

# “Inescapable Doubleness of Vision”: A Kristevian Reading of Alice Munro’s “Runaway”

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**Abstract**—The subject evolution as the core of psycho-philosophical debates is verbalized in Alice Munro’s “Runaway” (2004). Whereas the subject is one of the seminal ideas of the contemporary philosopher Julia Kristeva, it provides an integral part of the discussions over the character’s subjective development in fiction. The present study undertakes to discuss over the latent aspects of character in the story to show how they are developed in the Abjection. Through transgression and revolt, they are posited on the borders of symbolic. The objective of this paper is to highlight the subject evolution and to demonstrate the uncertainty and ambiguity felt by the characters due to transgressing the borders of symbolic. To this end, Julia Kristeva’s concept of Abjection will shed light upon the rise and fall of the character in order to study how they are formed through the abject. Considering the development of subjectivity in “Runaway”, it shows that they are conceived to be ‘subject-in-process’ rather than being the Lacanian static, ordered subject. A Kristevian reading of Munro’s short fiction presumes the abject part of characters indispensable for the evolution of their subjectivity. Threatening the integrity of the subjectivity, the characters attempt to overcome the double effect of seduction and repellent in abject and restore the secure territory of symbolic. Never to be consent with their lives, the characters stand on the verge of abjection which permanently summons them to revolt.

**Index Terms**—abjection, subject, symbolic, Alice Munro, Runaway

## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. Alice Munro’s Critical Background

“Alice Munro is considered by many to be the finest short story writer now working in English” (Hunter, 2007, p. 165). Born on July 10, 1931, Alice Munro becomes a great name among other names of fiction like Margaret Atwood, Katherine Ann Porter and John Updike. According to Silvia Albertazzi in “A Comparative Essay on the Sociology of Literature: Alice Munro’s “Unconsummated Relationships” (2010): “The major achievement of Alice Munro is to have conquered popularity and fame almost all over the world by dedicating her whole production to a rather unpopular and neglected genre: the short story” (p. 2). The general consensus of literary critics conceives of short story to be a minor, marginal form in literature, but it is the accurate form of a writer like Munro to exhibit the life of those women who are considered to be marginal or ‘Other’ by society and power relations. They fight, they lose, they win, sometimes but they never forget their desires. The Canadian writer pictures limited space at the Huron County-her native region- to confirm the limitations and boundaries for women who look for identity and freedom in many of her stories. Her novel-like stories delineate the dual life of women, one in reality, the other one in their imagination as the inner world. Elisa Vancoppennolle asserts :

This idea of a hidden identity appears in many of her stories under different forms, and also the fact that her protagonists are often married women with children who do not let themselves be oppressed by their husbands, but instead choose to live their own lives (2010, p. 4).

She delineates complicated lives in a genre that has space and narration limitations. Known as the “Chekov” in Canada, she had published the first collection of short stories in 1968 named *Dance of the Happy Shades*. Like Chekov, Munro is fascinated with the failings of love and small settings as well as regional areas. The Noble prize winner of 2013 creates complicated characters out of the common pictures of life .

The most important characteristics of her stories are regional settings, domestic life, distinction of inner and outer spaces for women, the world of women and “complexity of characterization” (Hunter, 2007, p. 165). She depicts through the words, what is common in the lives of men and women, but had not been studied well. Accordingly, Harold Bloom asserts: “ordinary unhappiness, which in others is not colorful to us, is an achievement for most of her women and many of her men” (2009, p. 1). Munro’s stories are character-based and how they endure complicated situations especially regarding the women. Female characters in Munro’s fiction are not the prototype of the ideal heroine but they conform to the type of women as in real life. Munro delineates women’s heart wills, grieves, worries, desires and limitations. They have different roles as mother, wife, and daughter. To have the world of their own, women are looking for what they want. In her stories, Munro “studies not their [women] nostalgias but their surprising endurances” (Bloom,

2009, p. 2). The women depicted in Munro's works never reveal their maladies and suffering. They endure the difficulties in their mind until they cannot stand them anymore and escape but ultimately return to home. Women's relationship with the world, their family and their surroundings is complicated. The outer world is reflected in their mind. Afraid to face the reality of their life, they live in repulsion and attraction to what they really desire. This is Munro's artistic creation. Brad Hooper in *The Fiction of Alice Munro* (2008) writes: "From the beginning, Munro's stories were primarily character studies, the chief way of describing them" (p. viii). Another outstanding characteristic of her style is depicting the past as her critics assert. Interweaving the past and present is the great stylistic achievement for Munro to show how the past affects the present lives of characters, not being able to wipe out their memories and mistakes. Brad Hooper indicates that :

The particular talent of Munro...derives from an untraditional handling of the past. Her characteristic circling through time is all about the past; the difference she makes in her handling of the past is to arrive at a new way, unbound by traditional short-story moves and distinctions, of bringing the past into the frame of the story. (2008, p. ix).

