

Yayınlayan: Ankara Üniversitesi KASAUM  
Adres: Kadın Sorunları Araştırma ve Uygulama Merkezi, Cebeci 06590 Ankara



Fe Dergi: Feminist Eleştiri 10, Sayı 2  
Erişim bilgileri, makale sunumu ve ayrıntılar için:  
<http://cins.ankara.edu.tr/>

**Mirage, Space and Hegemony: The Exploration of Identity in Alice Munro's "Runaway"**  
*Raheleh Bahador, Leila Hashemi ve Esmaeil Zohdi*

Çevrimiçi yayına başlama tarihi: 15 Aralık 2018

Bu makaleyi alıntılar için: Raheleh Bahador, Leila Hashemi, Esmaeil Zohdi, "Mirage, Space and Hegemony: The Exploration of Identity in Alice Munro's "Runaway" " *Fe Dergi 10*, no. 2 (2018), 131-139.

URL: [http://cins.ankara.edu.tr/20\\_12.pdf](http://cins.ankara.edu.tr/20_12.pdf)

Bu eser akademik faaliyetlerde ve referans verilerek kullanılabilir. Hiçbir şekilde izin alınmaksızın çoğaltılamaz.

### **Mirage, Space and Hegemony: The Exploration of Identity in Alice Munro's "Runaway"**

Raheleh Bahador\* Leila Hashemi\* Esmaeil Zohdi\*

*Eternal definitions imposed by tradition and ideology defines woman as the "Other" to man. Though it seems that postmodernity has broken the closed space of tradition and redefined the woman, not much has changed in the small and urban areas even in the first world countries. Family as the smallest unit in the society is the miniature of a bigger world that forms woman identity to enter a much bigger world. Social space influences the individual through lifetime. It provides the perspective into the hidden angles of mental space. Affected by strict social space, women live in a double world that one is illusory and the other one is reality. Just as a typical figure to study identity formation in contemporary world, the feminine character in Alice Munro's "Runaway" (2004) is pulled between conflicting imperatives, between rootedness and scape, freedom and domesticity, tending to family responsibilities and following the urgent promptings of her own heart. As an interdisciplinary study, this essay proposes to examine the social and mental spaces of the feminine character in Alice Munro's "Runaway" within the paradigm of Henri Lefebvre's mirage concept, assessing the extent to which she is defined by social space and the far-reaching temptation of escape and independence brought by subjective space in the context of modern Canada as a microcosm of the world. "Carla" does live between the internal world of her dreams that makes her to be an "agent" and the society that imposes its own models to fit in. The archetype model of woman as "passive" and "other" is repeated in the story by seminal female character but it is repeated in a world that heralds "equality" and "justice" for women. Not to follow mottoes, "Carla" is the heroine of her mental space since she has the courage to "runaway" from clichés. She knows how the world defines her but grasps the only chance in her life to change the conditions. More than a real social space, it is discussed that the restrictions that Carla is tangled within, is a mental state that women are born in. The hegemonic world of reality with its invisible lines has many spaces to relive and redefine the traditional concept of woman. Social space shapes the identity of the women and makes less blank spaces to run away and it cuts the world for them into reality and fantasy.*

*Anahtar Kelimeler:*Alice Munro, Runaway, Henri Lefebvre, mirage, Antonio Gramsci.

