

Narratology and Stylistic Analysis of Literature: Displacement between the Fantasy and Reality in “Runaway”

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Abstract: This article takes Alice Munro’s famous short story “Runaway” as the object of study, applies the relevant theories of narratology and stylistic analysis of literature to study it, and analyzes it by using a combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis methods, exploring the misalignment between the imagination and the reality of the heroine Carla when she is facing the difficulties in her life and the inner struggles and difficulties caused by it, and revealing the irreversible tragedy of Carla, which is destined to be destroyed from the very beginning of her life.

1. Introduction

Alice Munro was born on July 10, 1931, in Wingham, Ontario, Canada. Munro started writing during her teenage years and published her first story, “Dimensions of a Shadow,” in 1950 while she was a student at the University of Western Ontario. She was there on a two-year scholarship, studying English and journalism. Alice Munro’s stories are predominantly set in her native region of Huron County in southwestern Ontario. Her writing is known for its ability to delve into the complexities of human nature with a straightforward and clear prose style. Munro has been recognized as one of the greatest contemporary fiction writers, with Cynthia Ozick referring to her as “our Chekhov.” Over the years, Munro has been honored with numerous literary awards, including the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2013, with the Swedish Academy lauding her as the “master of the contemporary short story.” She also won the Man Booker International Prize in 2009 for her lifetime contribution to literature. Additionally, Munro is a three-time winner of Canada’s Governor General’s Award for Fiction and has received the Writers’ Trust of Canada’s Marian Engel Award in 1996 and the Rogers Writers’ Trust Fiction Prize in 2004 for *Runaway*. Her work is characterized by its precise language, complex characters, and intricate exploration of human emotions and relationships. Alice Munro is a brilliant writer who has a unique way of looking at everyday life. Her stories are like windows into the lives of ordinary people, showing the beauty and complexity that can be found in the most common situations. The short story “Runaway” is just one example.

“Runaway”, which is also the title of the collection it’s part of, published in 2004. The story is set in rural Ontario and is about a young woman named Carla. Carla was captivated by Clark,

sharing a mutual passion for animals, particularly horses. Clark, who was attractive and popular, appealed to Carla, who believed her own family placed too much value on material things. Driven by her feelings, she eloped with Clark, only to discover that he was prone to emotional abusiveness and had a quick temper. Meanwhile, Sylvia, also known as Mrs. Jamieson, returns from Greece, widowed after her poet husband passed away. Clark, scheming, sends Carla to Sylvia's home. There, Carla opens up about her deep unhappiness and disillusionment with their marriage. Sylvia presents her with a way out, and Carla seizes it, escaping on a bus. However, she soon second-guesses her decision and asks Clark to come for her. That night, Clark warns Sylvia to stay out of their relationship. Despite their initial antagonism, the situation shifts to a more amicable one with the return of Flora, a goat. However, it is subtly suggested that Clark might have killed Flora. Readers can perceive the vast gap between the characters' imagination and reality, and feel a sense of powerlessness and displacement. It is a great example of *Munro's* storytelling. She takes a simple situation and explores it in a way that makes you think about life, choices, and relationships.

2. Narratology and Stylistic Analysis of Literature

Dan Shen describes that "The fields of narrative studies and stylistics both utilize linguistic models to analyze literary works, belonging to the realm of interdisciplinary studies with strong vitality[1]". Narrative theory focuses on the structures and techniques used in storytelling, including plot, character development, point of view, and narrative pace. Stylistics, more broadly, is the study of linguistic features, such as vocabulary, syntax, and figures of speech, to understand how authors convey meanings and produce effects in their texts. Stylistic analysis of literature explains how the specific choice of words, sentence structure, narrative voice, and other linguistic patterns in literature influence the reader's perception, emotions, and interpretation of the story. This approach allows scholars and readers to explore the depths of a narrative's construction and the subtle ways in which language shapes our understanding of the story being told.

