



Woman as Alienated: A Study of Alice Munro's Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage

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Abstract: Alienation is a worldwide existential predicament. It is an inevitable fact of in every human existence. Generally this alienation as a human condition is frequently applicable to the man, the patriarch of society whereas woman as the 'second sex' and the 'alienated'. The works of Alice Munro explore the protagonists' personal agonies and traumas that arise out of alienation which leads to the subsequent state of emotional deliriums they endure leading to dissolution of marriage. Alice Munro is a well-regarded Canadian woman short-story writer. In her magnificently textured stories, she travels around the distinction of relationships and the profundity of emotions. For her literary contribution, she won Nobel Prize in 2013. This paper seeks to analyze the much neglected aspect of the woman as alienated with particular reference to Alice Munro's *Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage*. It was published in 2001 and consists of nine short stories. These stories are travel around the different themes like broken relationships of the characters with separation, isolation and alienation. The loneliness itself is believed to be felt by the women protagonists and it is the main idea used by the author, Munro. The main women characters in this collection Jimmy, Johanna, Lorna, Nina, Queenie and Grant seem to feel lonely at the beginning of the stories and later at the end they are abetting to achieve what they want. In the conclusion the study has discussed how to prevail over their loneliness to get compassion and how they have maintained good relationship with others. Thus the issue of loneliness that leads to eventual happiness.

Index Terms- Alienation, estrangement, relationship, analysis, loneliness, compassion, happiness.

INTRODUCTION:

Alice Munro's works are mostly known for portraying the problems that women face in their lives and living in the society. In her stories, the female characters involve in strange relationships and face uncommon situations. The driven theme behind most of her works is the independence and freedom of choice. Sometimes her female characters struggle to go against societal norms. One can see how prejudices against women come while they struggle to make their own decisions. Though Munro shows extramarital relations in her stories she seems to be giving more priority to on women's problems with their family or husbands and how they triumph over their problems. These are the central themes in her most of the stories. The preset paper ha looks into the alienated situation of married women through the different characters Jimmy, Johanna, Lorna, Nina, Queenie and so on.

Canadian woman writer, Alice Munro wrote about ordinary people in ordinary situations, creates a portrait of life in all of its complexities. The select stories have been taken from *Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage* collection. It consists of nine short stories, they are "Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage", "Floating Bridge", "Family Furnishings", "Comfort", "Nettles", "Post and Beam", "What is Remembered", "Queenie", and "The Bear Came Over the Mountain", in which all of the main characters are women. All stories are chosen as they have similarities in their narrative pattern. They consist of hate, friendship, courtship, love and marriage sequences used by the writer are observed in the narration. This paper critically analyses on this journey.

The title *Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage*, would have fit any of her ten previous books. Love in all its forms and stages: troubled and troubling, resisted and embraced, thwarted and nurtured, love as the fiercest motivation for one's existence or as the most unyielding obstacle to happiness. These have been her themes throughout her career. It is to her credit that Munro does not give us this feeling, of course, but rather offers a similarity something that looks and feels like that kind of moment at first glance. To some degree, it is another meta occurrence, slightly mannered because of the intentional vagueness of the language but still emotionally powerful. That it only reveals this double-sidedness upon closer examination is a kind of trick, but one that pays intellectual rewards.

'Can't you tolerate people being different, why is this so important?
If this isn't important, nothing is'. (HFCLM 129)

The first story "Floating Bridge" opens with the introduction of the main female protagonist, Jinny. Jinny is suffering from a severe illness that makes her feel dependent and desperate. This condition of her leads to feel alone. In this situation generally husband should take care of her. Rather than that, he does not be concerned about Jinny. This made to push her deeper into her loneliness. Neal prefers to spend time with their housemaid, Helen. When Jinny meets Ricky, a young man, she slowly changed her perspective of life with Ricky who is a caring and a carefree boy, consequently, she feels comforted and lighthearted toward life which that she has lost due to her focus on her illness. But Ricky is the opposite of Neal, and when he starts to speak, the difference becomes clearer. The writer believes that meeting Ricky is a step for her to come out of her shell and starting to open herself up. Since Ricky understands how tired Jinny is, so he offers to take her home. They go using an alternate road which leads them to a floating bridge where the stars shine brightly and then he kisses her.