#### **Mirage, Mekan ve Hegemonya: Alice Munro'nun "Kaçak"ında Kimlik Keşfi**

*Gelenek ve ideolojinin dayattığı müebbet tanımlamalar kadını erkeğin "Öteki"si olarak belirler. Postmodernitenin kapalı gelenek alanını kırdığı ve kadını yeniden tanımladığı görülse de, birinci dünya ülkelerinde bile küçük kentsel bölgelerde pek bir şey değişmemiştir. Toplumdaki en küçük birim olarak aile, daha büyük bir dünyaya girmek için kadın kimliğini oluşturan büyük dünyanın minyatürüdür. Toplumsal mekan, bireyi yaşamı boyunca etkiler ve zihinsel mekanın gizli kalmış köşelerine bakmayı sağlayacak bir perspektif sunar. Katı sosyal uzamın etkisi altında kadınlar, birinin aldatıcı, diğerinin ise gerçek olduğu bir çifte dünyada yaşarlar. Çağdaş dünyadaki kimlik oluşumunu incelemek için tipik bir karakter sunan Alice Munro'nun "Runaway" (2004) eserindeki kadın karakter, köklülük ve dallanmak, özgürlük ve evcillik, aile sorumluluklarını yerine getirmek ve kalbinin ivedi taleplerini izlemek arasında kalmaktadır. Disiplinler arası bir çalışma olan bu makale, Alice Munro'nun "Runaway" eserindeki kadın karakterin sosyal ve zihinsel mekanlarını, Henri Lefebvre'nin serap kavramı paradigması çerçevesinde inceleyerek, dünyanın bir mikrokozmosu olarak Kanada bağlamında kadın karakterin ne dereceye kadar toplumsal mekan, güçlü kaçma arzusu ve öznel mekanın yarattığı bağımsızlık tarafından tanımlandığını değerlendirmektedir. "Carla," onu "eyleyici" kılan hayallerinin iç dünyası ile uyması için kendi modellerini dayatan toplum arasında yaşar.*

\*Department of English Literature, faculty of humanities, Vali-e-Asr University, Rafsanjan, Kerman, Iran.

\*Department of English Literature, faculty of humanities, Vali-e-Asr University, Rafsanjan, Kerman, Iran.

\*Department of English Literature, faculty of humanities, Vali-e-Asr University, Rafsanjan, Kerman, Iran.

*Hikayede ufuk açıcı kadın karakter tarafından “pasif” ve “öteki” kadın arketip modeli tekrarlanır, fakat bu tekrar kadınlar için “eşitlik” ve “adalet”in habercisi olan bir dünyada gerçekleşir. Mottoları kabul etmemek amacıyla “Carla” kendi zihinsel mekanının karakteri olur çünkü o klişelerden “kaçma” cesaretine sahiptir. Dünyanın onu nasıl tanımladığını bilir fakat hayatta koşulları değiştirmek için karşısına çıkan tek şansa dört elle sarılır. Makalede Carla'nın dolandığı engellerin gerçek toplumsal mekandan çok kadınların içine doğdukları zihinsel durum olduğu iddia edilmektedir. Görünmez çizgileriyle gerçekliğin hegemonik dünyası, geleneksel kadın kavramının yeniden yaşanmasını ve yeniden tanımlanmasını sağlayacak pek çok mekan içermektedir. Toplumsal mekan kadınların kimliğini şekillendirmekte, kaçacak boş mekanları azaltmakta ve kadınlar için dünyayı gerçeklik ve fantezi olarak bölmektedir.*

*Keywords: Alice Munro, Runaway, Henri Lefebvre, serap, Antonio Gramsci.*

### Introduction

A woman gazing at an unknown point in the darkness of the trees, reviewing a dream that is gone with the wind, seeing her marriage as a mirage, and a man who stands an outsider to her thought-what is illusory and what is real? Taking place in a small rural countryside, the spatial and textual narration of the story is affected by space in two interdependent halves. In many stories of Alice Munro the identity changes through the moments of revelation and retrospection, crisis and anxiety. Through many of her stories the identity is reinvented and the relationships change over time and there are revealed moments of Joycean epiphany. Behind these fragmented narratives, Munro depicts “powerful legendary shapes behind ordinary life” (Sheldrick Ross 1983, 112) and they experience oblique sideways between different dimensions of reality. Munro’s emphasis on locations, landscapes and dislocations provides a field to investigate the connection between her explorations of identity related to characters’ dislocations within the textual spaces of her stories. The question of space in the everyday life could be discussed at the light of Henri Lefebvre’s influential enterprise regarding the concept of mirage and triplet spaces to answer that how Munro blurs the borders of her characters’ dislocations and multiplicities within the individual identity of them and their estrangement from the material spaces of the everyday world.

Henri Lefebvre in his masterly exposition *The Production of Space* (2007) explores the concept of *space* in theoretical and experiential terms. Lefebvre reconciles human space within the margins of three zones that overlap each other: physics, metaphysics, and ideology. In his vast endeavor he speculates on the relationship between “*mental space*” or abstract, subjective space, “*physical space*” or the space occupied by the human bodies and material objects and which would include geographical space, and “*social space*” which includes social relations of individual and collective as well as social structures like families, towns and cities. This trilogy affects the human identity in lifetime.