For example, in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, the story is narrated by Nick Carraway, a character within the narrative. His perspective is limited and subjective, coloring the reader's perception of other characters, especially Gatsby. The narrative voice creates a sense of intimacy and bias, allowing readers to see Gatsby through Nick's admiring and sometimes critical lens. Sentence length and structure can mimic the pace of action or reflect a character's psychological state. In James Joyce's *Ulysses*, stream-of-consciousness writing captures the tumultuous flow of thoughts and sensations. Joyce's complex sentences, with shifts in focus and interruptions, mirror the characters' internal experiences, making readers feel closer to the characters' consciousness. Metaphors, similes, and symbolism enrich narratives by adding layers of meaning. Through these examples, we see how narratology and stylistic analysis of literature involves analyzing the interplay between linguistic choices and their effects on storytelling. It offers insights into how narratives construct meaning, engage readers, and evoke emotional responses, showcasing the power of language in shaping narrative art.

Munro is renowned for her superb narrative style, and the short story "Runaway" is no exception, serving as one of her representative works. This article will also analyze the text using methods of stylistic analysis of literature, thereby exploring the displacement between the fantasy and reality reflected in the short story.

3. Literature Review

In the 1980s, *Alice Munro's* short stories were widely included in anthologies published in Canada, the United Kingdom, the United States, and other countries, gradually attracting the attention of the Western critical community, with related research quickly heating up. Not only in

English-speaking countries, but also in other regions of the world, a large number of academic papers and book reviews studying her novels emerged. In her homeland of Canada and in the United States, the research fervor reached new heights, with scholarly monographs being published one after another. Among them, Louis MacKendrick's "Probable Fictions: *Alice Munro's* Narrative Acts" (1983) and a collection of essays edited by Judith Miller, "The Art of *Alice Munro*: Saying the Unsayable" (1984), outlined the issues focused on in *Munro's* first four collections of short stories, laying the groundwork for future criticism and research on *Munro* and marking the beginning of a surge in studies about her work. Subsequently, although the focus of criticism on *Munro's* novels has varied with the development of literary criticism theories, the researchers' focus has essentially remained unchanged. Looking at the international literary community's research on *Munro's* novels, the critical perspectives mainly concentrate on the following five areas: her narrative art, her description of experience of common women, patterns in her writing, the relationship between *Munro's* living background and her fiction and the realism of *Alice Munro*. Internationally, research on "Runaway" is more abundant, with studies quadrupling in number compared to domestic research. These studies offer a wider range of perspectives, including psychological and linguistic approaches, to explore aspects such as cognitive dissonance, survival fear, and identity in the short story.

Academic research on *Munro* in China started relatively late. Before 2000, aside from a few introductory articles, there was almost no research on *Munro* within the Chinese literary community. "An Analysis of The Office" by Guoru Jian is the earliest academic paper critiquing *Munro's* stories that can be found on the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI). This article introduces *Munro* and her short story "The Office" (from the collection *Dance of the Happy Shades*), and analyzes the themes, characters, and artistic techniques of the story. Researchers are concentrated on themes, narrative strategies, writing style, language characteristics and feminism. Research on "Runaway" in China has concentrated on themes such as marriage, female growth, female consciousness, patriarchy, and runaway. Despite a sufficient number of studies, the perspectives remain somewhat narrow, leaving the text underexplored.

This article shares similarities with previous study in that both employ narratology and stylistics theory to analyze the famous short story "Runaway". However, it is distinguished by combining qualitative and quantitative methods to provide a comprehensive textual interpretation of the displacement between reality and imagination in the three main characters of "Runaway". Supported by data and charts, this approach aims to offer a scientific analysis of "Runaway", contributing new research methods and perspectives to the field.

4. Textual Analysis

4.1 A Narrative Analysis of "Runaway"

The short story "Runaway" focuses on the unsuccessful attempt of a small-town woman, Carla, to flee. It uses superb narrative skills to objectively and realistically reflect the influence of the external and internal world on her actions and her stress response. *Alice Munro* makes full use of the internal third-person point of view and different narrative techniques to fulfill the short story and perceive the narrative from different characters' viewing positions. The third-person fixed internal point of view involves the fixed characters' inner feelings into the narration and provides readers special angles to see the events. It fully portrays the protagonist Carla's attempt to break free from her husband's constraints and her eventual willingness to repeat the cycle of 'runaway—return', just like Fiona Tolan refers to " 'Runaway,' opens, not with a departure, but with a return"[2].

