



Egyptian Journal of Linguistics and Translation

'EJLT'

ISSN: 2314-6699

<https://ejlt.journals.ekb.eg/>

Volume 12, Issue 1

January 2024

Peer-reviewed Journal

Sohag University Publishing Center

The Influences of Cultural Context on the Psychological Development of Child in Alice Munro's Early Short Stories

Abdel Kareem Qutb

Shehata

Assistant Professor of
English Literature,
Department of English -
Faculty of Languages and
Translation - October 6
University

Abstract

Alice Munro is a Canadian short story writer and a novelist who was born in 1931. She won the Nobel prize for Literature in 2013. She published her first and important short story collection, *Dance of the Happy Shades* in 1968. It included fifteen short stories, three of these stories, "Walker Brother Cowboy", "Images", and "Boy and Girls", the first, the third and the ninth, in order, though do not follow each other in the book, they are greatly connected in many ways. The most important of these connections is the child girl main character and narrator. She suffers many aspects of the cultural context, such as parents' detachment, ways of living, values, customs and gender ideas. How does cultural context influence the psychological development of the child is the question of this paper. The main aim of the paper is to show how the cultural context affects the girl until, at the end of the last story, she regains herself and finds her own identity. The cultural and psychological theories are used in the paper to achieve its main aim.

Key words: Cultural Context - Psychological Development - Child -Alice Munro- Early Short Stories



Egyptian Journal of Linguistics and Translation

'EJLT'

Online ISSN: 2314-6699

<https://ejlt.journals.ekb.eg/>

Volume 12, Issue 1

January 2024

Peer-reviewed Journal

Sohag University Publishing Center

تأثيرات السياق الحضارى على التطور النفسى للطفل

في القصص القصيرة الأولى لأليس مونرو

مستخلص الدراسة

عبد الكريم قطب شحاته
أستاذ مساعد الادب الإنجليزي
قسم اللغة الانجليزية
كلية اللغات والترجمة
جامعة 6 اكتوبر

أليس مونرو كاتبة قصة قصيرة وروائية كندية من مواليد عام 1931. حصلت على جائزة الرواية في الأدب عام 2013. أصدرت أول وأهم مجموعاتها القصصية "رقصة الظلال السعيدة" عام 1968، وتضمنت خمسة عشر قصة قصيرة. ثلاث من هذه القصص، "الأخ ووكر كاوبوي"، و"صور"، و"الأولاد والبنات"، الأولى والثالثة والتاسعة، بالترتيب، وإن لم تتبع بعضها البعض في الكتاب، إلا أنها مرتبطة بشكل كبير وبطرق عديدة. وأهم هذه الروابط هي الشخصية الرئيسية في القصص الثلاث وهي الابنة. وهي تعاني من جوانب عديدة في السياق الثقافي، مثل انفصال الوالدين عنها، وطرق المعيشة، والقيم، والعادات، والأفكار المتعلقة بالنوع. كيف يؤثر السياق الثقافي على النمو النفسى للطفل؟ هو سؤال هذه الورقة البحثية. والهدف الرئيسى منها هو إظهار مدى تأثير السياق الثقافي على الابنة حتى تستعيد نفسها في نهاية القصة الأخيرة وتجد هوية البنت. وقد تم الاعتماد على النظريات الثقافية والنفسية في البحث لتحقيق هدفه الرئيسى. لذلك تأتي الورقة في ثلاثة أجزاء وخاتمة. يتناول الجزء الأول علاقة الشخصية الرئيسية بوالديها. وفي الجزء الثانى تناول البحث طرق العيش والبيئة في القصة القصيرة ومدى تأثيرها سلباً على الراوية. ويناقش الجزء الثالث قيم وأفكار النوع في المجتمع ودورها في معاناة الابنة من أزمة الهوية وكيفية إدراك الشخصية لهويتها ووصولها إلى مرحلة الثقة. وتبين الخاتمة نتائج الأجزاء الثلاثة بالإضافة إلى بعض التوصيات حول موضوع البحث.

الكلمات الرئيسية: السياق الثقافي - التنمية النفسية - الطفل - أليس مونرو - القصص

القصيرة المبكرة

The Influences of Cultural Context on the Psychological Development of Child in Alice Munro's Early Short Stories

Alice Munro is a Canadian short story writer and a novelist who was born in 1931. She won the Nobel prize for Literature in 2013. She published her first and important short story collection, *Dance of the Happy Shades* in 1968. It included fifteen short stories, three of these stories, "Walker Brother Cowboy", "Images", and "Boys and Girls", the first, the third and the ninth, in order, though do not follow each other in the book, they are greatly connected in many ways. The most important of these connections is the child girl main character and narrator. She suffers many aspects of the cultural context, such as parents' detachment, ways of living, values, customs and gender ideas.