In many of her stories, Munro depicts “the relationship between men and women constitute the field in which “the feminine” is defined through varieties of resistance to masculine constructions, as each woman seeks not a room of her own but a space of her own where she can escape the constraints of expectation imposed upon her.” (Howells 2009, 171) Like the other early stories of Munro which are concerned with departure than with returns, “*Runaway*” (2004) depicts the same adventure. Showing the multidimensionality of Munro's representations of identity, the narrative yields different layers of character investigation especially in Carla, the female protagonist. As an outstanding and different narrative among other stories of Munro with the central female characters who share the sense that life can be lived simultaneously in two different dimensions and experienced in two real but separate worlds, the main female protagonist in “*Runaway*” does go through the same path, returns to her husband with no other real world but continues to dream of that second life.

The present study recreates the picture of mirage in the context of Alice Munro’s short fiction “*Runaway*” and then discusses the connection between Gramsci’s concept of hegemony and its main relation to Lefebvre’s trilogy spaces. It will be discussed that the identity in the female protagonist is not fixed and firm but affected by the social space refigured in her husband, she dreams of ‘an impossible mirage’ to gain her freedom. The social space is indicated by the textual space Munro creates. The couple lives in a small rural area and the identity is formed in the same way while when she gets close to a bigger social space like Toronto to gain a new life, she experiences a greater free space out of the touch of hegemony. It is specifically obvious that significant moments of crisis and revelation are attached to certain places and all are inclined to subjective space as the center of kingdom for women. To live simultaneously in two separate but interdependent world of mental and

social space is probably the main endeavor of the female character. Accordingly, a hidden identity is formed far away from the eyes of hegemony although too fragile to born a revolution. As indicated by Elisa Vancoppennolle about Munro's common way of character in her stories:

*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. (Vancoppennolle 2010, 4)*

The crucial point is that the figure of Munro's protagonist as a woman who lives in a mirage is not confined to this story, but it is a mental state that is true about many women of the world, particularly the ones who live in communities or families which restrict the females' wishes, thoughts or in a broader sense, their identities. Accordingly, when a girl grows up to learn that she is not allowed to choose her way, to think by herself, and to live freely just the way she wants, the illusions start. She prefers to live in a mirage far and different from the real life that she owns. Her mind starts to visualize a fantasy world that she has always craved. Undeniably, this made up world, this mirage, brings her more joy and less grief.

## Discussion

### *I. Social Space and Reality: The Concept of Hegemony*

Living in a small town, two main protagonists Carla and Clark have escaped from Carla's parents to begin a happy, "authentic kind of life" (Munro 2004, 34). They live an ordinary life and it seems that nothing can disturb their calm life until the arrival of Flora, the mysterious white goat that changes the condition. Happy with her life, Carla "liked the rhythm of her regular chores, the high space under the barn roof, the smells." (Munro 2004, 5). World around the female protagonist can be divided into two interconnected but seemingly separate spaces. The social space includes physical space and Clark, their mobile home and everything that surrounds them. It is the constraints of the real world that compels her to make a fantasy world for herself. The main element of discontent and difficulty is Clark, her husband. As we read the story, Clark has a hysteric, bad-tempered mood. Somewhere in the beginning of the story Carla indicates: "You flare up." and Clark answers: "that's what men do" (Munro 2004, 6). The narrative recreates the clichéd picture of the hegemonic man and the captive woman in the context of modern Canada, represented in a rural area of the country. We have the description of nervous Clark from the very beginning. Carla reviews: "Clark often had fights...his friendliness, compelling at first... could suddenly turn sour" (Munro 2004, 6). Clark has the same attributes defined in patriarchal society by the dominant power.

As the story title bursts out, the protagonist runs away from home or better to say from her husband. It is not the first time Carla escapes and "leaving everything behind" (Munro 2004, 33) "to meet Clark in the church parking lot down the street" (Munro 2004, 33) but the second time "in the hope of recovering herself" (Munro 2004, 33) to gain wisdom and independence. Discontent with everything in her parents' home, Carla "despised their house, their backyard, their photo albums, their vacations, their underground lawn-sprinkling system" (Munro 2004, 33) runs away with Clark to attain "a more authentic kind of life" (Munro 2004, 33) and marries him. A review of Carla's first escape shows that Clark is the embodiment of Carla's outside dream of an authentic life. In the review of the memories in the narration Carla describes Clark as the "sturdy architect of life ahead of them, herself as a captive, her submission both proper and exquisite" (Munro 2004, 32).

