). Meantime, Del responds with the typical dread. The timid female rationality would provoke him to oppose more (Munro, 2011). So, she deeply feels that there is a gap between her and Jerry in concern with notions of gender.

While Del shows that Jerry: was aware of how they had split the atom and was in touch with reality (Munro, 2011). She goes on to say that the only world I was connected to was the one I had created for myself, using certain books, to be strange and nurturing (Munro, 2011). Del considers Jerry's world is sterile and unfriendly. She eventually recognizes that he is not the one who suits her world of her own creation. The sexual experience of her relationship with Jerry is far from satisfactory. The futile attempts of making love, fails as there is no harmony or conformity. Del says: Like bags of wet sand, our bodies fell against one another without resistance

and with ecstasy. As we have read and heard, our mouths opened to meet, yet we remained aloof. Our tongues are harsh and just lumps of unfortunate flesh (Munro, 2011). So, the only moment of excitement of their relationship is when he asks her to get off her clothes to see her naked from a distance. Del's secret desire to make love with Jerry lets her associate with him in this sexual experience. However, out of sense of deficiency, Jerry despises the instinctive nature of sexuality as it refers to the lack of mental control and vulnerability. Nakedness is shameful for Del and she always disgusts the idea of exposing her body. She expresses her distaste of nightgowns and that: due to the fact that they left you exposed between your legs and twisted around to work on you while you were sleeping (Munro, 2011).

The man who participates in Del's mental and spiritual awareness or development, is Garnet. The new reality of Del's experience with Garnet is: "something not far from what animals must see the world without names" (Munro, 2011, p. 184). The incident of church revival refers to a young virgin being gazed at by the one whose interest is irresistible and annoying at the same time Garnet's eye sockets are deep. cheeks that are lengthy and slightly sunken. An expression of solemn, unaware arrogance (Munro, 2011), conforms Del's hero of cherished dreams. When looking at Garnet, Del feels powerless as he reflects: Every possible combination of violence and self-control, pride and submissiveness, fierceness and tenderness (Munro, 2011). At the revival, Del doesn't know Garnet's name. Yet, she thinks about him deeply. When offering Del a ride one day, she gets disturbed and excited at the same time .The circumstances are anticipated but not ideal (Munro, 2011). She feels disappointed. When Del is introduced into adult sexuality, she is truly infatuated. As a result, she allows the sensation of floating to be unrestricted, protective, and endowed with limitless power (Munro, 2011), she senses that the fate of being: "endangered and desired" (Munro, 2011, p. 121) fails with Chamberlain but succeeds with Garnet. As being overwhelming powerful, Del finds safety in Garnet's world. He has sense of responsibility that's why she feels pleasant.

When visiting Garnet's family Del gets shocked of the names of Garnet's old girlfriends engraved on a beam of veranda. Garnet signs x after their names. He doesn't express anything to Del. His deed shows the low level of these girls for him. On the contrary, Garnet adds Del's name to the list, carving stars around her name and draws a print underneath. This points his decision of adding no more names to them and her name is the last one. Moreover, the story of "Baptizing" echoes the

Bluebeard story as the abductor compels his power on the abducted virgin even if he destroys her. The game begins happily as the two swim in the lake. They make love and then Garnet seriously bobs Del underwater unwillingly that: The laughter eventually stopped during the battle, and their faces' broad, painful, determined grimas hardened (Munro, 2011). So, the game is a public manifestation of the man and woman's power. Throughout Baptizing ritual, Garnet's attempt is to initiate Del into womanhood by accepting the notion of dependence on him. Whereas Del expresses Garnet's helplessness. Thus, Del fights with her total strength against him, refusing to obey his rules. When rejecting male aggression and victimization, Del humiliates the Bluebeard story.