The child who grows up in a good and natural social environment with healthy care givers, mother, father and other members of the family, develops smoothly from a dependent, weak member to be an independent strong one, who is aware of himself and his real identity. "Development is about progressing physically and psychologically, from dependent immaturity towards more mature competence and adult hood" (Oates et al.,2005, p. 55). The family, parents in particular form one aspect of the cultural context in which the child lives, grows and develops.

Culture has a wider meaning than that of the cultural context. Culture includes all the elements and the details of the world in which the child lives; the ideas, the values that the group of people around him / her adopt and bear, the concept of culture is therefore frequently used as a means of understanding relations between environments on the one hand and individual psychology on the other (Bronstein, p. 142). Culture refers to all the relations between the individual or the child, specifically his psychological development in one hand and everything, the weather, the plants, the animals and the people around on the other hand.

The cultural context relates more to the emotions, the feelings and the thoughts of the individual or the child and their relations with the healthy psychological side of his/ her

personality “cultural context (is) the indigenous cultural psychology of selfhood plays a critical role in shaping the way self and emotion relate to people’s well- being” (Misra, 2010, p. 95). So, the child relations with his parents and their religion, roles, ideas and their ways of living beside his/ her relations with the elements of the environment form his emotions, his thoughts and his feelings. All these elements consequently influence his physical and psychological health, and his psychological development.

A very important point about Alice Munro's way of short story telling is the many things happen in each of her short stories Hooper explains: “In many ways, a typical Munro short story... violates. At least at first glance the standard definition on the form: which, traditionally, has the short fictional form, unlike its big sister the novel” (1984, p. vii). The many actions with their details beside the meticulous description of the characters offer a great chance for the writer to express the thoughts, feelings and emotions of the characters to the reader, that certainly helps to transfer the messages of the writer directly, smoothly and the most influencing. Alice Munro connects the three short stories to the extent that they form a kind of autobiographical novella that could be titled (the Portrait of a Suffering child). The father of the narrator is named “Ben Jordan” in *Walker Brother Cowboy* and *Images*. In *Walker...* her father’s job in the past was to raise silver foxes, which is present job in *Boys and girls*. The child has also a sick mother in both *Walker...* and *Images*.

Douglas Gibson in his book *Stories About Storyteller* explains that Alice Munro’s “father has a failing fox farm... and her mother, a former teacher, fell ill early with Parkinson Disease and died Young” (1968, p.352). However, Alice lets her mother alive in the three stories. These similarities between Alice’s childhood and that of the main character of the stories make the character true, more convincing and influencing.

How does cultural context influence the psychological development of the child is the question of this paper. The main aim of the paper is to show how the cultural context affects

the girl until, at the end of the last story, she regains herself and finds her own identity. The cultural and psychological theories are used in the paper to achieve its main aim. So the paper comes in three parts and a conclusion. The first part tackles the main character relation with her parents. In the second part the paper deals with the ways of living and the environment in the short stories and how they negatively influence the narrator. The values and ideas of gender in the society and their role in the girl's suffering of the identity crisis and the way in which the character realizes her identity and reaches the stage of satisfaction are discussed in the third part. The conclusion shows the results of the three parts beside a few recommendations on the subject of the paper.

I

The most observed aspect of the cultural context of the girl in the stories is the weak and unhealthy relationship between the narrator and her parents. It is clear that her father and mother are responsible for that weak relation, which could be seen in the three stories through two dimensions: the detachment between the parents and their children; the girl and her brother, beside the disappointment, that parents cause to their daughter when they are not able to face the difficulties of life and instead they escape for other false and unreal things.

The girl suffers detachment from her father and mother she does not enjoy the normal relationship that includes continuous, warm and familiar conversations which usually start with a question from the child. These questions and the answers from the parent help the mental as well as the emotional development of the child. A precise analysis of the child problems that the adolescent has to face leads us to the fact that the central task is the reconstruction of the role identity bound to the parent family. Detachment from the family must be followed by the attempt to find another basis of identity to replace the family membership. (Dobert et al., 1987, p. 277) Then building the role identity of the adolescent and the child needs the natural connection with the parents, which has its great form in the

question and answer and the story telling conversations. When he / she does not find this and detached from parents he / she is disappointed and is deprived of family's warmth and intimacy.

The most obvious type of parent – child detachment in Alice's stories is the child question that does not find enough attention or is not answered in a serious way. In *Walker...* the girl complains: "A door upstairs opening on nothing but air? I asked my father and he says they are for walking in your sleep. What? ... I am offended, seeing too late that he is joking (12). She expects her father to explain to her why the owners of these houses make such windows; instead, her father makes fun of her serious question so she is hurt and feels offended.