Munro's choice of diction underscores Carla's lost desire for independence inspired and reinforced by Clark's influence. Carla describes herself as "captive" and yet this recognized submission is what is "proper and exquisite." (Munro 2004, 32). It implies that while women in the modern world may feel personally imprisoned by a dominant patriarchal society, they remain mostly compliant out of a perceived sense of responsibility imposed by hegemonic norms. Carla in this sense needs to figure out Clark as the image of power, desire and vital potentiality to help her achieve what she dreams of. In *The Second Sex* (1972) Simon de Beauvoir analysis woman as man's Other. She argues that patriarchal ideology presents man as transcendence and woman as immanence. From her existentialist perspective, de Beauvoir considers transcendence the mark of true humanity in the western philosophy. She claims that "man attains an authentically moral attitude when he renounces mere being to assume his position as an existent" (de Beauvoir 1972:172). Consequently, in order to free herself from status of otherness and become fully human, woman must follow in the footsteps of man and achieve the

transcendence from the limits of nature. Carla not conceived of herself as an independent woman needs Clark to complete her dream of a professional and independent life. Clark stands as the figure of social space. Carla had promised her parents to attend the college but vastly changed, she refuses and wants to join Clark to enter a new world. Munro uses this shift in Carla's aspiration to demonstrate the allure and the strength of patriarchy over feminine freedom. Subaltern of Clark, Carla leaves her roots of family and joins Clark who "has lost his touch with his family." (Munro 2004, 29) and "thought families like a poison in your blood." (Munro 2004, 29). It is interesting that Carla ignores her family as like as Clark and even talks about what Clark likes, "his dream, his plan" (Munro 2004, 28). Carla's subjectivity and identity is filled with Clark's imposing power. Steven J. Jones states that "hegemony is moral and intellectual leadership which treats the aspirations and views of subaltern people as an active element within the political and cultural programme of the hegemonizing bloc" (Jones 2006, 55). Clark's power over Carla is spread through this thinking and his views about social organizations and values like family. Implying the rejection of tradition, Clark indeed abhors the roots of traditional values in family.

Raymond Williams defines the notion of hegemony which was inaugurated by the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci and noted that hegemony was "a sense of reality for most people ... beyond which it is very difficult for most members of society to move" (qtd in Eley 1992, 322). Even when Carla succeeds to escape, she is unable to define herself without reference to Clark. She needs to return to Clark to redefine herself. Unsure of the following future, Carla thinks about the future "a life, a place... that it would not contain Clark" (Munro 2004, 33) but she is not able to picture the future without him. She does not know what to do after leaving Clark. Carla describes Clark as "a vivid challenge" (Munro 2004, 34). Obviously, Carla is not able to imagine her identity detached from that of Clark. She is content with what is given to her through Clark's dominant behavior. After her return she gets accustomed to everyday life again and comes back to the same social space she had come from: "she was busy for the rest of that day, and the next, and the next" (Munro 2004, 43). Confined to the domestic and marginalized from the male world of power, women are habitually aligned with the mundane and the unexceptional. Lefebvre states that the social space replicates and reinforces the ideology of those dominant in society. He asserts: "Social space... in addition to being a means of production is also a means of control, and hence of domination, of power." (Lefebvre 1969, 26). It is in this sense that Carla crawls in the world of dominant, Clark to save her situation as a wife in particular, and as a woman in general. Lefebvre is particularly interested in the effect that the surrounding environment has on one's subjectivity and sense of identity. Reviewing Gramsci, he believes that hegemony is not exercised by sheer coercion but by consent. The subject's position is synonymous with consent for he is gratified by the power of hegemony to discipline his life and society. Accordingly, Carla is satisfied to return within the domain of hegemony and *it is* the only thing that secures her from distress and anxiety of loneliness.