4.1.1 Nonlinear Narrative

Narratologist Gerard Genette explains “that story order is explicitly indicated by the narrative itself or inferable from one or another indirect clue[3].” Post-structuralist theory also laid the theoretical foundation for films with nonlinear narrative structures characterized by emphasizing the contingency of original events and disrupting the temporal and spatial order of original incidents. Post-structuralism provided an essential creative technique for the “nonlinearity” of this narrative structure “deconstruction”. Deconstruction essentially involves a form of vertical aggregation in writing. It deconstructs the text and then re-aggregates it vertically, rather than integrating it horizontally according to common sense or logic. Post-structuralism provided the necessary methodology for creating nonlinear narrative structures. The short story vividly painted the aspirations and expectations for a better life of a small-town woman named Carla. Initially, she fled her family life to elope with Clark, a horse training instructor. After marrying, the couple ran a stable together. However, as the gap between their fantasy and reality widened, Carla, unable to tolerate some indescribable frictions within the marriage, ran away with the help of her neighbor Sylvia. Yet, midway through her escape, she returned to Clark’s side.

This article will give a brief count of the number of times the main characters escape in this short story. According to statistics, Carla had escaped 3 times in this story. The first time was when she was eighteen years old and ran away with Clark in spite of her parents’ obstruction and the gap between their lives, trying to escape from her parents to live a free and beautiful life that she thought she could get; the second time was when Carla was ready to run away from her current marriage with Sylvia’s help and had already boarded a bus to Toronto, deciding to escape from the displacement of her fantasy and reality; the third time was when Carla received Sylvia’s letter, she burned it and never went to the bare tree again. The third time Carla chose to run away from her true thoughts, not wanting to face her desires and imagination of another life. Sylvia ran away twice in the narrative of the story. The first time was a trip to Greece with her friends after her husband’s death, which she wanted to use as an opportunity to escape from the pain of losing her lover; the second time, she chose to live near the university, away from the memories with Carla, Clark, and her dead husband. However, she still kept the house where she used to live, and did not sell it. Flora, the goat that appeared in the short story, flew twice, first when she was forced to flee and she was brought back by Clark from her original living situation, and the second time when she suddenly disappeared and Clark described her as “Flora might have just gone off to find herself a billy[4].” The male characters in this short story, besides Sylvia’s husband who had already been in death, is Clark, Carla’s husband, who also ran away during the rainy day scene of the short story, as he had been escaping from reality by playing the computer, as his horse stable was not doing well during the rainy days and he was not making any money. In addition, Joy Tucker boarded her horse with Clark because she couldn’t stand the heat and “ran away” to hike in the Rocky Mountains by herself. Joy Tucker was absent from all of the rainy day scenes of the story, and as the weather cleared up, she appeared in the story naturally, chatting with Clark. However, the “runaway” of these characters did not occur in sequence, one after the other, but rather, they gradually surfaced automatically as the story progresses. This was achieved through switching between different perspectives and scenes, allowing readers to piece together the full context of the story during their reading process. This benefited from *Munro*’s superb narrative ability and precise control of the narrative pace.

In reader’s traditional understanding, Carla was the protagonist of the story, with Sylvia serving merely as a supporting character who aided Carla’s escape. However, during the development of the story, it becomes apparent that the narrative focus shifts. This article provides an intuitive digital representation of the changes and proportions of different perspectives in the following pie chart. In Figure 1, it is reflected that the narrative focus initially centers on Carla and her life (Carla 1, C1),