Again in *Image*, her father commits the same mistake when he does not take other question seriously enough. She asks him about Old Joe Phippen, who was carrying an axe. She explains: "On the way I said, 'why did he have an axe?' Father answers: 'He don't mean any harm with the axe. It's just habit'" (1968, p.36). The reader is aware through the narration that the man has –or imagines that he has- some dangerous enemies. The daughter is really in need to have a more convincing answer that shows her father interest.

Parent- child detachment is also seen in the parents' preference not to talk with their daughter and keep silent. In *Boys and Girls*, the girl, the narrator reports: "My father did not talk to me unless it was about the job we were doing ... whatever thoughts and stories my father had were private, and I was shy of him and would never ask him questions" (1968, pp.87-88). Father speaks to her only when it is something about her job in raising the foxes. All his thoughts and stories are his personal and private things, she is shy to ask or talk about. However, she is not shy from her mother.

Mother also does not talk much with the narrator not because of her privacy but for her busy times. The daughter, feeling despair, writes: "My mother was too tired and

preoccupied to talk to me; she had no heart to tell about the normal school Graduation Dance... It seems to me that work in the house was ... peculiarly depressing” (88). Mother does not talk because she is always tired, busy and depressed out of the house work. She does not remember her happy moments of the school dances. She seems to have no love memories, which are expected to be the topic of lovely stories from a mother to her daughter.

A different type of the detachment from her parents is her father’s orders to her not to tell things happen out door to her mother. This happens twice in *Walker*... “Do you know what that was?” I say to my brother. “pee.” ... “pee, pee” sings my brother ecstatically. “Somebody dumped down pee!” “Just don’t Tell you mother that,” my father says. “She isn’t liable to see the joke” (1968, p.13). Here, father orders his daughter – the main character and the narrator – not to tell her mother that event which certainly and negatively influences her and naturally she is in need to share her feelings and thoughts with someone. Father justifies his order that mother’s health does not help her to enjoy the joke.

In the same story father visits, accompanied by his daughter and son, his old friends Nora and her blind mother. He drinks with Nora, who dances during the visit. Now, daughter understands her father, she is not in need of an order. She explains: “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 whisky and may be the dancing” (19). From her father’s thoughtfulness and silence, she gets his message that she should not mention anything about the visit, especially, his drinking whisky with Nora and Nora’s dancing during the visit.

Father’s orders not to mention the stories that happen outdoor at home come back openly and clearly in *Images*. After not showing any interest in his daughter’s question about Old Joe Phippen’s axe, he orders “But don’t say anything about it at home. Don’t mention it to your Momma or Many, either one. Because they might be scared about it” (1968, p.36).

Twice he orders “don’t say... Don’t mention” this time mother is not alone at home but Mary, the nurse is there too. Daughter is not allowed to talk with Mary either about what happened with Old Joe.

Turning many of the stories and events of everyday life into secrets confuses the daughter and creates a wide gap between her and the people around. With the time she becomes not able to decide which is allowed to talk about and which is not. This forces her to be silent all the time and not to speak even if she is asked to talk. More harmful is the child’s discovery that he / she is not important or dear enough for both father and mother. In *Walker*... “I’ll take her then. Take both of them, give you a rest.” What is there about us that people need to be given a rest from? Never mind. I am glad enough to find my brother and make him go to the toilet” (1968, p.11). In this situation the separation is complete between parents and children. The narrator hears her father telling mother that he is going to take “her” “both of them” referring to her and her brother, She realizes the wide gap between her parent from one side and she and her brother on the other side. Immediately she uses the same level of language, she says “us” referring to herself and her brother and “that people” referring to her parents. She decides that she will be glad to be with her brother.

In an earlier time of her childhood, the daughter suffers a more disappointing situation. In *Images*, she tries to come close to her sick mother but Mary – the nurse- “Shooed me off the bed... “you been tiring your Momma out? What do you want to bother your Momma for on this nice a day?” “I think she’s lonesome” my mother said, a weak and insincere defense... (1968, p.30). Here the daughter feels her rights to come close and stay for some time near her sick mother. The nurse is a stranger and may be unable to evaluate the child’s need to his mother. Mother defends her daughter, but it is not the defense she expects, it is weak and not of a true mother. The daughter is terribly disappointed by her mother’s weak defense.

I -b

The second dimension of the parents - child relationship as an aspect of the cultural context that influences the psychological development of the child in Alice's Munro's early short stories, is the parent's weakness in facing the economic drop of the family. Each parent escapes in different ways. That hurts the daughter, who is always sad and ashamed. "Shame is an emotion...supposes that one is completely exposed and conscious of being looked at ...Shame is early expressed in an impulse to bury one's face, or to sink... into the ground.... (Erikson,1987, p. 227). Throughout the three stories, the daughter, who is, either unconsciously or consciously, aware of her parents' actions and reactions in their everyday life feels shameful, sad and disappointed because of her parents.