"See the stars?" he said. "I told you. Stars"

"Now do you know where you are?" he said.

"On a dock?" she said.

"On a bridge. This is a floating bridge." (HFCLM 83).

Eventually, the main idea itself in the story is presented by the way a sick woman who is a pessimist towards life is getting her spirits back up by a young man she has just met. It tells the readers that finding happiness is in a wreck. When Jinny feels sorry for herself resulting in her being closed off, she finds the bright side in her situation when she meets Ricky. The hopelessness and the loneliness that Jinny has been feeling due to her illness is somehow becoming a way for her to reach happiness, once she lets go.

The next story "Queenie" begins when the protagonist Queenie decides to elope with her older neighbor Mr. Stan Vorguilla. Her parents are furious and choose to not talk to her anymore. Only her stepsister, Chrissy, is still in contact with her. Queenie's marriage is not something that comes out of a fairy tale. Her marriage is an unhappy one, with an abusive and jealous husband. She befriends with one of her husband's students, Andrew, and the two begin to send each other letters. She leaves her marriage behind to pursue her true happiness.

The story starts with a quarrel between Queenie and her family members. Her parents do not approve of their marriage due to obvious reasons, so they elope without telling anyone by leaving a letter behind them.

"I am going to marry Mr. Vorguilla, it said. *Yours truly, Queenie.*"

"It's underneath the sugar bowl," said my father.

Bet dropped her spoon.

"I want him prosecuted," she shouted. "I want her in Reform School. I want the police" (HFCLM 250).

This story deals with marital confinement and how running away from abusive households is seen as the only way out for women who encounter excruciatingly painful domestic situations. The same kind of extramarital affair also exists in *If I Die Today* by Shashi Deshpande. This novel is also a result of stress and loneliness. Rani, the wife of Dr. Aggarwal, the Dean of the hospital, has an affair with Dr. Kulkarni which is a result of her strained relationship with her husband and also her loneliness owing to her husband's long absence.

The next short story in this collection is "Post and Beam", the term is associated with architecture and building trade and refers to buildings which use heavy upright timbers or beams to support equally heavy posts. Aesthetically speaking, a post and beam building almost blend and become a part of the landscape while at the same time holding on to its inherent beauty. The story revolves around Lorna, her husband Brendan, and his student Lionel at the university. The story begins with Lionel's account of his mother's death, whom Lorna had met previously. Lorna tells Lionel about a memory that she once shared with her mother. She tells Lionel that her mother and she always listened to a Soap opera on the radio, and tells him about the concern that she felt when they missed listening to the radio for one evening. She felt a deep concern, not because of missing the story but because she wondered what would happen to the people in the story, with the radio not turned on, and her mother and herself not listening. More than concern she is horrified that her absence in some way might prove to be detrimental to the lives of the characters in the Soap opera and how easy it is to lose things when one is not even aware of their existence.

Lorna leaves for a vacation along with Brendan and her children leaving Polly alone in the house. Lorna understands that she has left Polly all alone and has hurt her feelings by not inviting her along on the journey. She starts imagining that when she returns home she might find Polly dead. She has a memory of how caring and protective Polly had been towards Lorna when they were children and begins to despise herself for her spitefulness and cruelty towards Polly. She tries to bargain with God in a futile attempt to make sure that Polly would be strong enough to bear the hurt and pain that Lorna had inflicted on her. She returns from her vacation only to realize that there developed a strong bond between Lionel and Polly and that her fears were completely unnecessary for. She sees Polly with a new insight and sees her strength, vitality and her indomitable spirit. It did not matter whether she married Lionel or not and had the strength to move on in life. This leads to the final epiphany moment when she sees Polly at ease with both Brendan and Lionel, an ease that Lorna herself was incapable of attaining.