In *The Production of Space* (2007) Lefebvre draws on Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony to argue that the social organization of space reproduces the values of the dominant ideology. The captive Carla is dominated by the power of Clark who is the miniature of the dominant ideology of the social organization. Oscillating between hegemonic temper, thought of Clark and her own desire to change the condition Carla live with the temptation of escape. Carla is not only affected by surrounding environment but penitent of escape, turns to the same dominant space and becomes a part of it. To make his or her individualistic identity, the subject needs to detach from the hegemonic power of society. Lefebvre asserts:

*In a bourgeois society the individual falls a victim to the powers of repression from the very moment that he does not conform to the norms and constraints by which this society produces "individualistic individuals, "which are isolated, separate and alike if not identical because they accept the same values (Lefebvre 1969, 28).*

The social space works like a machine that produces identical products. While Carla attempts to change the situation, it is obviously impossible to get rid of the power of Clark. Embodied as the hegemonic power of the values imposed by the society, Carla falls victim within the society. Carla is also the isolated individual who lives in the dream of liberty. What is significant in the Lefebvre's "individual" is that the subject does not go through an identity-making path. The individual is alienated from other individuals and at the same time suffers the weight of loneliness. The subject is tangled between a rock and a hard place and there is no way out of it. On the one hand the dominating power of norms in the society that makes identical individuals and on the other hand the temptation of revolt and a path that seems more like a mirage; promising but an everlasting impossible.

According to Lefebvre what is the most important space among other spaces is social space which produces the individual's subjectivity and identity out of its values. Social space and its most effective embodiment in the narration Clark makes the reality of Carla's life. To return to Raymond Williams, hegemony is the most crucial aspect of social space that infects the mental space to such an extent that it is the way the subject lives and forms his consciousness with: "...hegemony supposes the existence of something ...which is lived at such a depth, which saturates the society to such an extent ...that it corresponds to the reality of social experience..." (qtd. in Apple 2012, 21-22). Clark's vast and total influence has poisoned Carla's thought and will and makes her a passive captive in social space who has no way to the active actioner of her mental world and the dream of change and flight is too pale to believe in.

Carla chooses independently to live a life dreamed by Clark but unable to keep in touch with patriarchal dominancy of her husband makes another decision; to run away from what she dislikes. It is interesting to mention that according to the narrative, it is for the second time that Carla runs away. As we read the first time Carla escapes and leaves her family to join Clark and she makes another attempt to runs away from whom she escaped to. In this sense, Carla is confused between self-awareness and crisis. Both these elements would yield an abstract, mental world to Carla that will be fully discussed in the next part.

## II. Mental Space and Fantasy: The Concept of Mirage

The strong element of *mental space* is the extraordinary achievement of Alice Munro in "*Runaway*". In many of her stories, Alice Munro's women have a separate, latent world detached from the real world and hidden from men. Carla under the constraints of social space and its main element her husband, creates a mental space of her own filled with the notions of 'lack' and 'desire'. Carla leaves her parents with the dream of "a more authentic kind of life" but it goes that it never comes to her with Clark and to makes alive her dream, she decides by herself. In one of her interviews Munro asserts "You're the same person at nineteen that you are at thirty that you are at sixty that you go on being" (Gzowski 2001, 4). A part of Carla's character matches Munro's definition as she wants to gain a better life, a permanent thought from past until present. But as we compare twin escapes of Carla, in contrast with the first time that she was sure about what she wants (Clark) in the second time she is not sure in "the hazy idea" of her escape. Like Julia Kristeva's concept of "le-sujet-en-proces" (Kristeva 1982, 1) in which the identity is a dynamic and ever changing essence, Carla's identity changes throughout the time. Unable to decide, she is confused between reality of her difficult life and the fantasy of escape. In soliloquies in the bus to Toronto, Carla asks many unanswered questions about her oblique future. Carla goes out into the unknown territory following a fantasy script through which she strives to explore her new identity and her new life of independence but she has no clear idea about how to do it. The future is so unfamiliar like a blank space that she shakes in "her fog of fright" (Munro 2004, 34).