Her mother's easiest way to escape the real life is to feel sick, which ranges from feeling poorly or having headache to a chronic disease. In *Walker...* the main character and the narrators reports about her mother: "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" (1968, p.11). An important aspect of the character of her mother is being sick of headache. Because of her fits of headaches, she is often forced to lie down. When she lies down in the little bed, in the screened porch, she thinks that she is taken back to their rich home of the past. She does not accept the present house as their home and she escapes in her thoughts to the past.

When Nora asks Pen Jordan in the same story: "Where's your wife then" (he answers) "Home- She's not fond of the hot weather.it makes her feel poorly" (15). Mother does not like this house and she longs back to their house in the past and refers to it as home. Father also refers to the hot weather as one of her complaints from the new life. The character of mother seems more seriously sick in *Images*. The main character describes her sick mother: "My mother's bed was set up in the dining room, to spare Mary McQuade climbing

the stairs. My mother's hair was done in two little thin dark braids..., her neck warm... the rest of her under the covers had changed into some large, fragile and mysterious object, difficult to move" (1968, p.29). Here, mother seems to be seriously and terribly sick. She finds difficulty to move the lower part of her body, which because of the long time in bed and under covers is changed to be a large, weak and secret lot. That reflects the distance that is created between the narrator and her mother.

However, daughter does not believe that her mother is really sick. She sees that her mother's sickness is a way of escape. Other factors may help her mother in her escape, such as the presence of Mary McQuad, who presents herself to the main character: "I'm your father's cousin... And there is always somebody sick in this family and I got to go to them" (29). The child comments in her mind "I doubted this... If she had never come, my mother would never have taken to her bed" (29). So, in the child's point of view the presence of Mary is a main cause of her mother's sickness which is an aspect of weakness and passiveness.

Mother, however, exerts some effort in increasing the distance between her and her daughter, the narrator reports: "She spoke of herself gloomily in the third person saying, "Be careful, don't hurt mother, don't sit on Mother's legs." Every time she said Mother ... a kind a wretchedness and shame spread through me as it did at the name of Jesus" (30). Talking about herself in a sorrowful and gloomy way and referring to herself as 'mother' takes her away far from the daughter. In addition, this accompanies her with the image of Jesus when he was killed by the Jews. The daughter feels responsibility and wretchedness for her mother as for Jesus. Both of them are not helped by anybody and each does not help himself.

Mother's passive response in facing sickness reminds her daughter of the biblical story of Jesus and the Jews. Jesus was so passive that he showed no resistance in facing the Jews who charged and then crucified him. The biblical story says that the Jews rushed to

arrest Jesus, then one of his followers tried to defend him, but Jesus refused saying: “But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled...” (Mathew, 1993, 26:54). Later on in the story, “But Jesus remained silent” (26:63). Finally, in the Holy Bible “But Jesus made no reply, not even to a single charge to the great amazement of the governor” (27:14). Daughter’s reference to Jesus in this situation adds so deep meanings, feelings and passions to mother’s passiveness. Jesus deals with what the Jews do as his fate that is written in advance in the Scriptures, in spite of His certainty that they conspire against Him and that he is innocent and His crucifixion is not fair. Mother accepts the diseases as her fate she has no intention to raise from bed while – daughter thinks- she has the ability. Mother’s and Jesus situations fill her with the feelings of wretchedness and shame. Here, the reference also adds sacred effects to the character of the mother.

Mother also escapes the real difficulty of the economic drop of the family through other two ways: memories and pretensions. She always remembers these days in the past and reminds her daughter of the details of their daily life at that time, in *Walker*... “She is not able to keep from mentioning those days. “Do you remember when we put you in your sled and Major pulled you.”, ... , I pretend to remember for less than I do, wary of being trapped into sympathy or any unwanted emotion”(1968, pp.10-11). She takes herself and her daughter to remember the happiest moments of the past. Recalling all these details may evoke sympathy and emotions, the daughter sees, unwanted in their present time.

Mother can not recognize the changes that come over their life. She continues to wear the same clothes in spite of the different environment. Her daughter describes: “She walks serenely like a lady shopping, like a (Lady) shopping, past the house wives in loose beltless dresses torn under the arms” (10). She wears clothes, goes to the shopping and walks like a real lady among woman poor enough to wear torn dresses. Here, the daughter is aware of her mother’s inconvenient behaviors and does not feel good for that.

In *Walker*... again, mother escapes to the past and calls her daughter in a voice highly distinguished. The daughter confesses “I loathe even my name when she says it in public, in a voice so high, proud and ringing, deliberately different from the voice of any other mother on the street” (10). Mother on purpose shows herself and her daughter as highly distinguished from the rest of the families on the street. That makes the daughter feel disgust and she even hates her name when it is said that way.