then shifts to Sylvia(Sylvia 1, S1), with both segments occurring on rainy days(the blue parts) and having comparable lengths in the original text; in the latter half of the story, set during clear weather(the orange parts), the narrative focus mirrors the first part, initially concentrating on Carla before moving to Sylvia, with the narrative length remaining consistent; the final section of the story(Ending, E) concludes by detailing the ultimate choices of each character, particularly that of Carla. It (Figure 1) suggests that Sylvia was not merely an assistant but another unseen protagonist within the narrative. The story unfolded against the backdrop of two different weather conditions-rainy and sunny days-each leading to vastly different plot developments. On rainy days, Clark was idle and irritable, leading Carla to contemplate escape, especially as Sylvia returned from her trip to Greece, providing both motive and means for the escape. On sunny days, Carla decided to return to Clark, and the story concluded with everyone’s final choices. The proportion of the two types of weather was approximately 6:4, with rainy days occupying a longer portion of the narrative. This also reflected Carla’s inner torment and struggle.

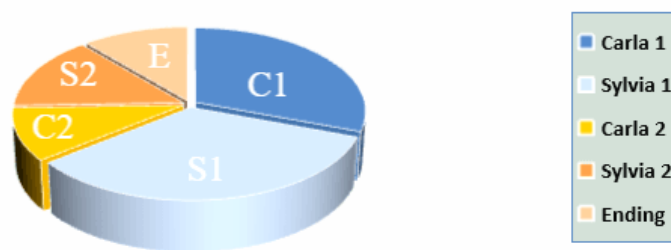


Figure 1: Narrative Perspectives of Each Part in “Runaway”

This kind of interwoven dual narrative is a common storytelling technique that adds complexity and depth to a story by alternating between the two storylines. In this structure, different storylines represent different characters, events, or periods, intertwining with each other and eventually converging or intersecting at some point in the story. It creates rich layers and tension, keeping the readers engaged with the story. *Munro* uses this narrative to explore events from different perspectives, shows how relationships between the characters, and reveals the underlying significance of certain plot points.

The narrative began from Carla’s perspective but shifts between her and Sylvia’s viewpoints, eventually adopting an omniscient perspective to reveal the characters’ ultimate fates. This distribution of narrative focus is roughly equal between the two women, highlighting Sylvia’s significance beyond just a helper role. Sylvia, a university lecturer, and her husband Mr. Jamieson, a poet with a significant age difference, represented a marriage that harbored problems, far from Sylvia’s initial idealized vision. At the beginning, Mr. Jamieson, Leon, affectionately called Sylvia Wordsworth’s sister. They were once very happy. However, in last spring before Mr. Jamieson passed away, Sylvia picked a small bunch of dog’s-tooth violets for Mr. Jamieson, yet he only looked at the flowers with mere exhaustion. Sometimes he would look at Sylvia as the same. “Last spring she went out once and picked him a small bunch of dog’s-tooth violets, but he looked at them—as he sometimes looked at her—with mere exhaustion, disavowal[4].” Later, Sylvia felt that the goat, Flora, was imbued with a magical quality that could be written into poetry. Then she quickly realized that her husband, Leon would likely not share this idea. Around the time of her husband’s death, Sylvia went through a painful emotional journey. After failing to help Carla run away, she moved away from the small town and settled into an apartment in a college town. The displacement in Sylvia was reflected not only in her marriage with Leon but also in her relationship

with Carla. Carla was initially just a helper in Sylvia's household, taking care of miscellaneous tasks during Leon's illness and passing. However, Sylvia's imagination of her went far beyond that. In Sylvia's eyes, Carla's figure while cleaning windows was highly attractive and a gentle kiss from Carla blossomed in her heart. Carla attracted her just as much as the special girl student in her botany classes who was passionately interested in nature. Her imagination for Carla even reached to the point of developing a special feeling, "crush" in the original text. Yet, when Sylvia saw Carla crying and lamenting her unhappy marriage, she realized there was a huge gap between her imagination of Carla and the objective reality. This was the second level of displacement in Sylvia.

From a straightforward statistical analysis, we can see the two women from different classes who seem to mirror each other, witnessing the discrepancy between their inflated imaginations about marriage before getting married and the grim reality they cannot change after marriage. It is precisely this misalignment that causes their inner turmoil and desire to escape.