Moreover in "Floating Bride", "Queenie" and "Post and Beam" found the same type of extramarital relation. The protagonists of the three stories are middle-aged women. They are leading family life. However, marriage proves to be no escape. The husbands accept their wives as working women but at the same time do not recognize or encourage the 'feminist self' in them. In all the three works studied here the heroines, Jinny, Queenie and Lorna are left without any sense of fulfillment –both physical and mental–because of their husbands' lack of understanding. The uncaring husband's ill-treatment leads to extramarital affair.

Similarly the Indian woman novelist, Manju Kapur's *Custody*, the main protagonist Shagun is married to a bright, hardworking man Raman. She has two kids. But the boredom of her husband's attitude and marriage drives her to abandon her family to get married to Raman's boss Ashok.

"The Bear Came Over the Mountain" is a story of love, romance, family relationship, an enigma of romance and psychological disorientation. The story reveal family bond through mental depression and physical inability. Alice Munro's presentation of human relationship and family bond gets a new dimension from psychopathological point of view. It shows a

peculiar relationship between two unacquainted families, members of which suffer from two different types of trauma: psychic hysteria and physical immobility. Alice Munro shows the effect of such frenzy on individuals as well as on societal connection.

Incidentally, she suffers from a type of memory loss, which Grant notices as he finds tiny notes of yellow papers all over the house. Munro sets this abnormality in her in the wake of the demise of the two dogs and the death of her mother, leaving her psychologically alone all the more. Her husband remains always careful, yet she starts showing unnatural signs of memory loss or dementia or Alzheimer's disease.

Moreover, the title of the story has been derived from a nursery rhyme that begins in this way:

The bear went over the mountain,
To see what he could see.
And all that he could see,
Side of the mountain. (HFCLM 275)

Significantly, the story reveals the secrets of Grant and the past life of Fiona. By the end of it, both are reunited in the sense that Fiona, more vulnerable than her husband, finds him as her only refuge. In his subconscious mind, he looks into the matters of human relationship. Grant, on the one hand, maintains his family life, and, on the other hand, focuses on the social attachment with Marian.

Additionally the film *Away from Her*, which is based on "The Bear Came Over the Mountain" (1999), addresses the subject of love, not from the perspective of a person with dementia, but rather from the perspective of the one left behind. Among the most poignant aspects of the story is what happens when the character of Fiona Anderson (Julie Christie), who has Alzheimer's disease, forgets her husband Grant (Gordon Pinsent) and forms a close relationship with another male companion.

Another story "Comfort" begins when Nina, wife of Lewis, comes home to find that her husband has committed suicide in their home. She immediately looks for a note, a suicide note, to at least help her to get a closure. The stories dwindle down to the past, telling the readers that Lewis used to be a teacher at a high school, disliked by many students and their parents due to his extreme perspective towards life. Nina and Lewis' marriage is not a happy one since he is much older than her and she has always been the one that is inferior to him. They often have a tiff because of their different beliefs yet Nina does not dare to defy her husband. Then, she meets Ed Shore, the owner of the funeral home. Ed shows concern toward Nina, telling her that he has found a note inside of Lewis' pocket, but it does not turn out to be a note she was hoping for. When she spreads Lewis' remains, she suddenly finds the comfort and calmness she was looking for and she finally let us go.

In addition to that the whole story is told by Nina's her point of view. She is described as a well-behaved woman, she once makes a promise to Lewis to take their lives together, yet he breaks it. Lewis Spiers commits suicide without leaving his wife even a single note. He is a sixty-two-year-old man and suffers from Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS). His illness is mainly the reason for him to take his own life, breaking his promise to his wife.

"What is the difference between Satan and Antichrist, or is there one?" said Nina. "The Quakers were very remiss about that." Lewis said that he could do without her treating all this as a joke. "Sorry," she said soberly. "Who do you think is really writing them? Some minister?" (HFCLM 132).

It seems like they do not share the same belief. The writer believes that it is one of the reasons why Lewis prefers to not being around her when she starts to doubt his belief. Lewis not being around is one of the indications that sometimes she is lonely and she lives an unhappy marriage. The writer assumes that the death here does not mean the end instead it makes a new beginning for Nina. Ed's concern for Nina inclines her towards him and it may be concluded that Ed and Nina derive comfort from each other may start a new life.