Father also escapes facing the economic drop of his life. However, he shows a little stronger character than that of his wife. He fails to present that fatherly strength expected by the daughter so she is also sad and ashamed by her father and his behaviors. In *Walker*... father escapes to his past. This is very clear in his visit Nora and her blind mother. The daughter reports what happens during the visit: “‘Ben Jordan’, says that old lady with no surprise. ‘you haven’t been to see us in the longest time. Have you been out of the country?’ My father and Nora look at each other. ‘He’s married, Momma, “says Nora cheerfully and aggressively”’ (15). Father escapes his reality to live sometime in his past. Beside showing himself as blamed by these two ladies he exposes an aspect of his character, very strange for his daughter why do he and Nora look at each other. The influence of his visit is made worse when the daughter understands that she should not mention this for her mother.

In *Images* the chance to escape comes to him through his relation with Mary McQuade, his cousin and the nurse of his sick wife. The daughter explains that attempt of escape in the change in her father’s nature: “My father, too, had altered since her coming. ...Some joke swelling her up... she (give) him a fork with a prong missing, pretending it was by accident. He threw it at her, and missed, but startled me considerably” (1968, p.30). She is aware of her father’s escape from the drop in his life because of his wife’s sickness. In her real presence in the same house, he escapes to have fun with his cousin Marry. The daughter is terribly worried by his laughing with Mary; she is so sad and ashamed by her father’s

behaviors.

In *Walker*... The main character, and the narrator of the three stories, is aware of the weaknesses of the character of her parents. She is really sad and feels ashamed. She expresses herself: "I feel we have become objects of universal ridicule- Even the dirty words chalked on the sidewalk are laughing at us" (1968, p.10). She is so sad and ashamed by her weak father and mother. She feels that everything in their society is laughing at them. Her parents do not seem to see this fact. Detachment from them and shame of their weakness cause the daughter's suffering. The ways of living and the animal abuse is her second suffering in these short stories.

II

The most important thing about the ways of living of the narrator's family in Munro's three stories is that her family depends, in their living, on animal abuse. Animal abuse is defined as "non-accidental, socially unacceptable behaviors that causes pain, suffering, or distress to and / or the death of animal" (Ascione et al., 2011, p. 118). Her father's business in *Boys and Girls* is raising foxes, killing horses to feed them, then killing the foxes to sell their pets. In *Images*, the father is a farmer who traps rats and kill them to feed his family, in *Walker* ... father sells rat poison. The daughter attends most of these scenes and suffers seeing blood and the repeated deathbed of those animals.

In *Boy and Girls* the main character, the narrator is the daughter of a fox farmer. He makes the living of his family from the fox business. She explains: "My father was a fox farmer. That is, he raised silver foxes, in pens: and in the fall and early winter, when their fur was prime, he killed them and skinned them and sold their pelts to the Hudson's Bay Company or the Montreal fur Traders" (1968, p.85). Her father used to kill the foxes, to skin the bodies of the dead foxes and finally he used to sell their skin to one of the two companies which are specialized in that trade. But before killing the foxes, he raises

them in small and closed places. He feeds them and gives them enough water. His daughter, the narrator used to help her father and to deal directly with these foxes. As a child she should start a kind of relationship with these animals.

The relationship between the girl and these foxes no doubt, includes some admiration and love, at least from her side. Her sympathy with the being killed foxes is clear in her description: “My father removed the pelt inside-out from the body of the fox, which looked surprisingly small, mean and rat-like, deprived of its arrogant weight of fur. The naked slippery bodies were collected in a sack and buried at the dump” (85). Describing the way of removing the pelt (inside out) shows her father’s method as savage and harsh. Then describing the bodies of the foxes after removing the pelt as (small, mean and rat like) refers to their weakness and helplessness. Also, seeing their weight and fur before the process of removing as arrogant, increases the severe influence of this process. Not respecting the bodies of these foxes and collecting them in a sack to be put at the dump is another criminal action.

The intimate relation between the girl, her younger brother and the foxes is certain. Of course, they are not pets. The girl and her brother know that those foxes will be killed finally. However, each fox has a name. The girl reports: “The foxes all had names ... Those my father named like Prince, Bob, Wally and Betty. Those I had named were called Star or Turk or Manreen or Diana. Laird named one Mand after a hired girl” (87). Naming the fox personalizes it and gives it a character, which naturally starts a relationship between the children and that fox. Then, giving the child a chance to give names to some foxes creates a type of intimacy between the child and these foxes in particular. Connecting killing these foxes with the living of the family increases the bad influence of the process of killing and starts a conflict inside the mind of child. To earn their living father kills the animals that they love.

The severe and negative influence of killing the foxes on the children is made clear through their mother who is older and more understanding. Mother herself hated killing the foxes inside the house. The daughter reports:

“In fact she disliked the whole pelting operation –that was what the killing, skinning, and preparation of the furs was called and wished it did not have to take place in the house. There was smell ...the smell of blood...” (85). Mother does not like either the scenes or the smell of blood in her house. Mother’s point of view clearly shows the terrible conditions of her daughter and son live in such a house.

