CHAPTER II

OBJECTIFIED GENDERED TRIPTYCH

MARTHA CRAVEN NUSSBAUM

(b. 6 May 1947)

American Philosopher, Feminist and

Ernst Freund Distinguished Service Professor of Law and Ethics

Objectification is a notion central to feminist theory. It can be roughly defined as the seeing and/or treating a person, usually a woman, as an object. Self-Objectification is the act of treating one’s own self as an object.

- Martha Nussbaum
Chapter II

Objectified Gendered Triptych

From time immemorial, almost all the societies irrespective of Race, Class and Culture have discriminated both men and women and have dictated and prescribed specific gender roles to them. Men have been identified with attributes of dominance, masculinity, and independence. To the contrary women have been objectified and branded as fragile, sensitive and totally dependent. This notion becomes applicable in both western and eastern cultures. Even modern western theorists continue to maintain the same identification. For example, Susan A. Basow, a social/clinical psychologist who has particular attention in the psychology of gender, in her book Gender: Stereotypes and Roles (1992) states that,

Sex is a biological term referring to people, animals, etc., being either female or male depending on their sex organs or genes. Sex also refers to the differences between the individuals that make them male or female. These differences are biologically determined. (157)

Eastern societies have also maintained the same ideology. On the whole, the masculine world continues to be patriarchal whereas the feminine world tends to be objectified or forced to succumb to ‘Female self-objectification.’ Though in the contemporary world women attempt to adopt flexible gender roles, and try to prove to be ‘Androgynous,’ which is an ambiguous form of combined masculine and feminine characteristics, yet self objectification predominates their life, where they result in either as observers or experiment their own selves which results in individual’s self-examination of ‘Chronic Self- Surveillance.’ Objectification is the act of treating a person as an object. Self- Objectification is the act of treating one’s own self as an object. Martha Nussbaum, an American Philosopher has an attentive concern on
feminism and philosophy. She identifies seven prominent features of objectification namely,

- Instrumentality
- Denial of Autonomy
- Inertness
- Fungibility
- Violability
- Ownership and
- Denial of Subjectivity

The predominant characteristic feature of objectification according to feminist theorists is Instrumentality. Immanuel Kant defines objectification in his work *Lectures on Ethics* (2001) as,

> Sexual love makes of the loved person an Object of appetite; as soon as that appetite has been stilled, the person is cast aside as one casts away a lemon which has been sucked dry. … as soon as a person becomes an Object of appetite for another, all motives of moral relationship cease to function, because as an Object of appetite for another a person becomes a thing and can be treated and used as such by everyone” (163).

Any individual who is equated to be an object or treated so proves that humanity has failed to render due reverence to the individual.

The second characteristic feature of objectification is the ‘Denial of Autonomy.’ It is viewed by Nussbaum as lacking self-determination. It is the trait of autonomy that leads to the empowerment of an individual as he/she make decisions and takes bold strategies to attain that decision.
Martha C. Nussbaum defines the trait of ‘Inertness’ to be in an individual who is treated as deficient in agency and activity. These women, who are branded as deficient, are made to feel powerless and helpless mostly by the dominant patriarchal world who is well seated in a powerful situation.

Nussbaum defines ‘Fungibility’ as the interchange of one person with the other. Feminist theorists particularly lawyers have condemned this human rights ‘Violation’ to be prevalent and widespread in the present times. The immensity of violation in all spheres has become so gruesome through which women have been totally shattered and have become prey to all incongruities.

Nussbaum defines ‘Ownership’ as ‘A person is treated as possessed by another person who can be bought and sold by the objectifier.’ For example, African American slavery had resulted in both the men and women to be objectified and dehumanized. It is the African women who have been equated to reproductive machines owing to racial discrimination. Nussbaum equates the ‘Denial of subjectivity’ to an individual who is deprived of his/her feelings and experiences.

It was Rae Langton in the year 2009, fourteen years after Nussbaum’s theory of objectification who added three distinctive features to her list. She is an Australian-British Professor of Philosophy. She elucidates that women become submissive and object-like because of men’s needs and desires. Men want women to be this way and if they have authority, they force women to become this way. Langston’s three additional features of Self- Objectification are,

- Reduction to the body
- Reduction to appearance and
- Silencing
She states that identifying a person biologically and judged him by his/her physical appearance and treating a person as if they lack the ability to speak has continued for centuries. Langton claims that ‘when object-hood is projected on to women who are not only seen more object like but are made to become more object like’ she ultimately claims that it is the epistemological dimension that creates objectification. The Self- Objectification process has been further illustrated vividly through this figure.

Fig.5- Illustration of the Process of Self – Objectification
Self-Objectification assumptions arise mainly owing to the gender conflicts in both men and women. During the late 1800s, psychologists while working on gender research aimed to establish the white male’s intellectual superiority by documenting the differences in the size of the brain in the male and female. While attempting to find these differences later even in the modern era, psychologists like Wolley and Holling Worth (2015) based on their studies finally assumed that the existing differences between men and women were based on Motor, Affective, Sensory and Intellectual abilities. Masculinity from immemorial was defined as sets of behaviors, interests, and traits equated to male gender role. For example, traits like aggression, apathy and goal/success oriented action defined men. To the contrary, women were defined to possess female gender roles like nurturing, submissiveness and empathy. As a result, these social constructional frameworks for centuries have viewed gender as socially formed qualities inherent to men and to women.

While the fixed gender roles have been meekly accepted by women of the past, owing to the advancements in all spheres, women have gradually attempted to question, to think and react against these gender roles. As a result, the gender conflict in every female, right from their adolescent stage to the middle age and even in the old age have made them reframe, the gender roles. While attempting to reframe though they have not succeeded yet the conflict in women to question themselves has created an awakening through which varied phases of feminist attitudes, theories, and movements have developed. It is owing to the gender role conflict that has resulted in sensitizing the women for a change which writers like Alice Munro have attempted through their literary portrayals.

This core chapter titled as, ‘Objectified Gendered Triptych’ analyses Alice Munro’s twenty-one short stories taken from the collections: ‘Dance of the Happy
Shades,’ ‘Who do you think you are?’ and ‘Lives of Girls and Women.’ The short
stories taken are ‘Walker Brothers Cowboy,’ ‘Boys and Girls,’ ‘Red Dress-1946’
(DHS); ‘Royal Beatings,’ ‘Privilege,’ ‘Half a Grapefruit,’ ‘Wild Swans,’ ‘The Beggar
Maid,’ ‘Mischief,’ ‘Providence,’ ‘Simon’s Luck,’ ‘Spelling’ and ‘Who Do You Think
You Are?’(WHO) and ‘The Flats Road,’ ‘Heirs of the Living Body,’ ‘Princess Ida,’
‘Age of Faith,’ ‘Changes and Ceremonies,’ ‘Lives of Girls and Women,’ ‘Baptizing’
and ‘Epilogue: The Photographer’ (LGW). All these short stories have been cross-
examined from Martha Nussbaum’s Theory of Objectification and Rae Langston’s
three distinct features added to Nussbaum’s theory.

The Dance of the Happy Shades (1968) is the first short story collection by Alice
Munro in the year 1968. The first short story taken for analysis from this collection
is ‘Walker Brothers Cowboy.’ It is set in the 1930s. The story is narrated by an
adolescent Canadian girl, who lives in the city of Tuppertown. Her family used to
have a flourishing fox farm, but later, lost their investment and social respect in their
area. Her father Ben Jordan after incurring the loss was working as a salesman in the
company Walker Brothers.