Coming to the next short fiction "Nettles" was first published in the *New Yorker* in 2000 and it also tells the story of a middle-aged woman who meets her childhood boyfriend after many years. This story uses the first person narration and the "I" in this case might refer to the author herself, though Munro states that her stories are not autobiographical but they seem to refer to an emotional reality; a reality which is strongly Munroian and is derived from her own life. The very name of the story "Nettles" suggests that love through beautiful might still possess the capability of hurting us, especially when least expect it to.

Predominantly, in this story love is a central idealization. The "underground resource" echoes the deep well, the well that is not just a hole in the ground but rather a mystery and the well mentioned at the beginning of the story in which she imagines are diamonds. The final paragraph about the large plants called joe-pye weed and the stinging nettles is a coda that suggests the insignificant that is significant and the imagined that is more real than actuality.

"Family Furnishings" is Munro's different short story. It tells about the narrator's second cousin, Alfrida, a journalist. The story opens with the name Alfrida, narrator's aunt. She seems to be a charismatic figure in her household. The narrator senses the difference between the visits of other relatives and Alfrida. The visit of other relatives is fairly formal; everyone behaves very formally at the table during dinner. It is not that they are not capable of talking or chatting at the table but they all feel a kind of restraining in their family conditions. Away from the table, they are normal and discuss all odds and events of their lives. When Alfrida visits their home, everything is quite different. Alfrida is working for a magazine and she writes for the newspaper. She has an air of liberty around her. She moves around not bothered about her relatives, discusses politics with her cousin and chats with the narrator's mother. She represents her aunt, the narrator's grandmother.

This moment was amazing as if Alfrida had transformed us into new people. Ordinarily, my mother would say that she did not like to see a woman smoke. She did not say that it was indecent, or unladylike-just that she did like it. (HFCLM 86)

Consequently, the protagonist's point of view, when she is at a young age she was very much impressed by Alfrida and her journalism profession. She admires her style and attitude. Thus she came to the city to get a higher education. But when she became older she knew the reality of life and real attitude of Alfrida. She comes to know Alfrida's relationships with others and sexual affairs with men. Therefore it is inferred that Munro gives importance to traditional emotions than sexual affairs in this story.

What is remembered and forgotten only to be remembered years later, in this story that begins with a quotation taken from a newspaper and is then structured as a secret story about a woman's fantasy life hidden within the story of her real life? The story "What is Remembered" opens in Vancouver with Meriel and her young husband Pierre at the funeral of his best friend Jonas, who died in a motorcycle accident up north, and it is at the lunch afterwards that Meriel, turning away from visions of the

afterlife promised by the minister at the service, sees her husband speaking to the unknown bush doctor who had cared for Jonas after his accident. At that stage Meriel has no inkling that within a few hours time she and the doctor would come together in a passionate sexual relationship for one afternoon, which she would remember for the rest of her life. It is only when the doctor, who had driven her to visit an old family friend in a nursing home, makes the surprising offer to come in with her for the visit that she begins to understand the unspoken sexual chemistry between them, registered not consciously but entirely through the language of her body: "She had a sudden mysterious sense of power and delight, as if with every step she took, a bright message was travelling from her heels to the top of her skull" (HFCLM 227).

Meriel's addiction to her fantasy script represents a form of feminine creativity where she edits her own plot and rejects other plots like the tragic romance plot. She discusses with Pierre when he is dying. She would like to revise the romantic climax of that novel because she feels offended by Turgenev's distortion of the omen's position: "I feel it's just Turgenev coming and yanking them apart and he's doing it for some purpose of his own" (236). Meriel is resisting not only Turgenev's nineteenth-century discourse of femininity but also Pierre's late twentieth-century masculinist construction of a woman's identity: "When it was over she'd love him all the more.