Anyway the foxes are wild and the daughter admired them from a certain distance. However, she and her brother suffer a more difficult experience with another domestic and likable animal, the horses. Father shoots Mack, a horse they keep for some time and kill to feed the foxes. The daughter complains: “The whole scene would flash into my mind ...I did not have any great feeling of horror and apposition, such as a city child might have had. I was too used to seeing the death of animals as a necessity by which we live” (93). She used to watching the deaths of many animals and understands from her family that the death of these animals is necessary for making the living of their family. The daughter here complains the conflict that happens between her natural feelings against the killing of all these animals in front of her from one side and the necessity of living, that oppresses these feelings.

A similar experience repeated in *Images*, where animal abuse is applied this time on rats. Father is a farmer too and he takes his daughter with him. She describes her father’s work on the rats: “He lifted the trap out of the water and explained to me how it worked, dragging the rat’s head under at once and mercifully drowning him. I did not understand or care. I only wanted...to touch the stiff, soaked body” (1968, p.32). Here, the daughter ironically describes the way her father killed the rat, (mercifully drowning him). She does not understand and she does not care to know why father kill the rats and why only rats are

necessary for their living .She had a strong desire to touch the dead and changed body of the rat but she can not because it is dead.

The daughter expresses the terrible influence of this scene on her mental abilities and symbolically she gives her point of view concerning her father's killing of the rats. She continues: "The river curved, I lost my sense of direction. In the traps, we found more rats, released them, shook them and hid them in the sack, replaced the bait" (32). The curved river and the lost sense of direction include her refusal of what her father did. However, in the following actions during the operation of collecting the dead rats and putting the bait to kill other she sees herself accompanied with her father, she uses the pronoun (we). This also highlights her inner conflict; she is influenced by the act of killing the rats but she knows the necessity of that killing for the living of the family. The strangest thing in this girl experience with animal abuse is her fate or her father's insistence to give her a job and a chance to participate in watching the operation of killing as in *Boys and Girls* and in *Images*.

In *Images* father accompanies her in his meeting with Old Joe Phippen, who gives whisky to his cat instead of milk she describes: "The cat rose and stretched himself stiffly, took one baleful look around and lowered his head to drink. 'Straight whisky', my father said" (35). The cat seems to suffer much pain and is terribly hurt by this drink. Father seems to forget or neglect the nature of his daughter and the inconvenience between her human traits as a girl and the terrible jobs and scenes to which she is exposed.

In Alice Munro's selected three short stories, the main character, the daughter also suffers the sad and gloomy environment and atmosphere. In *Walker...* The new town which they come to after the economic drop of the family is not either beautiful or happy place. The narrator describes the place which is presented as the park to which they resort to have some good time: "We enter a vacant lot, a kind of park really for it is kept clear of junk and there is one bench with a slat missing on the back, a place to sit and look at the water, which is

generally grey in the evening, under a lightly overcast sky, no sunset, the horizon dim” (1986, p.8). She ironically accepts naming the place a park why? Because there is not junk. The seat is not comfortable the water of the lake is not clear or blue, it reflects the colour of the cloudy sky. They can not enjoy the sunsets because of the continuous cloudy sky. The horizon is dark. The much clouds and darkness around this girl with her troubled family turns this wide world into a narrow suffocating place.

Near the end of the same story the sky of the same place is described by the daughter who is recently disappointed by her father: "when we get closer to Tuppertown the sky becomes gently overcast, as always, nearly always, on summer evenings by the lake" (19). Getting near to their house, she feels the increasing of the clouds in the sky. However, she emphasizes that this sad and disappointing weather is the normal state of their town and their world. In *Images*, the main character and near and close environments the room and the house in which she lives. She describes her suffering: “I was so young then I was put to sleep in a crib- not at home but this was... at my grandma's house... there was no fan there and the dazzel of outdoors... made lightning cracks in the drawn- down blinds. Who could sleep?” (1968, p.28). She gives a complete picture of the place and circumstances of the place in which she is asked to sleep. She had to face the barriers of the bed; she is taken away from their home where her mother and father sleep to sleep in the house of her grandma. The room had no fan and the strong light of outdoors terribly attacks the room. Then she makes her logical question. Here, this daughter complains her need to sleep calmly and peacefully at home and naturally near her mother.

She repeats her complains from the same place, but she seems to notice other aspect of suffering, it is the far ceiling and the wide space between her and that ceiling. She explains: “Yet the ceilings of the rooms were very high and under them was a great deal of dim wasted place, and when I lay in my crib too hot to sleep I could look up and see that

emptiness, the stained corners..." (28). As a child who is away from his mother and father, she should feel unsafe. She feels threats of the unknown for, dark and empty corners and spaces that come between her and her need to sleep.