One day, the father and daughter walk down to Lake Huron. The unnamed
narrator comes across the homeless and jobless people on the way. She has the habit
of daydreaming and so she thinks about her knowledgeable father. She imagines how
she will appear in the 20th century and it would not be quite enough to live in a world
where carriages were the only sort of land transport. She thinks how old she will be in
the 20th century and she fears the progression of age and death. As her father’s
business has not been so good, the girl laments over her future.

Her mother is very heartbroken about the husband’s misfortune in business and
the loss of their fox farm. Though she pretends not to care, yet she ponders over the
loss. One day, the narrator goes to Simon’s grocery for shopping along with her mother. When they return, her mother has a severe headache. The father suggests that they should get some fresh air. The mother feels tired and so asks her daughter to join her father. At first, her father says that her mother would need her help with the sewing and accepts the little son to come along with him. The mother refuses help and sends her daughter and younger son to go along with her father. The father stops the car around neighbors’ homes for his sales work. The narrator waits in the car itself and observes her father’s work of Walker Brothers Salesman. She understands that most of the people do not even properly respond. They just close the doors but very few people bought some things from her father.

The father drives to the barren street. They arrive into another house and he introduces himself as a salesman to that lady in that house who opens the door. At first, she ignores but after the father approaches her the woman recognizes him. The narrator and the little boy get down from the car and she notices that the woman’s name to be Nora Cronin. Nora is surprised that Ben now has two children. They meet Nora’s mother inside the house, who vaguely remembers Ben. Nora serves soda for the children and both Ben and Nora drink whiskey. The narrator notices that her father Ben feels relaxed being with Nora. Nora plays a song and teaches the children to dance. Nora and the narrator dance for some time. Then Nora and Ben dance together and the narrator wonders at her father dancing and drinking whiskey. She also thinks that there might be a past romantic story between her father and Nora. The girl realizes that her brother is too young to observe these and she decides not to reveal her father’s affinity towards another woman.

The theme of loss of dignity, disconnectedness in the family, monitory loss, defeat, remains prominent in ‘Walker Brothers Cowboy.’ The story is narrated in the
first person by the young female daughter who psychologically connects herself both within the family and outside. The mother is observed by the daughter to be in a state of bitterness which she states it as,

   My mother has headaches. She often has to lie down. She lies on my brother’s narrow bed in the little-screened porch, shaded by heavy branches. ‘I look up at that tree and I think I am at home,’ she says. ‘What you need,’ my father tells her, ‘is some fresh air and a drive in the country.’ (DHS 6)

   It is the mother who allows the daughter to find a new life away from their fox farm. Despite her only chance of conversing with the neighbor Mrs. Oliphant, the mother may be owing to their material discomfort does not connect herself with other neighbors. She earnestly wishes her daughter to come out of the clutches of the societal norms which has chained her.

   It is the mother who tends to allow her husband and her children to move forward or attempt to make some progress in life. To the contrary, the mother remains to be at home which parallels female objectification. The husband does not encourage her to accompany him as the wife allows the husband to move forward. The girl’s father for a psychological compensation meets his old ‘flame’ – his girlfriend, who is in direct contrast to his wife. The woman Nora drinks whiskey and dances with the narrator’s father Ben Jordan to which the man also accompanies her. The girl, the unnamed narrator compares and contrasts Nora’s dress with that of her mother as, “Nora’s dress … is flowered more lavishly than anything my mother owns” (DHS 12).

   The girl’s point of view that Nora’s outlook seems to be better than her mother reflects the patriarchal expectations of a man who enjoys women being a decorative object. The role of the mother is not taken into consideration by the men, whereas it is
the decorative attitude that consoles him which is expected from any women by the men.

Irrespective of cultures, the society expects the mother to be conventional and traditional whereas the solace to man- the father receives is from his former ‘old flame’ – the woman Nora with whom he might have been before marriage. There lies a ‘denial of autonomy’ both to the mother and daughter but is utilized and accepted when the woman does not fit into the conventional roles typical as Nora.

From the point of view of the daughter who sympathizes the father, one understands that may it be the father or the men, the support and the solace which the men need rests on superficial desires which the girl narrates as,

My father does not say anything to me about not mentioning things at home, but I know, just from the thoughtfulness, the pause when he passes the licorice, that there are things not to be mentioned. The whiskey, maybe the dancing. No worry about my brother, he does not notice enough. (DHS 18)

From the girl’s point of view it is quite natural there lies an Oedipus complex attitude towards the father than the mother. In spite of the mother’s domestic chores, like stitching the dresses for her children and compensating for the economic loss, the girl’s attitude which rests on the father exhibits women being objectified, according to the patriarchal expectations.

In enunciating the theory of Objectification, Nussbaum considers the relationship between the parent and the child to be of prime concern. She states that there lies a Denial of Autonomy to the children and also the denial of aspects of Ownership too. It is the complete denial of all the prospects to both girls and women that constitutes the Objectification theory. Almost in all the cultures all over the world women have been objectified to their female body. This theory categorizes the girls and women to be
socialized from their birth even by their own mothers to internalize their physical selves. Both the mother and Nora remain to be self-objectified. In order to give a vent to the suppressed state in her husband, she volunteers to confine herself in her home space and permits her daughter to serve as a mute companion and a silent observer in their journey with their father. The adolescent girl in spite of comparing her mother and the ex-girlfriend of her father decides to suppress her feelings for if she expresses herself it might lead to drastic consequences. She remains the unnamed voiceless adolescent girl and proves to be a ‘looking-glass self.’ It is Simone De Beauvoir, who stated that ‘When a girl becomes a woman, she becomes doubled.’ Instead of existing only within herself, she has to exist even outside herself. For a survival strategy in a sexually objectifying culture, women tend to remain silent which gets witnessed in ‘Walker Brothers Cowboy.’

The short story ‘Boys and Girls’ commences with the life of a thirteen-year-old girl, who narrates about her father’s fox farming business with companies like Montreal Fur Traders and Hudson’s Bay.

Plate VI. Image of Canada’s Hudson’s Bay Company and its Logo

https://goo.gl/images/hUq4dT
They raise the foxes and kill them for their fur. Their house would be filled with the raw smell of dead fox and blood. The narrator talks about her mother, father and younger brother Laird. Her father is very strict and allows her to help him in the works of fox farming. The girl is made responsible for giving water to the foxes twice a day. To the contrary, her mother wants her to be away from those outside chores. The narrator likes to work with her father than do household works with her mother in the kitchen. She never thinks those foxes as a pet even when she helps her father to feed the horses for foxes. She describes the sleeping time of herself. They sang songs together like ‘Danny Boy’ and ‘Jingle Bells’ to comfort themselves sleeping in the dark. After her brother sleeps, she thinks about her future and imagines how she should be a bold young girl. The nurturing attitude of the girl gets exhibited here. She accompanies her in singing and makes him sleep typical as a mother and later plans for herself. She wants to be courageous and self-sacrificing in nature. She imagines about riding the horse and shooting the wolves which she reflects it as,

These stories were about myself when I had grown a little older; they took place in a world that was recognizably mine … opportunities for courage, boldness and self-sacrificing. I rescued people from a bombed building … I shot two rabid wolves … I rode a fine horse spiritedly. (DHS 113)

Her brother Laird is very young to help but she is strong and willing to help her father. Their father convinces the mother to wait until the girl becomes young to help her inside the home. The father also wants his son to grow up and helps him in business. When her grandmother comes to visit them, the narrator ignores her grandmother’s advice of the restrictions of a girl in society. The gendered societal constructions are reflected by the grandmother as,
My grandmother came to stay with us for a few weeks and I heard other things. “Girls don’t slam doors like that.” “Girls keep their knees together when they sit down.” And worse still, when I asked some questions, “That’s none of girls’ business.” (DHS 119)

Western or Eastern culture gender roles remain to be the same for men and women. When the horse named Mack has killed to feed fox, the narrator remains calm and interested to know the way horses are killed. After a few months the companion horse of Mack, Flora is also killed. The narrator opens the gate and releases the horse to escape. She does not understand the reason for her activity. Later Flora is found and killed by her father and Henry Bailey. During dinner, Laird says that his sister had been the reason for Flora’s escaping from the farm. The narrator is frightened of her father’s response. To the contrary, he replied, ‘never mind, she is only a girl.’ The story concludes with the acceptance of the narrator by the father that she is only a girl. This short story ‘Boys and Girls’ adapted as twenty-two minutes short film named Boys and Girls directed by Don McBrearty in 1983 and won an Oscar in the year 1984 for the best short film.