4.1.2 Foreshadowing

For decades narrative theorists have characterized the concept of foreshadowing from different perspectives. Foreshadowing is a narrative technique of manipulating the reader's inferences about the story progression. Gary Saul Morson interprets foreshadowing as "An object in our path may cast a shadow backward, so that we reach the shadow before reaching the object casting it[5]." Foreshadowing is used effectively to hint at the unfolding events and the internal struggles of the characters. The first one was weather changes. The shifts between rainy and sunny weather in the story foreshadowed the changing moods and dynamics within Carla's life. "Just enough to get your hopes up—the clouds whitening and thinning and letting through a diffuse brightness that never got around to being real sunshine, and was usually gone before supper." Rainy days were associated with tension, conflict, and Carla's contemplation of escape. In contrast, sunny days represented a temporary return to normalcy and Carla's decision to stay with Clark. The weather patterns hinted at the cyclical nature of Carla's struggle.

The second one was lyrics Carla sang before her first runaway.

*"Last night she slept in a feather bed
With a silken quilt for cover
Tonight she'll sleep on the cold hard ground—
Beside her gypsy lo-ov-ver[4]."*

This song, often sung by Carla's mother and now constantly sung by Carla herself, mentioned last night's "feather bed" and "silken quilt", as well as tonight's "cold hard ground" and "gypsy lover". Carla affectionately called Clark "Gypsy Rover", and the lyrics foreshadowed that after marrying Clark, her life, which was currently somewhat comfortable, would become difficult. The lyrics exactly mimicked Carla's marriage life, which was hard and poor, contrast to her previous family life. Carla thought that eloping with Clark would grant her the freedom she imagined. However, reality was often disappointing. As mentioned earlier, Carla's home was not so good and couldn't really be called a home. Following her gypsy lover, she never truly felt at home or lived the life she dreamed of.

Another one was the dream with Flora Carla made. "She had dreamt of Flora last night and the night before. In the first dream Flora had walked right up to the bed with a red apple in her mouth, but in the second dream—last night—she had run away when she saw Carla coming. Her leg seemed to be hurt but she ran anyway. She led Carla to a barbed-wire barricade of the kind that might belong on some battlefield, and then she—Flora—slipped through it, hurt leg and all, just slithered through like a white eel and disappeared[4]." After the goat Flora disappeared, Carla had two dreams. In the first dream, Flora approached Carla's bed with a red apple in its mouth. In Bible, the red apple symbolizes temptation, and the goat symbolizes evil and the scapegoat. This implies

that amidst the pain of reality, Carla wavered and contemplated escaping from reality. Moreover, the goat Flora acts as the tempter, leading Carla towards what is metaphorically referred to as evil. In the second dream, the goat ran away upon seeing Carla approach, injuring its leg in the process. The goat led Carla to a wire fence, slipped through it like a white eel, and then disappeared, while Carla did not follow and escape with it. Even though she was tempted by Flora, Carla ultimately did not follow it through the barbed wire fence that could have hurt her. This foreshadows that although Carla contemplated escape, considering the cost of potential injury and the uncertainty of the future, she did not bravely make the escape. This aligned perfectly with the development of the story's subsequent plot. *Munro*, employing a god-like perspective, allows Carla, in her dreams, to embody Flora, performing the act of escape in her stead, while the real Carla remained forever trapped behind the wire fence.

4.2 A Stylistic Analysis of “Runaway”

The story is about wanting to escape from the reality out of the imagination, but it also shows how complicated and unpredictable life can be. *Munro*'s writing is very detailed and thoughtful, which makes the characters' emotions and dilemma more real. Geoffrey N. Leech and Michael H. Short provide a checklist of linguistic and stylistic categories in the book *Style in Fiction: A Linguistic Introduction to English Fictional Prose*. They divided the categories into four general parts: lexical categories, grammatical categories, figures of speech and cohesion and context[6]. The article will analyze the text from two main parts: lexical feature and figure of speech.