The presence of the past is a crucial part in discussions about character study in Munro's stories. This is the same quality which connects the study of Munro's works to psychology. The centrality of character along with the importance of past tense and persistent change paves the way for her stories to be read in psychoanalytic lens. Debarshi Prasad Nath affirms: "Alice Munro's stories are in many ways an enactment of the psychoanalytic study of life. Like in psychoanalysis, the tenor of Alice Munro's characters is shaped and determined by their past" (2010, p. 172). The main focus of Munro is women and how their world is different from that of men. In spite of their family responsibilities, they dream a world of their own and they tend towards freedom and independence, although never decline what is their duty. Sometimes the relationship between men and women is complicated to be interpretable and Munro takes her characters, whether to epiphany or unchanged inner world. To depict the inner world, the imaginative sphere of characters along with the reality of their lives is Munro's specific. The character development is not always logical and it is the same quality essential in subject-in-process in Kristeva's words. The rise and fall of the subject is what will be shown in characters in the understudy short fiction. To decipher the essence of characters in the story it is needed to go through Kristeva's lens on subject and the complicated path of subjectivity. According to what will be presented, the characters will appear in as nearest model to reality as possible. Rather than being completely white or black, pessimistic in the Lacanian world, they are gray-like. The real-like characters of Munro are 'subject-in-process' in its psycho-philosophical terms. C.A. Howells writes: "...Munro's narratives, where her stories with their overlapping complexities plot identity not as single and fixed but as a series of alternative histories hidden within individual subject's life stories. These are "identities always in process" (Bloom, 2009, p. 169).

#### B. *The Abjection: Subject-in-process*

In *Powers of Horror* (1982) Kristeva introduced one of the most complicated terms in her psycho-philosophy named Abjection. The phenomenon of abjection holds a central role in Kristeva's subjectivity as well as her literary theories. She considers that the most important challenge in the subjectivity is when the subject faces the meaninglessness weight of Reality. It makes him to search for a meaning for his life, to change his position and to demarcating his subjective/inner world with the objective/outer world. The border between subjectivity and its lines and the eruption of Lacanian Real is what makes the Abjection. That is why Kristeva calls it "the in-between" (Kristeva, 1982, p. 4). Julia Kristeva associates the abject with the response to the eruption of the Lacanian Real into our lives. She believed that the process of subjectivity and signification begins much before the Lacanian mirror stage. Abjection is set after the symbolic and before the Real. It is not completely semiotic structured neither symbolic ordered. Although the term resists definition, it can be defined as the backbone of the other Kristevian seminal idea: subject-in-process. Hedwig Fraunhofer writes:

The transgression of established separations and the impossibility of keeping these strict separations intact produce what Kristeva calls the "abject". Abjection is thus the mechanism by means of which patriarchal society, in the interest of establishing a clear inside/outside division, constructs the "feminine" as other- as everything that threatens this distinction (2007, p. 2).

Expelling what seems 'other' to 'oneself', the subject is in a persistent demarcation between him and his world to protect the subjectivity against what threatens his identity. The abjection appears while the subject tries to demarcate between *I* and Other. Neither in semiotic phase, nor in symbolic area abjection blurs the borders and lines. The process of abjection puts everything in uncertainty and doubt. It is both inner and outer threat that undermines the subjectivity. Kristeva introduces the term in physical examples, but she reinforces the idea when she attributes it to subjectivity. Accordingly, Kristeva argues that: "it is not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection, but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous" (Kristeva, 1982, p. 4). The Abjection is both repellent and seductive in the sense that it summons the subject to 'other' and yet activates the defensive position of him. The traces of abjection return back to the maternal body. Separation from the maternal body leaves the mark of the first *loss*. Subject can never put a definite border between him and his desire. Unable to get rid of desire, attracting towards abjection to fulfill loss is the process that forms subjectivity. The Abjection puts the subject out of order and he doubts the order of defined systems. It transgresses the laws, limitations and borders. The abject is the lost object which the subject has lost since the separation from maternal body. It is the sign of the maternal space

chora which is continued in the shape of 'other'. In order to save his subjectivity, subject needs to bypass the threat of abjection.