Plate VII. A short film adaptation of ‘Boys and Girls’ won an Oscar in 1984
Through this short story ‘Boys and Girls,’ Munro clearly depicts the gender conflict which is both internal and external in the life of the unnamed female protagonist. The story strongly depicts the pressures of the society imposed on a female to which she has to conform in order to maintain her desired self-image. Though, she has an internal conflict, in closing the gate or to open it, ultimately the desired female image probes in her mind. Hence she opens it according to the desired expectations. The father admits her choice as it had been according to the patriarchal expectations.

Not only has Munro depicted the life of female adolescent individuals but also has ironically presented it through the foxes who are controlled by others and locked in a cage. On the other hand, the horses though they try to roam free are denied freedom. Towards the end, similar to people who are caged and those who want to free themselves are also denied any freedom. Both the foxes and the horses die in the end as common people fall prey to the society’s ideals. The girl realizes after the conflict within herself but she has to act like a girl which she states as,

Laird said matter-of-factly, ‘She’s crying.’ ‘Never mind’, my father said. He spoke with resignation, even good humor, the words which absolved and dismissed me for good. “She’s only a girl,” he said. I didn’t protest that, even in my heart. Maybe it was true.” (DHS 127)

The conflict in the girl results only in confirming to the operations of the patriarchal structures. The trait of the adolescent girl adheres to ‘Fungibility’ which Nussbaum states it as the object being interchangeable with other objects of the same type, and with objects of other types.

Constant self-examination of gender roles leads to increased feelings of shame and anxiety in women right from their adolescent state. When a girl fails to meet the
cultural standards of contact or chooses to adhere to the societal standards of contact her ‘Self’ is forced to encounter. The cultural milieu of Self-Objectification or Sexual Objectification decreases the girl’s or women’s well being or limits her potential which could be observed in ‘Boys and Girls.’ Though the girl had the courage to close the gate, a courageous act to control the animals which were also on par with her father’s choice yet she takes up a decision according to her gender role and opens the gate and frees the horse as a deliberate choice of girls. Though she has acted according to the societal expectations, to her conscious, it was not her choice. She herself denies autonomy by adhering to the societal gender roles.

The next short story taken for analysis is ‘Red Dress – 1946.’ It deals with the story of an unnamed adolescent girl’s journey into the struggle of discovering sexuality as well as trying to fit in. The girl is a silent, weak minded person and is an outcast in the society. She fails to interrelate with anyone even with her closed members like her mother and her best friend. She is powerless to convey any emotion or view on any subject matter. The plot commences with the narrator's mother sewing a red dress which she always wanted to stitch for her daughter. To the contrary, the girl hates that dress and does not express it to her mother. She remains silent and submissive to her mother’s desires.

The mother makes the red dress for her daughter’s upcoming Christmas dance in her school. The narrator confesses that she does not want to participate. She comments that her mother liked to make dresses with her extraordinary imaginary designs which remain impossible and also did not hold good. One day, the narrator brings her best friend, Lonnie to her home and they look at her mother work on the red dress. The girl is uncomfortable with her mother who sits bizarrely, and complains about her own childhood. When the mother leaves from the spot, the girls chat about
boys and sex. The narrator girl decides to skip from the dance day and so she tries to pretend to fall off from her bicycle, and then she decides to swallow the cold air and smearing snow on her chest with wet clothes and sleeping in cold. In spite of all her attempts, she needs to go to school on the dance day owing to her mother’s pressures.

At the dance, the girl is in full of nervousness and tension, as she observes the senior students appear and disapprovingly ignore the juniors. All the students start dancing as a couple but the narrator remains alone in the corner of the hall. After a few minutes, a popular boy in the school named Mason Williams approaches her to dance with him. When the girl understands he is leaving her for the next dance, she feels embarrassed. When the boy leaves, she thinks something was wrong with her and that might be the reason for him to reject her. She runs off and hides in the restroom. Later the girl meets Mary Fortune in the restroom. She is another girl from the same school. The narrator approaches the dance and life on the whole transforms. Mary Fortune asks the narrator to smoke a cigarette with her. Mary describes that she is not a ‘boy-crazy kind of girl’ like the other girls. She has different goals in life and desires to be a physical education teacher which she explains as,

She said she wanted to be a physical education teacher and she would have to go to college for that … she wanted to be independent anyway … Listening to her, I felt the acute phase of my unhappiness passing. Here was someone who had suffered the same defeat as I had but she was full of energy and self-respect. (DHS 157-158)

With the help of Mary Fortune, the girl gains knowledge of that expressiveness to be a form of self-acceptance. She no longer attempts to gain anyone’s attraction and attention and no more does she remains crazy of boys- the other sex.
Mary Fortune is the individual character who makes the girl to achieve a sense of confidence and an intellect of self-acceptance. Later, the unnamed protagonist dances with Raymond, another boy from her class and accompanies her friend to walk home. They chat about a hockey game. He kisses her and leaves after they reach her home. The narrator realizes that her mother would be awake to hear the story of dance day from her daughter. The girl escapes from her mother to her room without saying anything. The girl is at last able to strip herself of the red dress.

The short story ‘Red Dress – 1946’ taken from Munro’s Dance of the Happy Shades is narrated by a young adolescent thirteen-year-old girl. The theme of ‘female appearance’ and ‘confined state’ descended to the female is narrated in the first person by the unnamed girl typical to girls who yearn to resemble their friends. This girl also has a liking in imitating her friend Lonnie. The girl’s dislike towards her physic is expressed as,

She said, hauling the pinned and basted dress over my head. My head was muffled in velvet, my body exposed, in an old cotton school slip. I felt like a great raw lump, clumsy and goose-pimpled. I wished I was like Lonnie, light-boned, pale and thin; she had been a Blue Baby. (DHS 148)

It reflects her outlook which she possesses according to the societal expectations. The common notion of the society that a girl who is beautiful is more accepted remains a universal notion. Neither do the adolescent girls acquire a sense of awareness nor does individuality reflect the politics of gender in the patriarchal world. Typical of girl children particularly at an adolescent stage who desire to move away from the parents, the girl also wishes to associate herself with the desire and passion of her own. The choice of the mother’s red dress creates a sort of annoyance in her. She wants to isolate herself from the world of her choice which was her blue color.
The girl disapproves the mother’s wishes. In the dance hall, when the boy Mason Williams offers himself to dance, typical of young girls, this girl also feels excited. Abruptly when he leaves her to pair with another girl she realizes the need to think for herself which she compares with her classmate Mary Fortune. Mary Fortune’s outlook on life proves to be more reactive as she had already been alienated, Mary finds herself to be safer in leading her own path which is being observed by the narrator. It is this comparison of gendered behavior – Mason Williams desires and Mary Fortune’s individualistic attitude which creates a psychological change in the girl who takes up a decision to free herself both from her mother and from the other gender and decide to stand on her own feet. The choice of freedom and individuality gets expressed when the narrator states her decision to lead a life of individuality.

