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VICTIMS OR PERPETRATORS? A STUDY OF WOMEN IN ALICE MUNRO'S "RUNAWAY"

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Canadian writing began as an imitative colonial literature, it has steadily developed its own national characteristics. The first huge immigration started from the New England Puritans 1760 onward and later of American Loyalists during the Revolution, Canadian literature followed U.S. models almost until the confederation in 1867. Before 1800 the rigors of pioneering left little time for the writing or the appreciation of literature. "The only notable works were journals, such as that of Jacob Bailey, and the recorded travels of explorers, such as Henry Kelsey, Samuel Hearne, and Sir Alexander Mackenzie". (Canadian)

Since 1900, Canadian novels have tended toward realism, but have remained predominantly regional, and many writers have been women. Among them most prominent authors have been Lucy M. Montgomery, author of *Anne of Green Gables* (1908); Mazo de la Roche, well known for her series on the Whiteoaks family of Jalna; Frederick P. Grove, author of *Settlers of the Marsh* (1925), a novel of farm life; and Laura Salverson and Nellie McClung, novelists of immigrant and rural life in West Canada.

Margaret Atwood is probably the best-known modern Canadian novelist and Alice Munro the most famous writer of short stories. Other important fiction writers during and since World War II include Morley Callaghan, Gwethalyn Graham, John Buell, Hugh MacLennan, Mordecai Richler, Malcolm Lowry, Ethel Wilson, Robertson Davies, Brian Moore, Margaret Laurence, Alistair MacLeod, Mavis Gallant, Timothy Findlay, Neil Bissoondath, and M. G. Vassanji. Many of their novels and stories have focused attention on Canadian city life, social problems, and cultural divisions.

Alice Munro was born on 1931, a well regarded Canadian short story writer. She had won the Man Booker International Prize in 2009 and the Noble Prize in Literature in 2013. *Runaway* is a book of collected short stories. This book consist totally of eight short stories namely "Runaway", "Chance", "Soon", "Silence", "Passion", "Trespases", "Trick" and "Powers".

The short story *Runaway* by Alice Munro portrayed about a woman who was in pathetic situation, where she tried to escape from her husband but she felt emotionally attached to him. A Young Woman named Carla along with her husband Clark, they lived in a Mobile House. The story further moved with another character named Sylvia Jamieson, an old woman whose husband had died recently and he was a poet. Clark and Carla ran a riding stable, which does not have many customers. Therefore, Clark decided to blackmail their neighbor Sylvia in order to fetch some money. He was waiting for a solid reason to get money from Sylvia, that was when Carla told her husband about Mr.Jamieson that he had called her many times to stay together in order to turn her husband's attention towards her. With this, Clark got an idea to blackmail Sylvia stating that her husband had miss behaved to Carla.

Carla was upset due to missing of her pet, a white goat named Flora. In this story author compares the innocent Flora with the protagonist Carla. Even the very sound of their name resembles their unity. She was very depressed after Flora's missing. Carla went for arranging things at Sylvia's house after when she returned

from Greece. She does not reveal anything about Clark's plan to Sylvia. Carla shared the reason for her depression to Sylvia that how much she suffered being with her husband, so with that Sylvia took over the situation. She gave Carla an idea to go to Toronto where her brother lives with his family, but she felt hesitated. So Sylvia helped her to stay along with one of her friend until she finds a job. Carla was happy at the same time very nervous too, because she did not want her husband to stop her while going. Therefore, she requests Sylvia to drop a letter in the letterbox after she leaves Carla in the bus stop. Sylvia spoke to her friend Ruth Stiles in Toronto about the arrival of Carla.

When Carla was young, she fell in love with Clark and she married him without her parent's acceptance. She left them behind for her love towards Clark, but later she was pushed to a situation that makes her to move away from him.

Carla boarded the bus that took her to Toronto. After two stops away from her place she started to think about Clark and the love, she had towards him. She got down from the bus and called him to take her back home. The same day night Clark went to see Sylvia and warned her not to interfere in his life anymore as she had helped his wife to escape from the town. That night Flora returned to them. Clark does not take Flora back to home. In fact, he had never told Carla about the Flora's appearance at all. When she received a letter from Sylvia where mentioned about Flora's return she does not react much instead she reminded silent and blank.

The protagonist Carla found to be the female victim in this story. Clark's character revealed through two main incidents in the story that shows how stingy and unfriendly he was with other people. "He would not go to Hy and Robert Buckley's Building Supply in Town, which he called Highway Robbers Buggery Supply, because he owed them money and had had a fight with them." (Munro 3). Clark wanted to buy roofing for his stable, but he refused to buy in that particular shop. He often fights with people "Clark often had fights, and not just with the people he owed money to. His friendliness, compelling at first, could suddenly turn sour. There were places in town that he would not go into, because of some row" (Munro 3).

Carla started to share her feelings with Sylvia "She howled and wept and gulped for air, and tears ran down her cheeks and snot out of her nostrils, and she began to look around wildly for something to wipe with. Sylvia ran and got handfuls of Kleenex." (Munro 16). Carla was so sure that she cannot stay with her husband anymore

"Carla said, "I can't stand it anymore."

What could she not stand?

It turned out to be the husband" (Munro 17).

Sylvia gave her the idea to move to Toronto, Carla was happy with the idea "Get away? I would if I could," Carla began to wail again. "I'd give anything to get away. I can't. I haven't any money. I haven't anywhere in this world to go." (Munro 18). Carla was the sure about her departure the only thing she was worried about was money and a place to stay. These are the few words Mrs. Jamieson would tell her "As Mrs. Jamieson might say—and as she herself might have said with satisfaction—taking charge of her own life. With nobody glowering over her, nobody's mood infecting her with misery, no implacable mysterious silence surrounding her." (Munro 26).

Carla was very confused and she was not ready to take a decision of her own "While she was running away from him—now—Clark still kept his place in her life. But when she was finished running away, when she just went on, what would she put in his place? What else—who else—could ever be so vivid a challenge?" (Munro 26). Finally, Carla came to a conclusion to get back to her husband and she realized that she cannot stay away from him.

"Come and get me. Please. Come and get me.

I will." (Munro 28).

Carla the protagonist of this story was not matured enough to take her own decisions, her character was weak. The main flaw in her character was her inability to handle the situation or to control her emotions. Towards the end of this story, Flora the pet goat's bone found in the woods. Carla tries to escape from Clark, but she ruined her own fate and tires to run away from reality.

Life is piled up with both reality and illusion, it's in the hands of people to differentiate them. Carla being an innocent person refuses to understand or realize it. Being a victim, she was put in a situation to take her own decision, but in turn she acts to be a perpetrator for her own fate. People have to understand the situation and act accordingly, just giving a temporary solution will not bring happiness it is like trying to escape from the reality for time being. The decision once made cannot not be withdrawn at any circumstances.

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