4.2.1 Lexical Feature

Foregrounding is an important term introduced into stylistics from the field of painting. It was originally used to describe how painters intentionally make the artistic images they want to express stand out from other people or things (i.e., the background) during the creation process, to achieve the purpose of attracting the reader's attention by showcasing the beauty and unique artistic effects of their work. Foregrounding in stylistics refers to the way certain elements of a text stand out or are made more prominent to create a special effect or draw the reader's attention. “Foregrounding” refers to a distinctive use of language that brings particular elements to the foreground to make them more noticeable. In Jan Mukarovsky's *Standard Language and Poetic Language*, he discussed the concept of “aktualisace,” or “actualization,” a term later translated by P. Garvin as “foregrounding” in his English translation of Mukarovsky's work.

In the short story, *Munro* makes extensive use of dashes, a deliberate deviation from convention by the author. In this example, the primary function of the dashes is to prepare for elaboration. *Munro* also employs a variety of synonyms for the verb “runaway” such as “get away” “getting out” “run away” “escape” “running away” “get off” in different scenes to suit the needs of the moment and the extent of Carla's desire to escape, deepening the impression through the use of diverse vocabulary. These words are all verbs, which means there is no result for all escape. This strategy enhances the reader's understanding of Carla's emotional states and emphasizes the varying degrees of her yearning for freedom.

After Carla's unsuccessful escape attempt with Sylvia's help and her return home, Clark came to find Sylvia in the middle of the night and had a conversation with her, in which Clark's choice of words is particularly worth exploring. The original excerpts were as follows. “*You mean my wife Carla?*” “*My wife Carla is home in bed. Asleep in bed. Where she belongs.*” “*I came here to tell you I don't appreciate you interfering in my life with my wife.*” “*My goodness, is that so? My wife is a human being? Really? Thank you for the information. But don't try getting smart with me. Sylvia[4].*” In this conversation, two phrases frequently appear from Clark's mouth, “my wife”.

Initially, he had Carla try to use the so-called scandal to threaten Sylvia, merely to extort money without any regard for whether Carla was willing or the harm it might cause her. After Carla's failed runaway and her return home, Clark's possessiveness over Carla exploded. In this brief dialogue, he used "my wife" four times, showing that Carla, to Clark, was not an individual with her own personality but, like the goat Flora, was Clark's property. This is what Clark believed and imagined, but reality did not align with his imagination. His perfect scam plan could not be implemented, his wife almost left him, and Carla's escape attempt greatly hurt his masculinity. Therefore, he was furious and hastily asserted his ownership to Sylvia, who helped Carla try to escape, reflecting Clark's machismo and an image of traditional man.

4.2.2 Figure of Speech

Metaphor In analyzing how *Munro* conveys complex ideas, emotions, and relationships, the use of metaphor in the short story is very important. Carla's elopement with Clark, which signified her first escape, occurred in the autumn, a season typically associated with the harvest, a time for reaping the fruits of one's labor. However, the necessity of a second escape served as a powerful indication that the first was unsuccessful. This subversion of autumn's traditional connotation of fruition and completion provided a stark contrast that left a strong impression on the readers. Autumn, instead of symbolizing a prosperous or fulfilling end, ironically underscored the futility of Carla's attempt at freedom and happiness. This metaphorical use of the season challenged the expected and enhanced the narrative's emotional depth, emphasizing the disappointment and the cyclical nature of Carla's struggle. In both escapes, Carla's envisioned life was drastically different from the reality she found herself in, which aligned perfectly with this metaphor. This metaphor underscored the notion that Carla's pursuit of happiness and fulfillment, much like an unfruitful harvest in autumn, had displaced with the reality. It captured the essence of her disillusionment and the perpetual cycle of seeking a life that remained out of reach.