I found that I was not so frightened, now that I had made up my mind to leave the dance behind. I was not waiting for anybody to choose me. I had my own plans. I did not have to smile or make signs for luck. It did not matter to me. I was on my way to have a hot chocolate, with my friend. (DHS 158)

The mother’s desire to preparing a red dress for her daughter reflects the mother’s anguish that she should be accepted in the party. The dress serves as a symbol of attraction. For the societal expectations, the girl is denied her autonomy even in her dress code.

Clothing and dress code serves as an important socializing factor and proves to be symbols of social status and identity. The dress code also places a prominent role in identity politics, particularly in urban societies. Dress code proves to be a symbolic act of making oneself available and attractive to others. It is the objectification in women that is being appreciated and admired. Girl children even at a very early state are tuned by their mothers to objectify themselves according to the expectations of the
society. In this process of objectified identity creation, there lies a conflict in a few girls to adhere to the norms and their individuality. This conflicting attitude could be observed in ‘Red Dress-1946.’ In spite of having satisfied her mother’s desire in wearing the red dress to be attractive to the opposite sex, owing to the freedom of choice young boys tend to shift their attitude from this unnamed protagonist to other girls. This state of being neglected provokes the girl in attempting to make a choice. It is through her friend Mary Fortune, a not so attractive girl that this protagonist awakens herself and finally decides to act individually. While in ‘Walker Brothers Cowboy’ and ‘boys and Girls’ the protagonists are not provided an independent space to think, Munro provides free space to this young girl accompanied by another girl to self examine herself. Ultimately, the learning exposure widens her cognitive domain which makes her transform herself. The final transition in the girl to empower herself independently gets reflected through Munro’s voice as, “I was just leaving; I was going to have a hot chocolate with my girlfriend” (DHS 159).

Similar to the three short stories ‘Walker Brothers Cowboy,’ ‘Boys and Girls’ and ‘Red Dress-1946’ from the collection Dance of the Happy Shades the following short stories from the collection Lives of Girls and Women also depicts the plight of adolescent female children in a different perspective.

The second short story collection chosen for analysis for this chapter is Who do you think you are? which turns focuses on the character Rose. The stories are ‘Royal Beatings,’ ‘Privilege,’ ‘Half a Grapefruit,’ ‘Wild Swans,’ ‘The Beggar Maid,’ ‘Mischief,’ ‘Providence,’ ‘Simon's Luck,’ ‘Spelling’ and ‘Who Do You Think You Are?.’ All are interconnected stories of the main character Rose and her stepmother Flo.
The first short story ‘Royal Beatings’ seems to be more like a quick look into the lives of different very emotional people. It is about the childhood days of Rose and Brian. They are living with their father and his second wife named Flo. The title comes from the habit of a beating, which is possibly too strong a word for the timeline of the story is of the 1960s but becomes applicable even today. Child abuse continues to be prevalent in all societies. Her father runs a dull business of furniture repair. Flo watches over a small store, selling food items in eastern Canada. The readers take notice of the reasons which the father is likely to give Rose through periodic beatings, for having an argument with her step-mother who then calls in the dad for the beating, the exploitation continues. The story is being told years later when Rose had forgotten her vengeance on her step-mother and her father is no longer alive. The story reflects the true life of every child similar to Rose during that period in a lower-middle-class life in Canada. It is not a complicated or special plot but a very powerful retelling of life as it was so in several homes during that period of time.

The first of the series in this collection is depicted with the title ‘Royal Beatings’ typical to a lower middle-class life. The protagonist Rose lives with her stepmother named Flo. She is accompanied by her brother Brian in her childhood days. The father runs an economically poor business of repairing furniture and the stepmother looks after a tiny store with foodstuffs. The plot reveals the step mother’s revengeful attitude towards the girl which gets exhibited when she calls Rose’s father for beating Rose. When the stepmother questions in the fit of anger, ‘who do you think you are?’ Rose explores the sense of her true self. The plight of a young girl without her mother and who is forced to live with the stepmother universalizes the problem of child abuse that rests all over the world. It is through reminiscing the royal beatings given by the father as instructed by Flo, the girl is forced to continue her life.
‘Privilege’ is the next story which deals with Rose’s younger years in an elementary school before war time. Wealth begins to modify things. They were poor. The school was quite weak under an unskilled and disinterested teacher. The story centers on Rose’s infatuation with an older girl student in the school. The story explains the situations of the school and community in the period of late 1930s to the mid-war years.

The short story titled ‘Privilege’ depicts Rose’s earlier days in an elementary school which had a very poor environment with unknowledgeable teachers. Rose narrates of her bitter experience with her school teacher Miss. Hattie who wrote a long poem on the blackboard and asked them to copy it out and recited it on the next day. In spite of having the talent to recite the poem, the girl’s confidence gets shattered when she was not excused for not copying it down. On the other hand, Rose was punished and forced to write every line three times. In spite of having written the imposition the final remark by the teacher once again shatters the young girl,

Of course, raging and writing while Miss Hattie got out her crocheting. When Rose took a copy to her desk Miss Hattie said mildly enough but with finality, “You can’t go thinking you are better than other people just because you can learn poems. Who do you think you are?. (WHO 200)

The class divisions which psychologically disturb the young adolescent children gets depicted which remains universal.

Rose commences with a story ‘Half a Grapefruit’ from her new high school. This was the time when her father’s illness and his last days of life shatter her. Flo narrates Rose some stories of her younger days and imagines that she does not agree with Rose’s scholarly ways. This might be the deceptive attitude in the step-mother to suppress Rose.
The short story in the series titled ‘Half a grapefruit’ depicts the life of Rose and her high school days. As an adolescent gradually entering the teenage life, this girl had to experience the illness of her father. The girl witnesses, the father being taken to the hospital. Rose finds her life torn between her elementary school life and high school life and also of the agonies in her life.

The next short story taken for analysis is ‘Wild Swans.’ Rose is on her first journey to Toronto and her mother warns her horror stories of young girls being taken the chance of being forced into being a sex slave and eventually similar stories frighten Rose. Consequently, on the train, an elderly man sits next to her, who pretends to be asleep and begins to touch her legs under his newspaper. He pretends to be asleep and he caresses Rose’s legs under his newspaper which horrifies Rose. Rose torn between horror and curiosity, does nothing and after some time leaves the train.

The short story titled ‘Wild Swans’ depicts Rose’s entry into the skeptical sexual world. Through her stepmother, who narrates horror stories of young girls who land up as sex slaves, Rose experiences the abuse through an elderly man on a train. On her way to receive the prize money for having won in a school essay competition as a young girl Rose being warned by Flo of various sexual dangers intensifies her horror and curiosity. Rose reminiscences an incredible story narrated by her stepmother of a retired undertaker in the countryside who seduced women with chocolates and flattering them in a hearse.

On her way to Toronto, in the train, she encounters a conversation with a man who introduces himself as a united church minister. Though Rose responds to him submissively, she was reminded of the warning from her stepmother. The girl is torn between fantasy and reality typically to every teenager, who would be emotionally
and psychologically filled with complexities. Rose also experiences society’s immorality and hypocrisy.