In *Boys and Girls* also sadness and disappointment of the environment relate to the time and place of sleep. She reports her and her younger brother's feelings: "We were afraid of inside the room where we sleep. At this time the upstairs of our house was not finished...very sad to look at ... when the light was off no place was safe but the beds themselves" (1968, pp.85-86). Sleeping in a neither completed nor well prepared place of sleep makes the children very sad. This sad place becomes also unsafe when the light is off. This environment fills the children with sadness and fear at the time of their sleep.

Thus the atmosphere and the environment in which the child is let to live and sleep in these three short stories fill this girl with sadness and uneasiness. She is taken to spend time in ugly places and suffer other dark and hot places. Because of her father's business and ways of living, she is exposed to the abuse of many animals. Her father's dependence on her in doing some jobs during making their living, in the presence of her younger brother, confuses her concerning gender identity.

III

The main character in Alice Munro's three short stories; the daughter suffers a problem of gender identity. Through the actions of these stories the members of her family, father, mother, younger brother and grandma treat her in a way that sharpens that problem,

Femininity and masculinity or one's gender identity refers to the degree to which persons see themselves as masculine or feminine given what it means to be a man or woman in a society... gender roles might include women investing in the domestic role and men investing in the worker role. (Stets and Peter, p. 997)

Here, the relation between the gender role and the feeling of being man or woman is very clear. Gender role means investing boys in worker role and investing girls in domestic role. In *Images* the daughter herself is so young and she does not have a brother yet. In *Boys and Girls* and in *Walker...* she is given the responsibility to look after him. However, in *Boys and Girls* her problem with the gender role and consequently with gender identity is made so clear.

It starts with her father who gives her a job in his work of raising the foxes. This job seems to be difficult and needs a physical effort. She proudly remembers: "He had fitted a tin drum on a wheel barrow, for bringing water down to the pens. This was my job in summer... I had the real watering can, my father's though I could only carry it three quarters full" (1968, p.87). The daughter is so proud that her father had been depending on her to carry that great amount of water for the foxes. Her success in helping her father in his work outside the house gives her this air of the strong worker. That happened in the presence of her brother who had been young and unable to do such work.

When she accidentally hears her mother mentioning for her father the name of her brother as a future help she defends his role and underestimates the abilities of her brother. She strongly makes this comparison: "I wheeled the tank up to the barn, where it was kept, and I heard my mother saying "wait till laird gets a little bigger, then you'll have a real help."... What did she mean about laird? He was no help to anybody" (88- 89). Her problem with the gender role and with the gender identity is so clear in this situation. Mother seems to be aware of the problem and is trying to help her by suggesting her brother to help in the outdoor work. However, she is so worried by her mother suggestion. She defends referring to her mother a "she" to express the distance between her needs and her mother's desires. She also judges her mother's solution as not good because laird is good only for playing.

The way, in which her mother speaks about her, forces the daughter to hate

being a girl. This may increase the problem. She quotes her mother and then comments: "And then I can use her more in the house," I heard my mother say. She had a dead –quiet, regretful way of talking about me that always made me uneasy... "I just get my back turned and she runs off. It's not like I had a girl in the family at all." (80). Mother declares a plan to use her daughter more in the house like girls and complains the daughter's obstinacy. The daughter always runs off and mother sees that it is like she had not a girl in the family. The daughter does not like her mother's way of getting her back to the house to have the correct role in the family. She realizes a type of contradiction in her relation with mother. She knows that mother loves her, she notices: "but she was also my enemy. She was always plotting now to get me to stay in the house more..., and keep me from working for my father" (89). The daughter sees herself more satisfied and happy in her work with her father. The problem is made more difficult by the direct teachings and statements of her grandma. She reports:

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." ..., "That's none of girls ' business." (90). Mother's and grandmother's notes, orders and pieces of advice are not accepted by the daughter who continues to keep the wrong gender role of working with father out of the house which means a problem in her gender identity as a girl.

Only at the end of *Boys and Girls* when something happens accidentally upon which she discovers her real identity as a girl. She is eleven years old when her father shoots the horse Mack before her eyes. When he intends to shoot the mare flora, Flora runs away, the daughter reports: "My father shouted to me. ... 'Go shut the gat'... instead of shutting the gate, I opened it as wide as I could" (93) for the first time she does not obey her father. She comments on her doing that "I could not understand why I had done it. Flora would not really get away... I did not regret it; when she came running at me and I held the gate open, that was the only thing I could do" (94). She knows that opening the gate and letting Flora run

away will not save her. They will get her back and kill her anyway. She is sure that the only output of her action is more effort for her poor father. Nevertheless, this was the only thing she could do. At this moment only and for the first time she behaves as a girl, her real and correct gender identity.