The Abjection denotes that the subject is never safe and secure and it leaves the subject in an ever-challenge with 'Other', 'not I'. Struggle towards '*want*' is attraction to the maternal body and this endless battle makes Kristevian 'subject-in-process'. On the one hand, the subject is attracted to abject for it reminds him of his initial separation and loss. On the other hand, subject attempts to overcome the temptation of abject for it threatens his subjectivity and puts him out of symbolic law. Mechanism of abjection enlivens desire in the subject and forms subjectivity. Subject besets by abjection and he rejects the threat but the rejection is never complete. The source of abjection returns to the maternal body and therefore many attribute abjection to feminine although Kristeva avoids the exact labeling of this phase. Abjection revolutionized the theories of psycho-philosophy about subject and questions the Lacanian as well as Freudian ordered, static, autonomous subject who is structured in the symbolic phase. She argues how the subject is influenced by desire towards loss during his lifetime. Kristeva opens a room for the feminine in abjection and in this way shatters the monopoly of symbolic paternal-masculine in the process of the subject. She sets the abjection neither in semiotic phase nor in the symbolic to indicate that none of them can conquer the other. Many critics conceive of abjection as the defence of feminine against masculine and discuss it in gender political terms. Kristeva believes that literature and art are two main sources of abjection for it allows the author/artist to put away what is other to him and therefore literary piece or artistic creation is seen as the lost object. The structure of character in Munro's short fiction has the same process in Kristeva's subject. Both fight inner desires and face the meaninglessness of Real in everyday life. The common ground between Kristeva's work in the field of subjectivity study and Munro's character creation in her fiction is that both close to the subject differently, namely different than their previous fellows or their contemporaries.

The Abjection is essentially a response to Lacanian Real. The Real presupposed by Lacan is abstract to perceive and is a concept out of touch. According to Lacan, Real is a phase in which the subject reaches a weight of meaninglessness. He discovers how the ideologies, social and personal values are the constructions of society and authorities. That there is no purpose or meaning out of values and systems that make meaningful constructions. In this position he sees over the barriers and fences of what he *thought* to be reality of life. This is the absurdity of life. He discovers that all values and meanings attributed to life and subjectivity are hallucinations. The subject pauses for a moment perhaps in a daily basis to doubt about his basic beliefs, to return and reevaluate what he is used to as 'life'. He faces meaninglessness and he feels passivity against this situation consequently. Although Lacan produces a stable subject out of the symbolic phase, the Real is what disrupts the ordered world of symbolic. The subject faces a serious challenge which makes him to doubt about the actuality of life. Kristeva argues that this meaningless situation is a serious challenge for the subjectivity for there is no rule, barrier or system to save the subject against what threatens his subjectivity. Real is subject's rebellion against the stability of symbolic pole, however the Real gives nothing except a handful of questions with no answers. Putting everything stable in doubt, the subject gains nothing in the exchange of his beliefs with the Real. Accordingly the subject needs a defensive position to protect him in the dilemma of life. Absurd and passive, the subject experiences one of his most powerful chaotic concepts in his life. The subject is caught between two annoying alternatives: between the symbolic order which is too restrictive and the Real that is incomprehensible and absurd. The symbolic is constructed to avoid subject's entrance in Real. But Real's insurrection is unavoidable to shatter the stability of subjectivity. Kristeva believes that the defensive position of abject is the safeguard of subjectivity:

A weight of meaninglessness, about which there is nothing insignificant, and which crushes me. On the edge of nonexistence and hallucination, of a reality that, if I acknowledge it, annihilates me. There abject and abjection are my safeguards. The primers of my cultures. (1982, p. 2).

The adoption of subject in Kristeva's terms with Munro's character development in her fiction is the objective of this chapter. The structure of character in Munro's short fiction has the same process in Kristeva's subject. Both fight inner desires and face the meaninglessness of Real in everyday life.

## II. DISCUSSION

### A. "Runaway": "Inescapable Doubleness of Vision"

The title of this chapter/article gains Margaret Atwood's phrase in description of Munro's literary achievement as quoted in Howells (1987, p. 3). Munro's eleventh collection of her short stories is called simply *Runaway* which is published in 2004. Although the collection is considered by critics like Brad Hooper to be "a slight step backward" (2008, p. 143) in contrast to her other collections, the masterpiece of this collection gains the title of the book. "Runaway" as the name indicates literally is the story of a runaway. A young wife called Carla runs away from her husband (her home) and in a minor story which is the dramatic point of the story an animal runs away from her. According to Hooper this short fiction is one of the most successful psychological stories of Munro's (2008, p. 143). At the first glance, it is a story about a marriage in serious dysfunction but in a deeper study there are psychological reasons behind the oppressive atmosphere of the story between the couple. Narrated in limited third person point of view, the narration alters from the perspective of two main females of the story. It narrates Carla's displeasure with her life in general and with her husband in particular. Their neighbor Mrs. Sylvia Jamieson is a kind of "foil" character for both Carla and her husband Clark to show the misery of their relationship and life. Setting in a rural area of Canada, the story narrates the conflicts of the young couple with the hard conditions of life on the one hand, and the conflict of

Carla with her husband that is seriously affected by the presence and sudden absence of a little white goat called Flora. The psychological sphere of the story is oppressive and autocratic ruled by Clark. Carla is depicted as a typical woman who suffers the oppressive power of her husband, dreams of her world and searches an imaginative life which is very different from their present situation. At an overall glance, Carla moves through the borders of Abjection, falls in it and returns. To give an explanation of Carla's situation and her life context it is necessary to perceive the presence of abjection.