The short story ‘Beggar Maid’ is about Rose who has won an academic scholarship and goes off to study. She meets Patrick Blatchford, a very learned boy and they fall in love. It turns out that he was very rich and that his father, particularly, did not support Patrick’s scholarly ways but wanted him to go into his business. He and Rose were from different worlds. She is insecure about herself and needs him to support her. He is sure of himself in his work and scholarship, but very weak on social graces and seems deep in love with her. He was not confident of himself. Ultimately they marry, but after 10 years of marriage they get separated and finally Rose goes on to a successful career as a television personality. On the other hand, after nine years Rose sees him in an airport and she is forced to understand her own frailty.

The first-hand experience of a sexual touch by an elderly church minister leads Rose to a state of ambiguity. She was not prepared to accept it as a reality for she had not imagined such fantasies. With this notion of sexual exploitation from the patriarchal world, Rose attains an academic scholarship and shifts to a larger city to perform her studies. There she meets a scholarly boy named Patrick Blatchford and falls in love with him. Though both hail from different classes of society, they fall deeply in love. After a married life of ten years, Rose gets separated from him and finds her own career. Typical to the short story titled ‘The Beggar Maid’, Rose meets Patrick nine years later and finds her weakness in ‘Mischief.’

‘Mischief’ is one of the enhanced stories in this collection. Rose and Patrick rarely go to parties and once at the home of her friend, Joycelyn and her husband Clifford. At a party one night Clifford comes on to Rose and they begin a kind of affair. There is much more trying to have an affair than having one. She gets annoyed
with him and the affair. So finally goes away. Later, after she has left Patrick and lives on her own, she often visits Joycelyn and Clifford and one evening, after the three of them were drinking, they really do have an experience which Rose enjoyed.

‘Mischief’ narrates Rose and Patrick’s visits to her friend Joycelyn and her husband Clifford. Clifford offers himself to Rose and it was after this meet that she gets separated from Patrick. With the sexual anxieties, she often meets Joycelyn and Clifford. These unstable desires lead her to create a relationship with another man, Tom. It is here the readers are informed that all these have been executed by Rose in the presence of her daughter Anna, with whom she lived.

‘Providence’ deals with Rose’s possible relationship with another married man, Tom. They meet now and again, finally plan to meet in another town. This is a period when Anna, her young daughter stays with her. First Anna is ill on one occasion when Rose and Tom have planned a meeting out of town. Then, when they organize another meeting snow ruins it.

Ironically Munro termed this series as ‘Providence’ for the weaker sex. The continuous shifting of sexual desires gets further explained in the next short story ‘Simon’s luck.’ While working as a part-time lecturer in a local college, Rose creates a sexual infatuation with Simon. After a few days of entertainment, Simon disappears abruptly without informing Rose. After continuous disappointments and with extreme depressions, Rose attains the television personality job. Munro states it as,

The thing she was ashamed of, in acting, was that she might have been paying attention to the wrong things, reporting antics when there was always something further, a tone, a depth, a light, that she couldn’t get and wouldn’t get. And it wasn’t just about acting she suspected this. Everything she had done could sometimes be seen as a mistake. (WHO 209)
‘Simon’s Luck’ is the next short story taken for analysis. Rose goes to a party of people at the local college where she works part-time and meets Simon, a professor at the school. They go off together after the party and have sex and Simon treats her extremely well, helping her to build a garden in the following days, and Rose thinks she is really in love. All of a sudden Simon disappears without informing her. Rose does not make any attempt to reach him and she is so depressed and she goes off. She actually moves to the west coast to take a job of acting for television.

In the short story ‘Spelling,’ Rose goes back home to take care of her mother. Her mother does not even know her and believes she is someone who has been hired to care for her. Rose quietly tries and succeeds in getting her mother to agree to enter a full care center. Once she is there, an event happens which causes her mother to recognize Rose and they do have some moments of reconciliation and recognition, but in the main, her mother is lost and her world of memories have gone. From a hedonistic state of seeking pleasure, the world of reality awakens Rose when she meets her mother.

It is here in the short story ‘Spelling’ that Rose attains a realization that she has to go back home to take care of her mother. She admits her mother in a full care center. Pathetically her readers are informed that it is too late that the mother slightly recognizes Rose for the world of memories in her mother had disappeared owing to her old age.

In the title story ‘Who do you think you are?’, Rose is back home in the small village where she grew up and she was there to get her mother settled in a long-standing care hospital. She has many reminiscences of people she knew as a child, their impact on her and the community, and she compares her life with that of others. She realizes how much the life of her home town is typical inside her and has in so
many ways to shape her own life. The title of the story is not only nature of the philosophical story but is also a touching and motivating story in itself. It was Rose, back home who remembers much of her adolescent days. Her mother is now in the home and at the end of her life. Rose is expected to seldom be back to the village, maybe not even until her mother’s funeral.

The last of the series titled, ‘Who do you think you are?’ submits Rose’s reminiscences of her childhood days, when she at last lands up in her village. It is here that Rose realizes that in many ways her own town had shaped her life. In spite of all these longings and acceptance, Rose leaves the village to attend to her life’s responsibilities waiting for the day to attend her mother’s funeral.

The character of Rose depicted in ‘Who Do You Think You Are?’ portrays humiliations encountered by an adolescent girl in many stages of her life. Most of them exhibit the humiliations of the female body which gets experienced by the protagonist Rose. Either through the beatings by the teachers or through the sexual and physical abuses by the father and the stepmother in the process of the struggle, Rose the protagonist has grown and has also escaped. Towards the end of the series of the collection, the readers are introduced to Rose as a caretaker. This cyclic transformation gets paralleled along with the journey through different geographical spaces. It is through the entire cycle of stories that are presented to the reader that Rose finally understands what Miss. Hattie Milton would have meant in the question, “Who do you think you are?” The recollections of Rose to Flo, her stepmother of the sexual encounter between Ruby Carruthers and Horse Nicholson and of the two boys who suspect Ruby and question her as “Who the hell are you?” transforms Rose to imitate an act out the varied experiences of her life. Rose’s psychological journey, as well as her geographical one to West Hanratty and finally to her native home, can be
equated to a self-relative journey. The realisation that life is fragmented and will constantly deviate is exhibited when she utters that her life was close to Ralph Gillespie’s life and she states it as, “What could she say about herself and Ralph Gillespie, except that she felt his life, close, closer than the lives of men she’d loved, one slot over from her own?” (WHO 210).

From an adolescent stage of humiliation to a failed relationship with unsuccessful trails exhibit a female being objectified and discarded. Her connections with young men like Patrick, Tom and Simon remain unsuccessful for she is continuously deceived by all the men. Rose’s episode ends with an Epilogue, where Rose accidentally encounters Patrick with whom she lived for nine years. It is in the Toronto airport where she witnesses him and expresses Patrick’s character as typical of young men who have discarded women after objectifying them.

He had smoothed out, filled out, into such a modish and agreeable, responsible, slightly complacent-looking man … He made a face at her. It was a truly hateful, savagely warning, face; infantile, self-indulgent, yet calculated; it was a timed explosion of disgust and loathing. It was hard to believe. But she saw it. (WHO 100)

Rose had been an experienced television interviewer with all types of people - politicians, housewives, bishops, humanitarians and working men and all men have displayed a kind of animosity only after making use of women. It was the same Patrick who rescued Rose from a leg grabber in the library initially. When being deserted by Patrick, Rose shifts her attention to Clifford, typical of a teenager. There lies an instability both in the adolescent and teenager Rose for, typical of girls she too has an unpredictable attitude of the real world. It is the same unpredictability that gets witnessed in Rose’s relationship with another married man Tom.
The final story of the series ‘Who Do You Think You Are?’ recollects Rose’s memories of childhood. The questions of ‘Who do you think you are?’ remains the central question typical to every female child. Rose also creates new ‘Selves.’ As a woman who is unable to fix her identity, Rose also continue to transform herself in spite of fixing herself with professional identity as a television interviewer for her economic independence. The life of Rose is depicted as a journey filled with loss, absence, humiliations, and suppressions, exploitations, meted out by a female in the patriarchal scenario.