This healthy change in the character of the daughter is stressed twice in the same story. The first time when they are at the dinner table after getting Flora killed, she describes these difficult moments for her: "Everybody at the table was looking at me. I nodded, To my shame, tears flooded my eyes. "Never mind" my father said... "she's only a girl," he said. I didn't protest that, even in my heart May be it was true" (95). This situation shows the daughter as a real girl, weak, ashamed and in flooded tears. Her father's forgiveness depends on the fact that she is a girl. She accepts that at once in her heart. It is her true identity. The other stress of the change and of her new and correct gender identity as a girl comes in the stories which she used to tell herself at her nights. For this girl her stories are similar to the children's dreams. Freud sees that "the dreams of little children are often simple fulfillments of wishes" (2010, p.28). If these stories of her night could be seen as dreams, the change in her role identity in her stories after Flora's accident shows her true gender identity as a girl.

At the beginning of the story, a longtime before Flora's accident she reports some of these stories that she was "represented opportunities for courage, boldness and self-sacrifice... I rescued people... I shot two rabid wolves... I rode a fine horse" (1968, p.86). All these roles are of a man or a boy which reflects her identity problem. However, after Flora's accident she reports her new stories as: "something different was happening... instead, somebody would be rescuing me, it might be a boy from our class at school, or even Mr. Campbell, our teacher" (95). This change which shows the change in her wishes according to Freud also shows her new and healthy identity as a girl.

Conclusion

In the selected three short stories, *Walker Brothers Cowboy*, *Images* and *Boys and Girls*, Alice Munro is able to show the negative influence of the elements of cultural context such as the parental relationship, the ways of living, animal abuse, the environment and the problem of identity on the child, represented most of the times by the daughter and sometimes with the daughter and her brother. The daughter and her brother are shown sad and disappointed because of detachment from their parents. The daughter is shown to be more aware of the rest of the cultural elements. She is so ashamed by her sick mother and weak father. She is negatively influenced by the animal abuse activities and is severely tormented by watching those activities and is severely tormented by connecting them with the family living. The daughter also suffers a problem in her gender identity; however, Munro is kind enough to give her a chance by the end of the third short story to regain her healthy identity as a girl.

Studying literature, that focuses on children development, social and psychological problems and family relations, is highly recommended. Such studies help to recognize, and then solve many of the peoples' social and psychological problems. They may prevent these problems and consequently, will participate in building good, healthy and happy societies.

References

- Ascione, Frank R. and Mika Maruyama. (2011). "Animal Abuse and Developmental psychology" *How Animals Affect Us: Examining the Influence of Human – Animal Interaction on Child development and Human Health*. Peggy Mc Cardle, Sandra Mc Cung James A. Griffin, and Valerie Maholmes eds., , American Psychology association, pp. 117-136.
- Bronstein, Marc H." Toward a Model of culture –parent- child" *The transactional Model of Development: How Children and Context Shape Each Other*. Arnold Sameroff ed. pp. 139-1621.
- Dobert, Rainer, Jurgen Habermas, and Gertrud Nunner Winkler. (1987). The Development of the Self " *Path in Psychology: critical Theories of Psychological development*. John M. Brouhgton ed. Plenum Press. pp. 275- 302.
- Erikson, Erik. H. (1987). *Childhood and Society*. Grafton Books.
- Freud, Sigmund. *The Interpretation of Dreams*. www.Abika.com. IAP. 2010.
- Gibson, Douglas. (2011). *Stories About Storytellers*. ECW press.
- Hooper, Brad. (1984). *The Fiction of Alice Munro: Appreciation*. Praeger,
- "Mathew". (1993). The New Testament. Today's New International Version the New Testament Preview Edition. Harper Torch PDF.
- Misra, Girishwar. (2010). " The Cultural construction of self and Emotion, Implications for well- being" *Personality, Human development, And Culture: International Perspectives on Psychological Science*. Vol.2 Rolf Schwazer and Peter Frensch.eds. Psychology Press Taylor & Francis Group, pp. 95-113.
- Munro, Alice. (1968). "Walker Brothers Cowboy". *Dance of the Happy Shades*. Vintage Books, pp. 8-19
- (1968). "Images". *Dance of the Happy Shades*. Vintage Books, pp.28-37.

..... (1968). "Boys and Girls". *Dance of the Happy Shades*. New York: Vintage Books, 1968, pp. 85-95.

Oates John, Clare Wood and Andrew Grayson. (2005). *Psychological Development and Early Childhood*. Blackwell Publishing.

Stets, Jan E. and peter J. Burke. "Feminity Masculinity" Encyclopedia of sociology, Revised Edition. Edgar F. Brogatta and Rhonda J. V. Montgomery eds. Macmillan, pp. 1997-.1005.