After all, as Atwood remarked in *The Robber Bride*, "The dead are in the hands of the living," and Meriel is positioned here as the historian who is outside the event manipulating her own script. She offers perhaps unwittingly a savage anatomy of the narcissistic self-serving quality of romantic fantasy, which imaginatively reverses the dynamics of power in a sexual relationship while paradoxically guaranteeing its vitality as a crucial component of the feminine imaginary. (HFCLM 38)

In addition both "Nettles" and "What I remembered" are same narrative stories. The protagonists of the fiction recollect their past experiences of their boyfriends. The stories move from present to past and past to present. Sometimes the reader will get confused as to which is the present and which is the past. The narrator recollects her boy-girl relationship when she saw Mike in "Nettles", and the same way Meriel remembers when she sees the doctor at Jonas home. Meriel is very much unhappy with the ill-treatment of Pierre. Meriel is attracted by the doctor's good treatment and respect towards her.

The title story, "Hateship, Friendship, Courtsip, Loveship, Marriage" starts when Sabitha and Edith, a pair of best friends, decide to pull a prank on Sabitha's housemaid, Johanna. They start by sending her false letters in the name of Sabitha's father, Ken. An oblivious Johanna, an independent yet closed off the woman, starts to open up in her letters by telling 'Ken' about her heart-wrenching past. One day, she decides to send some of Ken's furniture to him and resigns from her job then moves to take care of Ken. Ken looks at Johanna strange when she gets to his place, not knowing why she wants to take him under her care. In the course of time, they become real friends from then; Johanna is no longer a lonely woman for she has found her family.

Johanna does not know that Sabitha and her friend, Edith, have been sending her letters in the name of Sabitha's father. In the letters she tells "Ken" about her miserable and lonely past.

Johanna is a plain, poor, unmarried woman, works as a housekeeper for Mr. McCauley and his granddaughter Sabitha. Sabitha's mother is dead, and her father, Ken Boudreau, lives elsewhere in poverty, frequently pleading with his father-in-law for money. She is friends with Edith, a blacksmith's daughter who feels bored with her constricting blue-collar lifestyle. Edith devises a hoax in which she and Sabitha forge love letters from Sabitha's father to Johanna. Johanna, convinced by the letters that Ken will marry her, uses her substantial savings to travel to his remote location in rural Canada. She discovers that Ken has fallen ill, and, lovingly, she nurses him back to health. Having realized that Ken cannot control his own life, Johanna takes charge and arranges for them to start a new life.

After exchanging letters, Johanna believes that she has to move to where Ken is to take care of him because he is alone and barely can take care of himself due to his depression of losing his wife. Johanna decides to send some of Ken's furniture to where he is staying now in Saskatchewan. The writer believes that by taking a big step to move is a way of trying to move away from the loneliness that was resisting inside her. Due to her wanting to move to Saskatchewan, she resigns from her job. (HFCLM 10-17). She cut her losses in Mr. McCauley's household, knowing that she will move away to take care of her friend shows her seriousness in her friendship with Ken.

In Saskatchewan, she goes to his apartment. Ken is oblivious as to why a stranger comes to his house. Ken does not know a thing about Johanna and is unaware of her sudden presence in his house (HFCLM 42-45). Ken cannot comprehend why a woman is standing in his house trying to take care of him while she is still a complete stranger to him though she knows about him through the false letters she's been sending. Ken's obliviousness toward Johanna at first becomes a problem since she is still a stranger to him. Along the way, he opens up just like she did, and befriends her, letting her taking care of him (HFCLM 47-51). The writer is certain that by Ken opening up to Johanna makes her feel start to hope that there is a way for her to be happy for she has found a friend in life.

Unexpectedly, the story flashes forward into two years in the future where Johanna has a child from Ken and named him Omar (51). Johanna's happiness finally is within reach for her to have found a friend for life and that said friend has given her a family she has never had. The writer concludes that this particular story, as it has been believed before, carries a story of how loneliness affects a woman to be strong yet loner and then she finds a friend who turns her lonely upside down.

The story turns when she decides to move to take care of Ken. She even sends him his personal furniture and resigns from her job showing her seriousness in their friendship. Although she still does not know that she is being pranked by the two teenagers. Her decision to move shows that she is willing to do anything for her new friend, "Ken", and that she is pursuing her newfound friendship that will lead to her having happiness that she has not felt for a long time.