The first short story taken for analysis from the final collection for this chapter Lives of Girls and Women is ‘The Flats Road.’ It introduces Del Jordan and her small prairie town of Jubilee. She lives with her parents, her younger brother, and her Uncle Benny, who is not a relative but lives with the family after his divorce in a small country home in the outskirts of the town. Uncle Benny’s plight is the first experience Del has with seeing someone’s life fall apart, and it gives her a more skeptical outlook on the world. It takes place in the small town of Jubilee in Ontario, Canada. The protagonist and the young girl create a friendship with her Uncle Benny. Often they go fishing and frog hunting together. Uncle Benny is at the age of thirty-seven and has not married again. While looking through the paper, one day he finds an article about a young female who is in the search for a husband and in agreement, she would do the housework. Uncle Benny is very eager and goes straight to her place in Kitchener, Ontario and gets wedded right there and then. Madeleine (his wife) turns out to be a young adult who has a ten-month-old daughter named Diane. Madeleine's aggressiveness is visible through her personality. She never lets anyone come close to their house. When Del desires to visit Uncle Benny, Madeleine chases her away. Later on, Madeleine goes missing and is heard that she has left to Toronto with Diane with
some of Benny's belongings. Benny goes looking for her but gives up after a day of searching. He remains worried mainly because of Diane's safety, as he informs Del that all the bruises on her legs were from Madeleine abusing her. She is then finally described by Benny as “Madeleine! That Madwoman!” (LGW 34).

Alice Munro commences this coming-of-age series titled as Lives of Girls and Women with the title ‘The Flat Roads.’ The female adolescent Del is still in her childhood oscillating between the worlds of flats roads where she once lived and the present urban environment- the town of Jubilee. She enlists the inhabitants of the flat roads as “Mitch Plim and the Potter boys were the bootleggers on the Flats Road” (LGW 8).

The other country termed as ‘Jubilee’ represents the eccentric behavior of the urbanites. The only outsider to advise the Jordon family to shift to the other country – the town of Jubilee is Uncle Benny. Giving heed to this stranger come a member of the family, the entire family shifts. He believes that economically they can thrive in the city by raising rabbits and budgies. His desire to get married is recollected by Del through an advertisement given by Madeleine, which states that “Lady with one child desires housekeeping position for a man in the quiet country home. Fond of farm life. Matrimony if suited” (LGW 15). Immediately Benny responded to it as,

I am writing this letter in reply to what you put in the paper which I get through the mail. I am a man thirty-seven-year-old living alone on my own place which is fifteen acres out at the end of the Flats Road … Your child will be welcome … I have a job working for a man that raises silver foxes in the next place to this. His wife is an educated woman if you like to go visiting. I hope I will have a letter from you soon. Yours truly, Benjamin Thomas Poole.

(LGW 15-16)
The sincerity of Uncle Benny could be understood by his narration of the entire family which had given him shelter. He got married. He left Jordon, family. Del once affectionate to meet Uncle Benny visits his house. To her disappointment, she was asked to go home. Later to Del’s further disappointments, one day Uncle Benny arrives at Jordon’s house informing that Madeleine has left him without informing him. To their surprise one day Uncle Benny received a letter from Madeleine without any salutation in which she stated as “I left my yellow sweater and a green umbrella and diones blanket at your place send them to me here. 1249 Ridley St., Toronto, Ont” (LGW 27).

As a typical man with passion in contrast to the urbanites, he goes in search of Madeleine and the child Diane and returns without them to continue his life with the Jordon family. While the elders-Del’s father, mother and even Uncle Benny could accept the manifestation of a chaotic life which they have to dwell upon, as a child Del is unable to face the darker side of the life. When Benny returns from his unsuccessful trip to the Jordon family in Toronto, Del states,

So lying alongside our world was Uncle Benny’s world like a troubling distorted reflection, the same but never at all the same. In that world people could go down in quicksand, be vanquished by ghosts or terrible ordinary cities; luck and wickedness were gigantic and unpredictable; nothing was deserved, anything might happen; defeats were met with crazy satisfaction.

(LGW 32-33)

The sociological terminology of idiots, bootleggers, garrisons could be fixed only to the inhabitants in the city life which Del understands when she terms Madeleine as “Madeleine! That madwoman!” (LGW 34). The keen observation and empathizing attitude of the young girl Del gets reflected here. The innocence and the true affection
towards a member whom the entire family had accepted could be found in Del
towards Uncle Benny. The girl’s observation of another gender-man being denied
autonomy where he is forced to accept the woman and later being disappointed proves
that objectification and denial are common in families where the mentally strong
dominate the other gender.

The second story in the collection *Lives of Girls and Women*, ‘Heirs of the Living
Body,’ focuses on Del’s life as her world begins to expand. She gets to know people
beyond her immediate family, as more relatives visit. In particular, her aunts seem to
have a negative attitude towards her and discourage her from taking chances and
hoping for anything beyond day-to-day survival. She continues to try to find her own
place in the family, the town, and the larger world. Del’s views broaden as her life.
Her life no longer consists of her immediate family members but possesses a line of
relatives, who have come before into her life. Del's aunts seem to revolve around
routines and daily activities, and she seems not to fit in with them. In this story, Del
tries very hard to find her own place within her family, the town, and the world. This
placing hits when her Uncle Craig passes away and she is forced to attend his funeral.
Here she meets many of her relatives and realizes that she is at the age when one
cannot just shy your way out of these gatherings because of age like her little brother
Owen.

In ‘Heir of the Living Body,’ Del confronts death through the death of Uncle
Craig in the garrison world. It was filled with two aunts and Uncle Craig. Uncle Craig
had two sisters Elspeth and Grace. The Jordon family in garrison was in domestic fear
filled with many inmates and their conversations which is described as,

Conversations there had many levels, nothing could be stated directly, every
joke might be a thrust turned inside out. My mother’s disapproval was open
and unmistakable, like heavy weather; theirs came like tiny razor cuts, bewilderingly, in the middle of kindness. (LGW 46-47)

Though the members of the family proved to be a manifestation of chaotic order yet it was filled with a psychological order with the defense. When Del is asked to view Craig’s body, she bites her cousin for encountering the death which gave her a gothic realistic attitude which she states it as,

Uncle Craig was like that under his lilies, on his satin pillow; he was the terrible, silent, indifferent conductor of forces that could flare up, in an instant, and burn through this room, all reality, leave us dark. I turned away with humming in my ears but was relieved, glad that I had done it after all, and survived. (LGW 74)

As a young girl, Del was unable to welcome the burden of death. Immediately she was reminded of Uncle Craig’s unfinished manuscript. Del’s only solace was in remembrance of Uncle Craig. She would one day complete it. The gradual transformation of a girl encountering marriage in Uncle Benny’s life and facing death through the demise of Uncle Craig molds her psychologically. As a mark of gratitude to him, she vows to complete the unfinished manuscript.