Julia Kristeva essentially associates the abject with the response to the eruption of the Lacanian Real into our lives. She enlivens the active subject against the passivity that wants to yield him against the absurdity of existence. The defensive position of Abjection is to resist the disruptive power of Real. Actually it is the pressure and comprehension of Real which makes the subject to guard against the danger which threatens his subjectivity. While perceiving Real, the subject feels that there is no possible meaning or direction for life. It is the last phase which Lacan presupposes for the subject. After entering into the symbolic phase and being besieged by orders, laws, filters, limitations and barriers, the subject discovers a reality other than the routine process of life. In this position the subject asks about the philosophy of life and existence. To doubt about the place he is standing is to perceive the Real which is beyond his control and is going to deprive him of all the possible meanings and values for his life. A brief overview over the Lacanian Real shows that in this phase the subject supposes no purpose or meaning for the life. When the subject sees through ideology he perceives that there is a curtain over the life he thinks to be real and meaningful. It is the world behind the curtain which collapses the meaningful life in the realm of symbolic. In *Critical Theory Today* (2006) Lois Tyson writes:

Real is the experience we have, perhaps on a daily basis even if it's only for a moment, when we feel that there is no purpose or meaning to life... the Real is something we can know nothing about, except to have the anxious feeling from time to time that it's there (p. 32).

"That it's there" and Carla knows about the fact of this irrefutable situation through her lifetime and continues life in abjection. As it had been argued Kristeva's Abjection is a response to the dilemma of Lacanian Real. When the subject faces meaninglessness, his struggle begins towards recapturing meaning and purpose. In order to understand the connection between Real and Abjection in "Runaway" the story is divided up into two parts: Carla's imagination about living with Clark and her life with him and then her escape and return. It might seem that the process of Symbolic, Abjection and their demarcation overlap in the course of the narration applying the theory but it is the same quality which justifies the title of this chapter.

Carla is very young when she gets familiar with Clark and gets married to him. The objectivity of Carla's life before Clark remains an abstract in her dreams for there are no similarities between her desires and the Real. The story narrates that Carla wants an "authentic life" (Munro, 2004, p. 33) with Clark which she never could attain. The oppressive atmosphere lingers throughout the story as early as the first paragraphs. The narrator explains that "this was the summer of rain and more rain" (Munro, 2004, p. 4). It indicates that Carla's economic life is solid and is threatened by her surroundings. It is indicated later that she lives not in a comfortable home but in a "mobile home" (Munro, 2004, p. 4). The heavy rain is simply a backdrop for the nature of her married life. It is foreshadowing that Carla does not live in the life she dreamt. The main oppressive power and the most serious in the story and in Carla's life is her husband Clark. The story narrates: "Clark had fights not just with the people he owed money to. His friendliness compelling at first, could suddenly turn sour" (Munro, 2004, p.6). The grumpy mood of Clark is indicated in a dialogue between him and Carla:

"You flare up," said Carla.

"That's what men do." (Munro, 2004, p. 6)

The life explained in the first paragraphs is reducing expectations to Carla. As the narrations shows, the condition in which Carla lives is quit new to her: "up until three years ago Carla never really looked at mobile homes" (Munro, 2004, p.6). The solid economic conditions, Clark's bitter temper and his oppressive behavior and Carla's dreams of a new life make her to search for a 'new identity' through finding a 'new life': "a life, a place, chosen for that specific reason-that it would not contain Clark" (Munro, 2004, p. 33). Carla wishes of a life in which she "taking charges of her own life. With nobody glowering over her, nobody's mood infecting her with misery" (Munro, 2004, p.32). In order to reach the imaginative life, Carla needs to remove Clark and to start anew. The Real of her life is that she perceives of Clark "as the architect of the life ahead of them" (Munro, 2004, p. 32). Clark is for Carla the source of values and thought. Embodying the preserve of the sense of self-reliance in Carla, Clark is introduced like a meaning-making for Carla. While she is in the bus, traveling to Toronto in the search of a new, independent life, Carla is unable to picture a future without Clark's existence. The story narrates:

While she was running away from him –now- Clark still kept his place in her life. But 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, 2004, p. 34).