In "*Runaway*" the image of Flora, the white goat is very significant in two ways. In one hand she is the physical embodiment of the potential for female freedom and independence and on the other hand she implies the image of mirage in the story. Flora in the Freudian terms is the reflection of lack or loss which is the remembrance of mirage picture in Lefebvre's terms. In search of freedom, Carla searches her need which Flora inspires her. There is something somewhere but it lies always out of reach. As Lefebvre asks in *The Production of Space* "The mirage... is in some sense that which lies short of-and beyond-each part..."(2007,181). Every time she tries to reach the dream it goes farther and remains far-reaching. The mirage embodies in the shape of Flora, the goat. Flora is mirage-like because we never have the physical presence of her through the story. The entire narrative is structured around Flora and is reported in the past tense. In this way we can divide the narrative into three parts: before Flora, her first absence, the second coming and her last absence. The reader has the description of her arrival and absence only through the narrative and memories of the characters in the story. Her sudden and "apparition" (Munro 2004, 39) presence in the fog is too short to have any real effect during the course of the story especially on Carla who never believes her return when Sylvia writes her in a letter. The enigma of Flora underscores the unbelievable presence of her: "It condensed itself into an unearthly sort of animal, pure. White... something like a giant unicorn" (Munro 2004, 39). In fact the story forms around the absence rather than the presence of Flora, the goat. In the relationship between material and psychical images Lefebvre considers the mirage effects as "reflections, surface *versus* depth, the revealed *versus* the concealed the opaque *versus* the transparent" (Lefebvre 2007, 187). The concept of lack or mirage is the central concept composed by the presence and absence of Flora and affects Carla in an illusionary way and leaves her into a double world of imaginary and real. Lefebvre asserts: "the idea of a new life is at once realistic and illusory-and

hence neither true nor false. What is true is that the preconditions for a different life have already been created, and that that other life is thus on the cards" (Lefebvre 2007, 189). Carla is in search of a new life without even the haze of her past but in fact even the new life is the extension of the former and is already created. She is disturbed by the extended power of Clark and the fright of future without him. Accordingly, she struggles to change the cards but she can never change the game. Flora is the incarnation of Carla's subjective space as she wonders about Flora's destiny and Carla herself is the mirror of Sylvia's subjectivity. Both women dream of freedom.

The chronological review of Carla's life according to the narrative shows that Carla is never sure about what she wants. From her leaving and "hazy idea of what she was going to" (Munro 2004, 34) in the first escape since her subjective soliloquies in the bus she thinks about after days of escape. Lefebvre asserts that "Mirage effects can introduce an extraordinary element into an ordinary context" (Lefebvre 2007, 189). For Carla what that seem clear and graspable shifts to become unreachable and delusory. At Sylvia's home, she excited with her imminent escape that she "never knew it would be this easy" (Munro 2004, 35) believes the easiness of her escape but in the bus "she could not picture" (Munro 2004, 33) the future. Although Carla feels self-respecting at first but then she cannot manage the situation and calls Clark to take her home. A hidden metaphor used by Munro indicates the quality of flight in the story. Sylvia dedicates a unicorn brought from Greece to Carla. Metaphorically read, the unicorn belongs to a legendary place that seems not real enough to avoid its mirage effect and not imaginary enough to get rid of.

The abstract space of Carla is the second world that is hidden from Clark. Her second world is her power but unable to be born, it cannot change her situation. Her inner subjective space is reinforced by the presence of Flora. Flora that is attached to Clark turns to Carla gradually. Flora is the representation of Carla's dream of independence and freedom. After Flora's absence, Carla dreams her twice and in both of them Flora appears in a condition that implicitly tempts Carla to escape, in the first dream Flora appears "with a red apple in her mouth" (Munro 2004, 7) and in the second "just slithered through (barbed-wire barricade) like a white eel and disappeared" (Munro 2004, 7). Mental space of Carla is structured not by the presence of Flora but in fact by her absence. The presence of Flora fills the lack of Carla's inability to overcome her weakness with Clark but Flora's absence changes every thought into rebellion and discontent. In both of her dreams, Flora appears with signs to tempt Carla to flight in order to gain a new life out of the dilemma with Clark. The illusionary idea of flight is so strong that she makes her mind in Sylvia's home and joins the dream constructs by the mirage. In *The Production of Space* Lefebvre states:

*Mirage effects have far-ranging consequences...the impression of transparency becomes stronger and stronger, and the illusion of a new life is everywhere reinforced. Real life indeed appears quite close to us, we feel able, from within everyday life, to reach out and grasp it...(2007, 189)*