The third short story is taken for analysis titled as ‘Princess Ida’ focuses on Del’s mother Addie. Addie is a door-to-door salesperson, hawking encyclopedias. She enjoys her job, as it gives her freedom and helps her understand the world in a rational way. Del and her mother spend summers in the main town of Jubilee, and Del has come to both love and hate the place. Del’s mother shares her own humble upbringing with her daughter, and Del learns that her mother was sexually abused by Dell’s uncle Bill. Bill is still in the town, and later in this story visits Del and Addie. This forever
changes the way Del views both her family and her town, which have kept such terrible conspirators all these times.

In the third story, ‘Princess Ida’ Del shifts her observation to her mother Ada. The girl observes the mother as a garrison figure and also as a champion of passion and love for knowledge. She observes at her mother selling encyclopedias, a job suited for a house maker in leisure time. She would sell it “over all of the highways and back roads of Wawanash county” (LGW 81). Del looks at her mother as a pathetic and eccentric misfit who could never understand the other country. She recollects her mother’s mother- a religious fanatic who had spent 250 dollars on Bibles which Ada had to sell “all over the country at the age of eight, in boys’ shoes and not owning a pair of mittens” (LGW 96). It is the same attitude that Del finds in her mother which she does not desire to inculcate.

Del observes her mother’s attitude always to be on the darker side of everything when once her mother stated about nature as,

What so good about Nature? Nature is just one thing preying on another all the way down the line. Nature is just a lot of waste and cruelty, maybe not from nature’s point of view but from a human point of view. Cruelty is the law of nature. (LGW 109-110)

Though the garrison life had morally educated her either through her parents or through her environment, Del was constellated that the garrison life had not exposed her. People could stay silent, with no need to do or say something remarkable. A realization of a paradoxical life in an urban environment is received by Del wherein she gains faith which Munro expresses it in the fourth story of the series ‘Age of Faith.’
The fourth story ‘Age of Faith,’ tackles the question of religion in a small town in Canada. In Jubilee, attending church was as much a social affair as a religious one, and it illuminates the distinction between the town’s in-crowd and the outcasts. People go to church merely to be seen by the rest of the town, and as such, the church is often abuzz with talk of ‘who’s there and what they’re wearing, with faith a forgotten subject.’ Del seeks a greater understanding of religion, and attends one church after another trying to find meaning. She winds up enjoying the theatre of religious practice, but still searches for meaning.

Unlike her mother, Del very inquisitively looks into the outer chaos to which according to her the only true defense against these terrors, she asserts is to possess a faith in God which she states it as,

If God could be discovered, or recalled, everything would be safe … It seemed plain to me that this was the only way the world could be borne, the only way it could be borne - if all these atoms, galaxies of atoms, were safe all the time, whirling away in God’s mind. (LGW 127)

Del could observe a sort of an ever-threatening darkness in the other country to which the garrison approach of the faith in God saved her. When she looks at her little brother Owen kneeling to pray at end of the chapter she confesses her oscillation in the faith in God and states that, “seeing somebody having faith, close up, is no easier than seeing someone chop a finger off” (LGW 146). This oscillation could be their shift from the garrison to the other country from a gradual transformation to attain a partial faith in God, typical of the urbanites.

The next short story titled ‘Changes and Ceremonies’ concentrates on Del’s first love on a classmate. The boy, Frank Wales, occupies Del’s attention for a while. However, the sudden death of her teacher, Miss Farris, soon transforms the town
forever. It becomes clearer to Del that the town is keeping many secrets, and Jubilee is not the friendly, wholesome place it seems. In this story, Alice Munro involves Del with a different side. This is the first time Del has a serious infatuation on a boy which leads to her first ever sexual feelings toward someone. Del also has a tragic loss of someone dearer in her life—her teacher Miss Farris who passes away, leaving a very strong line of "still waters run deep." Jubilee is also portrayed in a different way.

‘Changes and Ceremonies’ explores the faith in art to be a passionate commitment. Reading books in a garrison world is entirely different from women or men in an urban environment who read books. As a typical teenager, Del was also searching for passages about sex in the books she has read. This urban attitude of sexual desires even in art made her more sensitive and she pitied herself which she states it as, “I felt a slight sadness, handling this over. I was always betraying someone or somebody; it seemed the only way to get along” (LGW 150). She confessed that she was betraying herself.

Del gets older in the title story ‘Lives of Girls and Women.’ She meets the man who will her first lover. He is Art Chamberlain, a worker at the local radio station. He was already with another woman, Fern Dougherty. Del’s first relationship is filled with turmoil and is passionate, but inappropriate. In this story, Del starts to have sexual feelings. Del and her current high school friend Naomi have daily discussions regarding sex. They find a book in Naomi's mother's 'hope chest' underneath some blankets which holds a little information on sex, but it is the only information they have about it. They are both virgins up to this point of the story. Del starts to transform sexually in this episode. She realizes that sexual desires alone do not render meaning to life and ponders over life practically.
In the next short story ‘Baptizing,’ she finds a healthier relationship in the form of Garnet French, a charismatic and worldly man. This concluding story depicts Del processing a rebirth, as she begins her life as an adult. Del finds herself gradually moving away from her friend Naomi. Del is continuing with academic level classes whereas Naomi has dropped down to commercial level and has also acquired a job at the office in the creamery. They find their lives following two separate paths. When Del goes to see Naomi at work she is shocked at the changes in what used to be her best friend. She decides that they could never again be as close as they once were. Throughout this story, Del has gone through rebirths or baptisms of herself. She begins to go her own way. She also meets and starts a relationship with Garnet French. Towards the end of the story, Del finds out that Naomi is pregnant and later on states that Naomi is also now married. From a state of sexual desires, Del gradually transforms herself to marital responsibilities.

The next two short stories in the series – ‘Lives of Girls and Women’ and ‘Baptizing’ introduces to the emotions of the formation of sexual passion in teenage girls. While ‘Lives of Girls and Women’ depicts the darker and disgusting side of sexuality, ‘Baptizing’ presence the exotic side of it. As the emotions of sexual passion are concerned the world does not accept desires in women. As far as sexual passion is concerned in the garrison though it is considered as a necessity it is not transparently looked at as a necessary passion. To the contrary, Del understands that sexual passions in the urban world do not even demarcate the prostitutes and society. There is no demarcation for, everything is looked at only from the point of sexuality which Del states it as,

Glory in the cold spring, a wonder of Jubilee. The noise beginning again did not come from any of them ... the one white peacock up in a tree, his tail full
out, falling down through the branches like water over rock. Pure white, pure blessing … ‘Its sex makes them scream’, said Naomi. (LGW 200-201)

Del and her friend Naomi look at the peacocks and equate it to symbols of sexuality. It is here at this moment that Del encounters Mr. Chamberlain, a boyfriend of her mother’s boarder fern.

Del succumbs to the passions of Mr. Chamberlain and fears to be seduced. In spite of surrendering herself to him, he plays only foul sexuality. After a momentary passion, Chamberlain leaves Jubilee typical of every urbanite where men abruptly leave the women. It is at this moment, Del contrasts her life to the intricacies of the rural garrison environment. She herself states of the falsities of life of the urbanites as,

My faith in simple depravity had weakened. Perhaps nowhere but in daydreams did the trap door open so sweetly and easily plunging bodies altogether free of thought, free of personality, into self-indulgence, mad, bad license … that is not overcome but has to be thumped into ecstasy.

(LGW 219)

Disappointments and failures in the city life have to be accepted as a common feature which Del too attempts to inculcate the dilemma. In the final and eighth chapter of the series of ‘Baptizing,’ Del meets her former friend Garnet French at a revival meeting though she understands that he had been saved by being baptized. She makes love and experiences the ‘glory of the Peacock’, which she states as, “sex seemed to me all surrender – not the woman’s to the man but the person’s to the body, an act of faith, freedom in humility” (LGW 276 ).