Entering into the symbolic phase, the subject accepts barriers, limitations and systems to achieve the formation of a 'self' affirmed by social and cultural definitions. The social systems, the ideologies rooted in society, culture, religion and politics are there to make a meaningful, ordered world associated with the symbolic pole. The subject bases his life upon these systems that make 'meaning' and 'purpose' to life. This is the same reality which Lacan calls the symbolic. The systems of meanings make the subject to attain the subjectivity which is socially accepted like what happens in the

symbolic pole of the psyche. They act as 'activators' in the process of subjectivity. The subject feels dependence upon them and this dependence prevents the sense of meaninglessness. The Lacanian Real puts the subject in a position against all these ordered systems. It leaves all them in doubt and exchanges nothing instead. The values in the form of social, cultural, political and personal systems prevent subject's falling in the wilderness of meaninglessness. In the Lacanian Real the subject faces the artificiality of the ideologies, values and perceives that they are just 'social constructions'. The Real gives the opportunity to the subject to think beyond the present limitations and condemn the entrance to the realm of symbolic that is restrictive. Freedom proposed by a bondless space beyond the domination and influence of the Real is double in effect. On the one hand, it gives the chance to the subject to put the barriers away, to think anew in the essence of existence and the reality of life. But on the other hand, to remove the systems which make meaning and order to life, puts the subject in vacuum. It gives nothing to us in place of those meanings. The meaning-making systems are symbolic phases of life. They brought fore orders, laws and purposes in subject's life. Lois Tyson writes:

The Real is the uninterpretable dimension of existence; it is existence without the filters and buffers of our signifying, or meaning-making, systems... the Real is that experience we have, on a daily basis even if it's only for a moment, when we feel that there is no purpose or meaning to life (2006, p. 32).

Clark's presence for Carla is in a similar way a symbolic function. He gives order, meaning and purpose to her life as well as limitations, barriers and solid states of existence. He limits the power of Carla's subjectivity in the sense that he is viewed as a finished, state subject, meaning-making element throughout the story who prevents her wife by his grumpy nature. Accordingly, Carla thinks of Clark as "the architect of the life" (Munro, 2004, p. 32). Clark's presence is two dimensional in Carla's life. On the one hand, it defines life for her in a limited view which is controlled by his power. He gives meaning and purpose to Carla's life. He activates the passion and feeling for life in Carla as the story flashes back to the early days in their life: "in those days their world included several towns in the surrounding countryside and they had sometimes behaved like tourists... and they would sing all the way home like crazy hillbillies" (Munro, 2004, p. 33). On the other hand, Clark imposes restrictions upon Carla's freedom and she is always under the pressure of his dominance. In the sense of the symbolic, Clark is both restrictive and meaning-making. Lack of Clark's existence in her life faces Carla with Real. Omitting out Clark, Carla is searching a new identity for herself but is unable to substitute something or somebody for him. Actually the absence of Clark equals to lose of her symbolic pole and her meaningful act of her subjectivity. While she is omitting Clark out, leaves him behind and takes a journey to nowhere in fact, she misses the validity of her own existence. She leaves the arena of symbolic as she left Clark behind and enters the realm of semiotic while she runs away from him. Leaving him makes 'Real' bare to her: no systems, no values, no meaning and consequently absurdity. But there is nobody, nothing to put in place of Clark. A blank appears in Carla's life and essentially in her subjectivity which can be filled with nothing else. In order to protect her subjectivity against the threat of out/Other, Carla returns to Clark. She returns to the symbolic phase of her life. The borders between subjectivity borders' protection and the eruption of Lacanian Real lurk Abjection. Carla runs away and faces the Real, remains in abjection when she removes Clark and returns to the symbolic when she returns home. The weight of meaninglessness is the pressure upon Carla to escape the shadow of Real but even after her return she lives in abjection.

The impulse behind Carla's abjection is her dissatisfaction of life with Clark, a life that is a reduction of her expectations. Carla desires a life of her own in which Clark does not exist, to end "the seesaw misery with Clark" (Munro, 2004, p.16). Her impulse is embodied in the presence of a little goat named Flora. Flora stands as the desire or in Kristevian terms 'want'. The maternal desire which is never finished in the subjectivity stands both as a threat to subjectivity for it puts him out of the borders of symbolic and threatens his subjectivity consequently and it gives a freedom to him to think over the borders, transgress the lines and break the rules. This is what causes innovation and progress and leaves the subject a 'subject-in-process'. There are even similarities between the nature of Flora and Carla's. Flora is feminine and similar to Carla's feeling about Clark: "her [Flora's] resemblance to a guileless girl in love" (Munro, 2004, p. 9). It is interesting that Flora's feelings to Clark is quiet similar to that of Carla. At first the animal is attached towards Clark as "she had been Clark's pet entirely" (Munro, 2004, p.9) but then when "she grew older she seemed to attach herself to Carla" (Munro, 2004, p. 9). Carla revolts against the limitations of her life. Her revolt is apparently against her husband but in fact it is a revolt to reject the restriction imposed upon her while living in a rural area. Anna Jean Smith writes: "Abjection is a revolt of (and against) the being that gives us existence" (1992, p. 279). Abjection gives the opportunity to Carla to break the rules, to transgress and revolt against her condition in life with Clark. She perceives how the territory and dictatorship of Clark is breakable. She revolts against the life that is ordered by Clark as a system of stable, solid restrictions. Abjection as "the dark revolt of being" (Kristeva, 1982, p. 1), makes Carla to reevaluate her situation. There is nothing in common with her desired life before Clark or what she has defined as "authentic life" (Munro, 2004, p. 33). According to what Kristeva argues in *Powers of Horror* (1982) the subject has self-consciousness in the process of abjection. He knows both about his transgression and its consequent freedom and how the object might threaten his subjectivity.