"Baptizing" refers to the idea of transformation for Del on which she tries to initiate her own path in life. Yet, Garnet is unaware of her new path in the world, Del mentions that: I couldn't be furious; I was too amazed. I neglected to be reminded. It was inconceivable to me that he wouldn't realize that he was the one using all of the abilities I had given him. that I intended to keep him permanently stitched into the skin of his golden lover (Munro, 2011). Now, Garnet is shown to be a victim for the male myth of regarding sex as a way of controlling women. For Del, sexuality concerns submission, but the person's to the body, not the woman's to the guy. It refers to her will to satisfy her desire in the warm, transparent, and irresistibly flowing water (Munro, 2011). It is the idea of the instincts that are uncontrolled by the mind. So, in Del's point of view, sex is an individual act. She is 17 years old and fights to change the rules of male society especially that of Garnet who is 23. She always thinks of her own world of sexuality, abuse, and the disintegrated self. She refuses to give in to Garnet's desire as well as his offer to marry her. Eventually, she chooses self-autonomy rather than man's plan to degrade her.

Del is different from other females in Jubilee as she refuses the tradition of sexual roles. Howells (2014) indicates her inclination: that She constantly struggles with her dual awareness of her independent self in order to be ravished and transformed. (p. 83). Del discovers that her power comes from her actual self. So, she is saved by herself rather than any other hero in her life. Del points out that women like Marion Sherriff and Miss Farris are different from her as they hope for men's help, so they cannot develop their autonomous self. They also do not perceive their actual self, so they have no real place in the world.

Del thinks of writing a novel concerning with the Sherriff family members and their disasters. She focuses on the character who is "the photographer", taking frightening pictures to people to show hidden things in them. Del finds it difficult to write her Jubilee novel. When electing the Sherriff family and their personal tragedies, Del decides to rearrange their life. She says: I relocated them from their home to a towering brick home with long, narrow windows that I had built myself (Munro, 2011). Marion, whose name is Caroline in her novel, has lust and caprice after young men and this is irreconcilable to her assumed role. It seems that this character represents Del's desire, disgust, and perversity. There is a combination of love and death, desire and disgust.

When meeting her true hero or villain, the photographer, Caroline who confirms her survival mentions that he has: a dazzling, uncaring smile, black hair parted in the middle, and a terrible fluid energy about him (Munro, 2011). Caroline's hard sexuality makes her a sacrifice, with her fragile body crushed into the muck and hen dirt of backyards, her body spread out for sex on moldy, unpleasant tombstones, and her body pressed against the harsh bark of trees. endorsing men's killing weight .(Munro, 2011). So, Caroline's decision of drowning herself in the river is when she finds out she is pregnant and abandoned by the photographer. In addition, when writing her novel, Del confesses that the story: seemed accurate to me. as though I had actually found, rather than invented, such people and a story, as though that town were right behind the one I passed every day (Munro, 2011).

Del's transformation from childhood into womanhood witnesses sufferings and tragic events for her as well as other female characters. She always admits that a girl's progress comes true away from men's interruption, saying: "And this was what I expected sexual communication to be a flash of insanity. a dreamlike. Ruthless. contemptuous breakthrough in a world of decent appearances" (Munro, 2011, p. 205). So, her desire is to escape the tyranny and oppression of men. Throughout her contact with men, Del is aware of inner re-structure of herself. Even though she is different from those women who are unambitious and do not defend themselves against the victimizers, Del represents all women in the Jubilee street. Throughout her journey, by following the path of writing, Del understands how to be free from the limits of sexuality. For her, writing represents independence and power. She faces the threat of sexuality as a form of incest or rape in which a female loses her

virginity. So, Del chooses to be a writer which is an honorable way of empowerment for women.

Conclusion

Del Jordan's journey in *Lives of Girls and Women* demonstrates a deep investigation of female empowerment and self-discovery. Through her experiences, Munro invites the reader to think on the complex nature of empowerment itself in addition to illuminating the difficulties of a young woman's awakening in a patriarchal society. Del's persona exemplifies the bravery to challenge social expectations, the fortitude to value her uniqueness, and the tenacity to forge her own route in spite of environmental constraints. Del's eventual decisions reflect a more comprehensive declaration of independence and agency, implying that genuine empowerment results from having a thorough understanding of oneself and the bravery to live a genuine life. Thus, Munro's *Lives of Girls and Women* is a classic of feminist literature because it provides a potent critique of gender relations as well as an uplifting example of the never-ending quest for self-definition.