Her school work gets unfulfilled and she loses her expected scholarship. The only choice for teenagers to get along with men like Garnet is typical of every teenager. Garnet forces her to get married and he compels her to become baptized. Typical of
every teenager who realizes that the dreams of books, arts, knowledge – only threaten her she takes a final decision. Del decides to free herself and returns home with the decision that the relationship is over. She states that,

I fought underwater exactly as you would fight in such a dream, with a feeling of desperation that was not quite immediate, that had to work upward through layers of incredulity. Yet I thought that he might drown me. I really thought that. I thought that I was fighting for my life. (LGW 301)

The fear in the teenager which transforms into an adult that she might either be submerged in the garrison or might be forced to surrender to the other country gets depicted here.

Finally, in the last story ‘Epilogue: The Photographer’ catches up with Del as an adult and depicts that she has become a successful writer who has broadened her horizons outside Jubilee. In this final section of the novella, Del writes a novel. She wrote a novel that was based on the Sherriff and his family but just ended up changing the names of all the characters. She also changed their occupations and the name of the town. Later in July, Del walked every Saturday in town to see if her results of the departmental examinations have come in yet. One morning, she visits Sherriff’s house to say good morning and they had ended up sitting on his porch talking for a while. They start talking about how Del was going to the University and potentially with a scholarship. They then continue to talk about the future and the Sherriff finally and wished her good luck with her life.

Del is torn between two extremes in the Epilogue in this collection of the short stories entitled ‘Epilogue: The Photographer.’ Del has started to write a novel of the garrison and the world of the other country. It is at that moment that she encounters yet another friendship with Bobby Sheriff, a boy who has returned home on a holiday
from an asylum. Del does not get distracted but observes as she has been totally lost in the state of dullness and oscillation of the garrison world and with the other country. She just smiles and does not get totally involved with anyone. Munro submits the final decision of Del to leave Jubilee as a matured adult woman who would continue her writing with the true revolution from the divided world which she has experienced. The gradual crisis and the progression of a young girl entering into an adolescent state and passing through the teenage life and finally ending up with the compromising position has been clearly demonstrated through Del’s life by Munro. The final perception that the day to day experiences of life remains to be a greater illusion which would allow one ‘to make us see’ is successfully experienced by Del Jordon.

In the final short story collection *Lives of Girls and Women* Munro employs the double time scheme of a paradigmatic discourse in depicting the character of Del Jordon, who remains to be the narrator. In one frame, Del expresses the day to day events and in another frame, Del looks back on the past. Munro shifts the readers back and forth between Del, a girl in her grade four and Del as an elderly woman. It is through the elderly woman Munro gives a chance to a woman to re-experience, reminiscence and reshapes her past. It is in the world of Uncle Benny and through his faith that paves the path for Del Jordon’s development as a creative writer. Unlike Rose in ‘Who Do You Think You Are?’ Del is surrounded by many people both relatives and inmates in her house.

Typical of Rose’s life, Del’s life also has been a record of failure. It had been a struggle involved in the process of writing as Del’s only aim was to become a writer. Her struggles and failures take the readers to the world of discovery along with Del Jordon. The keen observation from the world of experience with the doubleness of
reality gets exhibited in Del’s character. Unlike Rose who had been a prey to physical and psychological abuse, Del experiences a psychological struggle in herself typical to a middle-class girl. It is a portrayal of withdrawal, rejection and returns to her native space that gets depicted in *Lives of Girls and Women*. It deals with the discourses of a young girl who encounters death faces rejections by men and realizes her goal of becoming a writer.

The plight of gender discrimination which suppresses the potential of women in the profession of writing is dealt with in this collection. It is the study of women as an artist who attempts to write about the female body from her childhood. Along with these complexities, the varied experiences in different phases of life gets reflected here. There lies a social devaluation in a class-based society all over the world where Canada is no exemption. The class-based society which constructs boundaries and stands as an obstacle to women’s ambition and their progress and forces them to survive in a caged world gets exhibited through the character of Del. In contrast to Virginia Woolf who refrained herself from the writing of her own sexuality and female passion. Munro’s short stories closely and vividly depict the feminine consciousness and their fragmented and transformational experiences. It is this consciousness and imagination of Alice Munro as an artist that is explicitly portrayed through the character of Del Jordon.

Del Jordon’s exploration of the forces of religion, sex, and class consciousness gets depicted from one chapter to the other. Del’s journey in this series is an account of a young girl-empowering herself as an artist in spite of all the social taboos in a conservative Canadian society. On the whole *Lives of Girls and Women* is a discovery of the realities of sin, demise, religion, gender, sexual characteristics and art.
From a cross-examination of five female characters, three individual short stories, and two bildungsroman narrative, it is observed that the stages of an adolescent female up to their middle age is being viewed as a state of objectification. Either the girls like the unnamed protagonist in ‘Walker Brothers Cowboy,’ ‘Boys and Girls,’ ‘Red Dress-1946’ on in the character of Rose in Who Do You Think You Are? and Del Jordon in Lives of Girls and Women almost all the female adolescent girls have been assigned only a derogatory position. The unnamed narrator’s silent observation in the story ‘Walker Brothers Cowboy’ leading to the objectification in ‘Boys and Girl’ and shifts to a resilient reintegration by the female protagonist in the short story ‘Red Dress-1946.’

![Illustration of Three Modes of Reintegration](image)

**Fig.6 - Illustration of Three Modes of Reintegration**

Immanuel Kant believed that Objectification dehumanizes an individual and reduces him/her to an object. These female adolescent individuals have either been kept as mute observers or treated as instruments of pleasure assigned to fulfill the appetite of men and have been thrown away like ‘lemon which has been sucked dry.’
Sandra Lee Bartky, a professor of Gender Studies, identifies the ‘Sexual Objectification’ of women in patriarchal culture, so has the character of the unnamed protagonist ‘Red Dress- 1946’ been portrayed. She is taught to perceive herself through her mother to immense disciplinary and conventional practices, while the other three individuals remain silent observers yet with the self-examination of their own ‘Selves.’

Later two characters Rose and Del Jordon gradually transform to get rid of the oppressive feminine roles and land up as television interviewer and women writer. Though they could get rid of the feminine roles, yet the ‘Feminine image’ which suppresses women as consumers proves the society to be preoccupied with the consumer culture. Almost all the characteristic traits of Nussbaum’s Objectification could be identified in all these characters. The girl in ‘Walker Brothers Cowboy’ is treated as an instrument or a tool to serve her mother’s purpose. There lies a ‘Denial of Autonomy’ in ‘Boys and Girls’ for she has to confine herself to the gender role. She proves to be ‘Violable,’ for she is treated as a deficient in integrating her father’s choice. The female proves to adhere to ‘Fungibility’ which could be witnessed in the character of Rose. Del being forced to experience death and evil equates ‘Denial of Subjectivity.’ The struggle in Del to transform herself as a writer proves the forced ‘Inertness’ in the female. From cross-examination of three individual stories in the collection Dance of the Happy Shades to two bildungsroman narratives, the analyses prove that Female Objectification continues to be a universal phenomenon in the patriarchal world. Either they are Objectified or they Self Objectify themselves, Women universally have been treated as secondary objects to which few writers like Alice Munro have attempted to transform their gender roles for empowerment which gets examined in the next core chapter titled ‘Exotic Incongruities.’