Two women from two different generations have the same dream and it is strange that there is no obvious change or difference between the destiny of them. Each one struggles to reconcile the marginalized picture of femaleness but all is vain and the imposing shadow of maleness is felt through their lives. To read in a prolepsis way, Sylvia is Carla in the old age and Munro paradoxically leaves much less open end for the reader to imagine the future of Carla. Sylvia tries to change the rails in the mind of Carla but dislocation does not work. It seems that Sylvia had no deep connection with her husband. After his death, Sylvia and Carla gather up all his objects and throw them away. When Carla is in Sylvia's home and reveals her life to her, Sylvia says: "perhaps you do know what to do" (Munro 2004, 23). At the same time Carla answers with a question. A paradox forms in the mind that seems Sylvia must asked Carla's question. Carla asks: "run away?" (Munro 2004, 23). Sylvia's sentence implies that 'you know what to do' and Carla says what exist in the mind of Sylvia. When in the midnight Clark intrudes Sylvia's home, she says about Carla that she seemed happy to be going. Flora is the reflection of Carla's subjective dream of escape and Carla is the embodiment of Sylvia's old wish of escape. Carla's dream of Flora reflects her psychological state. Her trip to Toronto is like entering a blank space, not only is there nobody to welcome her but Carla is not sure what to do in a world that "living among hordes of people every day who were not Clark, a life, a place that it would not contain Clark..." (Munro 2004, 34). In fact what bothers Carla, what makes her worry is that she does not know how to fill the blank space of Clark after his omission "while she was running away from him-now- Clark still kept his place in her life. What would she put in his place? What else-who else- could ever be so vivid a challenge?" (Munro 2004, 34). The subjective state of

Carla shows how she is dependent on Clark. In order to redefine herself, she needs to return to him. Unable to make that individualistic picture, Carla is the prolonger of Clark's hegemonic being. Lefebvre asserts:

*For the concrete individual in this society where individualism is the dominant ideology, his own accomplishment and development appear to him like a fleeting mirage, a promise never to be kept: a possible-impossible. (1969, 28)*

Instability of Carla's decision makes her to trust a mirage-like situation. The couple lives in a mobile home away from their parents. Living at a mobile home is quite new for Carla: "Up until three years ago, Carla had never really looked at mobile homes." (Munro 2004, 8). Mobile homes, metaphorically implies the unstable condition and unsafe of the situation. She moves away from the "Runaway Day" (Munro 2004, 34) but she keeps alive that dream in her mental space. Dream's accomplishment is a far-reaching mirage that puts a new life out of touch for Carla but bewilderment is there to glance.

### Conclusion

In *The Production of Space* (2007) Lefebvre writes, "How many maps, in the descriptive or geographical sense, might be needed to deal exhaustively with a given space, to code and decode all its meanings and contents?" (85). Munro's depiction of the female character in "Runaway" (2004) designs overlapping spaces, plots identity not as single but as a series of histories hidden within individual's life stories. The overlap of mental space and social space is so blurred in the narrative that to draw a rigid line between the two is nearly impossible. A hegemonic reading of Lefebvre's concept of mirage has been scrutinized through the male character of Clark as representation of masculine power and a microcosm of hegemonic world. The resistance against this hegemony is Carla's subjective space embodied in her unfinished flight. Carla moves backwards and forwards between past and present, always oscillating between acquiescence and estrangement. Affected by the new space in Sylvia's home, Carla struggles to attain her dream but everything is doomed to failure. Even her temporary freedom cannot make her to decide a final decision. Carried by her mental space, she lives in a world that shows her identity not split but pluralized.

Munro depicts a particular kind of female anger that remains hidden and is only shown through disguised jokes and one failed escape. The joke is made by Clark as "Runaway Day" to point to Carla's escape date. Hegemony turns everything into a stable place to avoid the resistance of its actioners. Carla, thus, lives in an imaginary space deliberately shut off from reality to avoid hegemony. The borders of social and mental spaces are blurred to indicate how they are tangled into the character's individual identity. The female protagonist in the story is affected by two spaces: one the social space embodied in her husband and the other her imaginary space that is revitalized in her solitude once in a while. Mirage effects indicate that there is something somewhere but it lies always beyond reach. The promise of a better life has brought Carla to a space filled with the repetitions of everyday life but empty of meaning for her. At the end of the story, the sparkle of reconciliation in the couple's relationship is figured in their improved sexual relationship. To make a balance between two spaces, the protagonist has to get along with the material space. To read more optimistically, it is not to give up the dream, but to hide it from the pressure of hegemony and to survive it at last. The female protagonist shaped is formed as a pluralized subject that while easy to control but is unexpected. The importance of space and its implied connection to identity in Munro's fiction is that the character undergoes a changing subjectivity as the space alters around her. Terrified by the possibility of becoming lonely and marginalized, Carla turns from a space promised by liberty into a space secured by defined norms. Through her domestic entrapment the reader is able to trace a series of crisis that ends to the climax of the narrative and its final fall. Carla passes through spaces that get her close to her self-figuring and her thrilling - exciting moment of escape.