The object is a realm where drives and signifiers are all mixed up. The distinction between the border of symbolic and the line of desire is difficult if not completely impossible. As Kristeva notes, abjection is "a composite of judgment and affect, of condemnation and yearning, of signs and drives" (1982, p. 10). Carla's escape is affected by the restriction of the symbolic phase imposed by her husband. She reaches Real when she leaves Clark behind, for she omits out the

system of meaning-making who she has accepted in the figure of Clark. Unable to distinguish between condemnation and yearning, she lives in abjection. The story ends with the key sentence about the inner feelings of Carla after she returns home: “the days passed and Carla didn't go near that place. She held out against the temptation” (Munro, 2004, p.47). The double effect of abjection is ambiguity. Abjection as Kristeva notes is the “in-between”. The subject lives in uncertainty about what has defined him as stable subject, the symbolic system of meanings, orders and limitations. He reevaluates identity in the light of a new psychic discovery. The Real rapes the hallucination of a stable identity constructed in the symbolic but leaves the subject in vacuum. Carla follows the desire to achieve her imagined life. She even feels “an unaccustomed confidence” (Munro, 2004, p.31). The feeling is the result of freedom brought about by Abjection, as she breaks the rules and experiences a new identity. Her yearning to have independence comes true when she runs away. The story narrates Carla's thoughts loudly: “her escape seems the most rational thing you could imagine, in fact the only self-respecting thing that a person in Carla's shoes could do” (Munro, 2004, p. 31) but her return puts her in the order phase of the symbolic. Implying the thought of escape, Carla is looking at far away “to the edge of bare woods” (Munro, 2004, p. 47) where she thinks of Flora. Living in temptation to know about Flora's destiny again, she has the temptation towards revolt. She knows that escape would allow her to be more or less, detached and autonomous but she is terrified of the danger of emptiness felt by the blank space of Clark. She is caught up between a rock and a hard place. She is tired with the symbolic world of Clark with all those orders, limitations and barriers but the world of Real is unlivable too. Devoid of meaning in Real and dissatisfied with the world she lives in, she continues in Abjection. The story narrates: “it was as if she had a murderous needle somewhere in her lungs” (Munro, 2004, p. 46). Carla attains a kind of self-awareness and consciousness when she experiences a space without Clark but it is difficult to bear it up for it is empty of value and meaning.

The thought of revolt, the ambiguous feeling of *want* along with the simultaneous feelings of yearning and condemnation are the 'murderous needle' of abjection. Carla feels uneasy towards the feeling that both suffers and enjoys. She knows now and then that “it was still there” (Munro, 200, p. 46). Oscillating between her desire to be free and autonomous and her fear of bewilderment again, Carla is the kind of Kristevian “tireless builder” (Kristeva, 1982, p. 8) who journeys through the difficult, tempting path of Abjection. Carla is in tenter-hooks; pulling towards desire, the maternal object of want and retreating into stability that Clark dedicates her. Uncertain and dissatisfied, Carla lives in a land of oblivion that is constantly remembered. She fights against her desire but is unable to forget it entirely. Kristeva argues: “the “unconscious” contents remain here excluded but in strange fashion: not radically enough to allow for a secure differentiation between subject and object, and yet clearly enough for a defensive position to be established” (Kristeva, 1982, p. 7). Implying a defensive position against what is going to weaken her subjectivity, Carla returns home to be safe and secure against 'outward object' of danger. Abjection pushes through a simultaneous feeling of desire and rejection and threatens the subjectivity. Carla's desire is both repellent and seductive as like as Abjection. What prevents Carla to fall in the land of abject is her fear of loneliness. Her inner thoughts in the way to Toronto are the comprehensive perspective of her feelings:

She set herself to thinking about Toronto, the first steps ahead. The taxi, the house she had never seen, the strange bed she would sleep in alone...she could not picture it...living among hordes of people every day who were not Clark (Munro, 2004, p. 33).