Notably the change in Johanna's life, this time, is actually shown from Ken's point of view. "... Two women, actually, a young one and an older one who knew about each other and were ready to tear other's hair out.... Perhaps a solution had arrived for that, as well" (49). Ken has already started to open up to Johanna is actually what makes her start to feel happier and less lonely because she has found a true friend, and somehow a lover, in Ken.

Therefore this story has the main idea of loneliness that leads to happiness. When at first Johanna, is all alone and has no friend to run to, takes a chance then turns her loneliness into happiness by moving out of her old life to pursue something new. As it is shown before that Johanna is a loner yet a strong woman and due to false letter mishap she finds a friend in Sabitha. Simply put, the author uses Johanna as an example that though being independent, in this case, because she has no friends, will

somehow lead to loneliness. However, when one opens up to her surroundings and finds their match, it will eventually direct one to happiness.

Alice Munro portrays women and their place in society in a variety of ways. Some critics call her a feminist writer or "a writer on the side of women". Feminism itself is a doctrine or movement that advocates equal rights for women and literature is a very important and versatile medium for the promotion of women's rights in 20th century. The stereotype that society has established on the subject of the way men and women should behave is an important factor in the short stories of Alice Munro.

After all, as Atwood remarked in *The Robber Bride*, "The dead are in the hands of the living," and Meriel is positioned here as the historian who is outside the event manipulating her own script. She offers perhaps unwittingly a savage anatomy of the narcissistic self-serving quality of romantic fantasy, which imaginatively reverses the dynamics of power in a sexual relationship while paradoxically guaranteeing its vitality as a crucial component of the feminine imaginary. (HFCLM 38)

Shashi Deshpande's *That Long Silence* depicts the extra-marital relationship of Jaya, the protagonist, with her neighbor, Kamat. Their relationship is never precisely defined, Jaya's empty, meaningless and loveless relationship with her husband, Mohan, that draws her towards Kamat who is opposite to Mohan. Just as he gets attracted to her, Queenie attracts her husband's student Andrew in "Queenie". To her, it is an escapade to find some human empathy and to share a fulfillment of her desire for affectionate relationship, a kind of inner satisfaction that Jaya and Queenie's relationship with Mohan and Andrew alone had failed to provide.

Conclusion:

Consequently, in all the stories discussed above the relationships between men and women constitute the field in which the feminine is defined through varieties of resistance to masculine constructions, as each woman seeks not a room of her own but a space of her own where she can escape the constraints of expectation imposed upon her. Munro is still seeding for new ways of "saying the unsayable" and constructing "probable fiction" figuring out identities through narratives that reconstruct apparently stable surfaces as multidimensional spaces where characters are aware of slipping in and out of different subjective worlds while their bodies remain grounded in the physical spaces of the everyday life.

Alice Munro portrays her middle aged women characters as modern women. Generally extramarital relationship is the issue of men. But in this collection *Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage*, Munro depicts the extramarital affairs of married women. All Munro's women protagonists are not ready to mould themselves into the role of traditional women's wife. They don't want to suffer or get oppressed in the hands of their husbands and they want to reshape themselves. They know how to overcome their problems and how to fulfillment their desires. Every story in this collection starts with sorrow, loneliness, abandonment, depression, separation but ends with happiness and bliss thereby reflecting Munro's skill of writing and supporting women.

Moreover the traditional woman who believes that her place is with her husband and family, whatever are her troubles, does not leave her husband; she does not leave her family; she strives for working relationship with him at any cost. In a sense Alice Munro represents the traditional custom in some of her stories. She underwent psychological alienation in her material life when protagonist husbands heed no attention to their needs. In "Floating Bridge", "Post and Beam", "What is Remembered", "Queenie" and "The Bear Came over the Mountain" although the protagonists suffer with their spouse they don't want to leave them. The study has observed that as a modern educated woman Alice Munro is able to come out of her predicament and hunt for to fulfill her 'self'. She holds that it is the heroines' retreat in their selves rather than in any external crutches which injects a hope for the woman's redemption from her predicament. The woman's increasing involvement rather than detachment in her circumstance crisis as expressed in her stories reveals the positive, humanistic side.

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