Grammatical and Lexical Scheme In addition to metaphor, *Munro* skillfully employs parallel that makes this short story endlessly memorable, enhancing the artistic value of the work. Besides the Clarks and the Jamiesons, the story's protagonist includes a little goat named Flora. Flora played a significant symbolic role in the story. Her destiny and experience were parallel with Carla. Carla led a "goat's" life. The connection between the goat Flora and Carla was evident, symbolizing Carla's alter ego. However, the author, *Munro*, did not want to overuse this symbol but instead used it to create an open-ended conclusion for the story. Flora's first disappearance could be seen as symbolizing Carla's journey to freedom, but Flora's second disappearance was intriguing, leading readers to wonder if Carla's future was equally uncertain.

Flora's growth process complemented Carla's changes. Initially, Flora was like Clark's pet, always following him around. However, as she grew up, Flora became closer to Carla. Clark's interpretation of Flora's disappearance as going out to find herself a mate symbolized Carla's first escape from her parents' home for love. The growing closeness between Flora and Carla after Flora had grown up also laid the groundwork for Carla's second escape—Flora's disappearance filled Carla with fear and unease about her marital relationship.

On the night of Carla's escape, when Clark went to find Sylvia, Flora suddenly reappeared. Their conversation seemed not to be about the goat but about Carla—the goat's temperament was unpredictable, seemingly gentle but actually rebellious. At the end of the story, Carla received a letter from Sylvia and found what appeared to be Flora's body but burned the letter and never went to the area with the bare tree again. *Munro* hinted at Flora's death here, which also implied that Carla's self and desires had been killed, and her imagination no longer existed.

Phonological Scheme By choosing synonyms with slight differences in connotation, *Munro* also aligns the reader's emotional response with the subtleties of Carla's experiences, thus

emphasizing the theme of escape in the narrative.

*“Last night she slept in a feather bed.
With a silken quilt for cover
Tonight she'll sleep on the cold hard ground—
Besides her gypsy lo-ov-ver[4].”*

This was a song often hummed by Carla’s mother in the original text. In English poetry, common rhyming phenomena can be divided into different types such as alliteration, assonance, and consonance, based on the repetition of phonemes within words. Consonance, as the name suggests, refers to the repetition of consonant sounds at the end of words. To reflect the characteristics and rhythm of the song, *Munro* used end rhyme and alternating rhyme schemes to achieve the purpose of phonetic deviation. The final word “bed” in the first line and the final word “ground” in the third line rhymed with the same consonant sound /d/; the final word “cover” in the second line and the final word “lover” in the fourth line rhymed with the same vowel sound /ər/. This endowed the sentences with a clear musical beat and rhythm, enhancing the rhythmic sense and fluency of the language.

Alice Munro once said that a story is more like a house rather than a road to follow. Readers can go inside and stay there for a while, wandering back and forth and settling where you like and discovering how the room and corridors relate to each other, how the world outside is altered by being viewed from these windows. This wonderful short story “Runaway” is indeed like a house that appears simple from the outside but is intricately designed on the inside. It has so many windows, each offering a different view, and every turn of the staircase is unique. As readers, we can’t possibly catalog all the discoveries to be made in this house, but we can freely wander through, feeling the flickers of hope and imagination, and the reality that falls away within it.

5. Conclusion

“Runaway” narrates a simple yet intriguing story, devoid of tears, songs, gentle persuasion, or soul-stirring revelations. However, through seemingly casual shifts in perspective, changes in rhythm, and ostensibly unintentional descriptions, *Munro* imbues an ordinary tale with infinite artistic depth and rhythmic beauty. All of this touches the readers’ senses and souls, thereby elevating the themes and core of the novel. This article employs theories of narratology and stylistic analysis of literature to conduct a detailed analysis of “Runaway”, primarily focusing on the three main characters across two families—Carla, Sylvia, and Clark—and exploring the displacement between their imaginations and reality. The struggles and disillusionment of Carla, Sylvia’s feelings about marriage and her changing emotions towards Carla, as well as Clark’s relationship with Carla, are all elaborately discussed. We can appreciate how *Munro* skillfully weaves an invisible web within this short story, drawing readers in to linger and explore further. “Runaway” serves as a gateway into *Munro*’s artistic world, allowing us a glimpse of her understated and cool description and striding rhythm, truly experiencing the effect of “hearing thunder in a silent place.”

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