She feels the threat of meaninglessness and danger of undermining her identity without the presence of Clark. Hence she returns to him to recapture the source of value and order. A future without Clark's existence is unimaginable for her although “he despised her” (Munro, 2004, p. 24). Clark for Carla is both restrictive and meaning-making. He is *inescapable*, for Carla has accepted him as protector. She is alienated with the world of future and prefers the virulence of Clark, set in the symbolic. Clark for her brings security and stability vis-à-vis the alienation and terrifying world of Real/future. Through her escape, she achieves self-awareness that she is dependent on Clark yet the symbolic function of Clark is suffering for her. She has to demarcate between the abstract future which promises her freedom and perhaps an authentic life and undermining her subjectivity with lack of a stable symbolic embodied in Clark. Kristeva qualifies abject as “a refusal but also a sublimating elaboration” (1982, p. 7). Carla's sublime desire to be an autonomous subject is achieved through her refusal of Clark's domination and her self-awareness that gives her progress and motivation. Her refusal against temptation is 'a sublimating elaboration' for she holds on laws and limitations in order to save her familial responsibilities. Carla endeavors to separate herself from the object. The maternal *loss/want* penetrates whenever Carla looks at that direction of bare woods where she reminds of Flora. But the separation is not complete and enlivens through her resistance. Kristeva asserts that abjection is rooted in past, in the connection of subject with maternal body. Whenever the subject sets himself stable in the symbolic, it is abjection which shatters his comfort and shakes the solid basis of subjectivity: “a deep well of memory that is unapproachable and intimate: abject” (Kristeva, 1982, p. 6). Abjection is a double-edged phenomenon. It resides in the subject in the form of want/desire and it tantalizes with Out/object. There is no flight of abjection except a defensive position of the subject. R. Byrne writes: “it [abjection] is suppressed by society and thus it is placed behind closed doors- it is nevertheless, ultimately an element of life” (2010, p. 72). The subject adapts to the situation of demarcation in order to preserve his subjectivity. Carla's self-adaptation is the quintessential to the defensive position proposed by Kristeva. Carla's situation is akin to a mature subject who is fighting for and against an outward threat. She feels tired whenever she turns back in her inner thoughts. The story follows:

Carla found that she had got used to the sharp thought that had lodged in her. It wasn't so sharp anymore—in fact, it no longer surprised her. And she was inhabited now by an almost seductive notion, a constant low-lying temptation (Munro, 2004, pp. 46-47).

The Abjection is a realm of limits and boundaries and the voyager feels frustrated while he fights to secure his subjectivity. It is like an “inescapable boomerang” (Kristeva, 1982, p. 1) turns back to Carla while she confronts the absurdity of Real. A 'seductive notion' inhibited in the dark angles of subjectivity makes Carla aware of her inner desire and her disability to reach it. She combats against the inner desires and her rebellious subjectivity. Ian Rae writes: “the abject evokes a range of conflicting desires in the individual by entangling rejection and desire, far and near, fear and an uncanny sense of familiarity” (2010, p. 8) Kristeva considers the abjection of the self as the “culminating form of that experience of the subject” (1982, p. 5). She notes that the objects are rooted in the unresolved, maternal world and subject's separation which remains in the form of an endless loss. The story indicates that Carla flights for the second time. The first time she leaves her parents to live 'an authentic life' with Clark whom her parents hated. Dissatisfied with Clark, she runs away from him. Her escape is the second time in her life. Carla's dissatisfaction derives from unresolved desires rooted in the maternal loss. The Kristevian subject is 'subject-in-process' for there is an endless process of success and failure against an eternal loss and desire towards an object. Demarcating the borders of subjectivity with those of Not I is Carla's threat in the context of her life. The sense of ambiguity prevail Carla's thought. The abject is a dynamic activator which pushes the subject to promotion but he also passes back and forth in uncertainty and ambiguity. Carla is a reactioner against her feeling of loss but can never defy it completely. The dialectical relation between subject and object produces the sense of abjection in him which he guards against object and at the same time he desires it. Calvin Thomas writes: "At bottom, Kristeva writes, it is the “logic of prohibition”, “the simple logic of excluding filth”, that “founds the abject” (2008, p. xiii). Carla feels prohibited in front of what she desires for the restrictive power of Clark and her fear of losing him. Excluding the object of desire embodied in Flora, Carla maintains through the abject to avoid the object.

### B. *Jouissance*

Through the process of abjection, there is 'jouissance' that Kristeva associates with the subject. Megan Becker Leckrone describes jouissance that “is a kind of bliss or euphoria associated with the breakdown of conventional practices” (2005, p. 158). The Other is structurally symbolic. Accordingly, the subject in order to be a subject other than Other (defined as the 'symbolic order') needs to transgress the laws articulated by Other in the symbolic pole. In rejection of the symbolic Other, jouissance appears as the psychic effect of the tolerance against it. Kristeva argues that the only reason for the abject to exist is essentially jouissance. The frontiers between the subject and Other is demarcated with the revolt of subject against the symbolic structure of the Other. In fact, the subject needs Other to be the subject of his own but he has the space to break the monopoly of Other. This unstable temporary position which is dominated by want is what causes jouissance. It is 'temporary' for the subject has to return to Other in order to set in the symbolic order. Carla in the way to Toronto feels an “unaccustomed confidence” (Munro, 2004, p. 31) and “even a sense of humor” (Munro, 2004, p. 31). Obviously she feels satisfied while she is running away from Clark. As it has been said, Clark is the source of symbolic order for Carla. Running away from him, Carla feels happiness, the feeling of freedom in result of breaking Other embodied in Clark. Carla transgresses the limitations imposed by Clark. Feeling jouissance, Carla releases the symbolic Other to touch the joy of another subjectivity. She releases the symbolic and the sense of jouissance enlivens in her “violently and painfully” (Kristeva, 1982, p. 9). The atmosphere described by Munro while Carla is in the bus in the way of Toronto is significant for it is in harmony with the kind of Jouissance which Kristeva associates with Abjection: freedom caused by breaking the symbolic order. The rainy, “steady showers” and “the summer of rain and more rain” (Munro, 2004, p. 4) changes into a delicate, pleasure weather of spring: (Munro, 2004, p. 4 )