Lives of Girls and Women leads to a clear understanding of femininity that constructs a girl's self respect and empowerment in a community. Female empowerment is a main theme that earns careful consideration. It throws light on the oppression of the patriarchal society on the female characters. Alice Munro creates the characters of Del and her female peers, reflecting her attitudes about the females lives that are governed by gendered norms. She also shows females' desires to free themselves from the myths of their society. Del rejects the limits imposed on her by the Jubilee society. She acquires self-discovery after many challenges she experiences in her life time. Her description to Ada refers to her own success. Ada seems to be free from the anxiety of authorship. She believes in her way of thinking, and strife for intellectual improvement.

Del exposes the potential resentment existed in women at the time of 1940s. She always tries to alleviate her anxiety. She also thinks that sexuality causes women's dependence. For Del, sexuality is a representation of violence and evil. She cannot understand a healthy sexual relationship. Del is reacting to the invisible part of life, her daily communication with the people who obey the existed norms, enables her to be experienced of others. Del eventually accepts her sexual adventures as a necessary component of her development rather than rejecting or downplaying them. Her experience offers a realistic depiction of adolescence and

the search for one's identity in a culture that has mixed opinions about women's sexuality. She integrates her prior experiences into a stronger, more self-aware identity, moving past her early relationships with a deeper sense of self and a complex grasp of her values and desires.

Generally speaking, women are able to take care of their everyday lives, paying no attention to the notion of a man who imposes unfair treatment on a woman. The novel tackles the differences between past and present or between powerless and powerful women. By exploring females' qualities and personalities, the narrator establishes her own identity. At the end, Del makes use of both her memories of childhood, and her emotions and understanding to the inhabitants of Jubilee, reflecting her own experiences in her writing. Del tries to make a balance between the internal world and the external one, and she constructs her new identity. In addition, Munro invites readers to think of the importance of female empowerment and its influence on society.

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تمكين المرأة: دراسة شخصية ديل جوردان في رواية حياة الفتيات والنساء ل اليس مونرو

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الملخص:

يتناول هذا البحث موضوع تمكين المرأة الذي كان مهما في المجتمع الكندي في اربعينيات القرن العشرين، ويعمل كموضوع رئيسي في الرواية. كما يتناول البحث كيف تكتسب بطلة الرواية في حياة الفتيات والنساء ل اليس مونرو الهوية والتمكين اثناء الطفولة وبلوغ سن الرشد. تهدف الرواية الى ترسيخ مبادئ البطلة ومواقفها لتعزيز وتصوير مجتمع الاناث. في هذا البحث، يتم تقديم تجارب بطلة الرواية التي تظهر المواقف الخفية والصارمة للعالم بأسره. يتم التعرف على تمكين بطلة الرواية من خلال التغييرات في سلوكها حول كيفية اذلالها للتجارب الجنسية والاورام التي يفرضها عليها الرجال. لذلك عند رفض اضطهاد المجتمع الذكوري، فان ديل تضع طريقة جديدة للحرية لها وكذلك للاناث الاخريات في المجتمع. وهكذا فان بطلة الرواية، ديل جوردان، تحقق الصحة الروحية للاناث. علاوة على ذلك ، يلقي البحث الضوء على كيفية ان مونرو ، وهي شخصية انثى جديدة متمكنة ، تخترق مفهوم النوع الاجتماعي في مجتمعها. السمة المهمة للشخصيات الاناث هي أنها تولي اهتماما لتجاربها اليومية. تواجه تلك الشخصيات الواقع وتكون قادرة على التعبير عن أي حدث بصوتها .