In many of Munro's fictions there is a paradigm of spatial oppositions that identity is formed for characters along or against them. Parallel with the major map, the different spaces in "Runaway" provide a sort of Cixous's "Sorties" (Cixous 1981, 91) to shape the female feelings changing and unstable: mobile home versus parents' home, the solitude of the countryside versus journey to Toronto by bus, reality of Clark versus fantasy of Flora. Her departure from her parents' home and her residence in a mobile home is a physical picture of the muddle in her mind. Though she returns to a male dominated space where Clark exists, she needs that to define herself in a framework of norms. In her bleak moments, when she glares at an unknown place in the nearby jungle, she reconnects to the forbidden mirage and gains a moment of solitude and self-figuring woman. The landscape



remains a crucial place of thought for her as the story ends with it. Arita Van Herk describes a woman's experience of a prairie as: "Landscape beckons escape: escapade" (1992, 140). The landscape in the last scene of the story where Flora had disappeared long ago keeps the temptation of flight alive. In the picture that shades into mirage, Carla is never certain of her present situation and glances at her near-visionary experience once in a while. The unspecified place among trees with vultures above the place alludes to death that perhaps there is no escape from the real world unless through death. The rejoicing moment of her experience is shadowed by hegemony and is returned to the hidden labyrinth of her imagination. Carla's changed identity after the glorious revelation in Sylvia's home and in the bus dislocates the laws of the game in reality and such a transgression is not easy to pay for. The indeterminate ending that is so characteristic of Munro's stories are constructed like that darkness in the tress, leaves everything obscure and open across the spaces between reality and imagination. Munro's own words are a fit epilogue to this part:

*And the other story is about, of course, how our imaginations, how our fantasies can play such a terribly important role in our lives. Fantasies that never come true, but do come true in a way and then are misrepresented and how we need these dreams to live by (Gzowski 2001, 4).*

## Bibliography

- Apple, Michael W, *Knowledge, Power and Education: The Selected Works of Michael W. Apple*, London & New York: Routledge: 2012, 21-22.
- Howells, Coral Ann. 'Intimate Dislocations: Alice Munro, Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage' in *Alice Munro*, Ed. Harold Bloom, New York: Infobase Publishing: 2009, 171.
- Vancoppennolle, Elisa. 'Hunted Families: Gothic Realism in Alice Munro's *Too Much Happiness*'. *A Thesis*. Universiteit Gent, Faculty of Arts and Philosophy, 2010:4.
- Munro, Alice. *Runaway Stories*, New York: Vintage Book: 2004.
- Hélène Cixous, "Sorties," in *New French Feminisms*, ed. E. Marks and I. de Courtivron, New York and London: Harvester-Wheatsheaf, 1981, 90-98.
- Herk, Arita Van, 'Women Writers and the Prairie: Spies in an Indifferent Landscape' in *A Frozen Tongue*, Sydney: Dangaroo, 1992, 140.
- Peter Gzowski, 'You're the same person at 19 that you are at 60: Interview with Alice Munro,' *The Globe and Mail*, September 29, 2001, 4-5
- Lefebvre, Henri. *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson Smith, U.S.A: Blackwell Publishing: 2007.
- Henri Lefebvre, 'Reply to Professor Roderick Chisholm and Comments', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol. 30, No. 1, Sep., 1969: 28.
- Jones, Steven J. *Antonio Gramsci*, London & New York: Routledge: 2006, 55.
- Eley, Geoff, 'Placing' in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. Calhoun, Craig J, The MIT Press: 1992, 322.
- de Beauvoir, Simon, H.M. Parshley, *The Second Sex*, Harmondsworth: Penguin: 1972.

Catherine Sheldrick Ross, "'At Least Part Legend': The Fiction of Alice Munro," in *Probable Fictions*, ed. Louis B. MacKendrick, Toronto: ECW Press, 1983, 112–36.

Kristeva, Julia. *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, New York: Columbia University Press: 1982: 1.