The sun was shining, as it had been for some time. When they sat at lunch it had made the wineglasses sparkle. No rain had fallen since early morning...summer clouds, not rain clouds were scudding across the sky. The whole countryside was changing, shaking itself loose, into the true brightness of a July day (Munro, 2004, p. 31).

However, the sense of meaninglessness begins while she is keeping Clark in distance. She immediately asks herself about the blank space caused by the absence of him. The discipline of her life is shattered when she omits out Clark. The chaotic weight of meaninglessness as well as terrifying picture of future in which Clark does not exist, makes Carla to return to her husband. She takes aside laws and limitations but to be an accepted subject she recovers Other in her subjectivity. In order to save her subjectivity, Carla needs Clark as Other. Throughout the story, the presence of Clark is more through Carla's thought than his real presence. The weight of his existence is so highlighted that he is at the core of Carla's dramatic conflict with her life.

Carla stays in the ambiguous space of abject. As she looks at the direction in the bare woods, she is uncertain about everything including her life, the essential of Clark's mood, Flora's destiny, her desires and even the nature of Sylvia's effect upon her. As they are in bed, she tells her husband that her decision to go away and leave him was “all a lie” (Munro, 2004, p. 45). She is uncertain about her decision while she was in the bus as well as in her return to Clark. She breaks the monopoly of Clark and feels a freedom needed to keep her alive. To survive, she needed a confrontation with the difficulty of Real and to grasp the symbolic order as well. Unable to define herself as a subject detached from the symbolic, she asks herself about the purpose of her life after leaving Clark away: “How would she know that she was

alive?" (Munro, 2004, p. 34). The world she enters is chaotic for the lack of stability of the symbolic pole. In search of want, she leaves behind the stable world of her home and her husband but the weight of meaninglessness of Real crushes her and makes her to return to the symbolic. She knows about the restrictions imposed upon her by Clark yet she cannot confront the Real. That is the inescapable doubleness of vision in abjection. She feels free for a few, short moments and that is the sweet jouissance of a 'subject-in-process' who commits abjection.

### III. CONCLUSION

The abjection is a double condition. On the one hand, it denotes a seductive condition of freedom and independence from the masculine symbolic. On the other hand, it repels the subject towards the threat of undermining his subjectivity. The seductive power of abjection summons the subject to revolt, to outrage the Law-of-the-Father in the symbolic. This is the very quality that attracts the female character in "Runaway" (2004) to break the oppression of her husband who imposes upon her a solid life. In this way she questions the authority of symbolic and finds the chance to reevaluate her own subjectivity at the light of freedom suggests by abject. The jouissance of freedom in abject connects her to outlaw desires. Breaking the system of patriarchy, she is reconnected to the desire of maternal body-semiotic- and enjoys the world of her own. The repellent power of abject is the other side of it that warns the subject against the perilous effect of aggression. Not to be in the stable world of symbolic, Carla sets on the verge of uncertainty and ambiguity. She is deprived of the stable construction of symbolic embodied in Clark yet she is irritated by the restrictions and oppressions of him. While she is posited out of the rationality and meaning-making system of symbolic, she is confronted with the absurdity of Real. Suffused of the feelings of uncertainty and ambiguity, she stands on the borders of abject. She feels the touch of freedom out of a solid symbolic system, but the meaninglessness of Real is unlivable too. Unable to define a separate subjectivity for her, Carla returns to the secure territory of symbolic and returns home consequently. She reconciled herself to the restrictive arena of symbolic to save her subjectivity against what is going to undermine her identity. The consequent meaninglessness of the Real makes Carla to redefine herself in the shadow of Clark's symbolic characteristic. She has to keep a defensive position against the seductive power of abject if she tends to the meaning-making quality of symbolic pole. While she stands the pressure of temptation against revolt, abject enlivens the ambiguous sense of aggression and ignorance in her. Accordingly, Carla stays at the seductive realm of abject that calls her to annihilate the symbolic world of Clark and to remain in the safe area of him simultaneously. Freedom as the 'object of desire' for Carla keeps the sense of abject in progress in her. Whereas the abject blurs the demarcations of I/outside in Carla's subjectivity, she resists the annihilating feature of abject and ignores the joy of its liberating power.

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