

Simultaneity as narrative strategy: Margaret Laurence's *The Diviners*

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Abstract

Margaret Laurence is one of the best Canadian Fiction writers. Her novels are famous for portraying women characters with psychological insight. The inner confrontation takes place inside women has been expressed by her through interior monologues and recollection of memory. She used images to symbolise the psychic status of women. She stands unique in narrating the story of women with different view. Margaret Laurence's *The Diviners* is one such narrative. The protagonist, Morag Gunn is a writer. She can be called a symbol of courage and determination. Morag Gunn has created her identity as a writer by encountering many challenges. A narrative that is fixed in the present but the protagonist is seeing back at her life, beginning from a time before she was born and leading up to the present. Again the past and present are spread out in this story. This Paper likes to propel the unique technique adopted by the writers to make her community to be considered as unique in future.

Keywords: Simultaneity, memory, snap shots

Introduction

The Diviners is one of novels of the Manawaka Cycle. Manawaka is an imaginary home town created by Margaret Laurence where she recollected the memory of the past. She had a chance to recollect the picture of her home land when she was at England with her husband in 1962. There are four novels and one collection of short story is written under the title Manawaka series and the *The Diviners* is the last of this series. Simultaneity is a tool which is adopted by the writer to tell the story of her imagination. Narrative technique differs from writer to writer. Margaret Laurence narration is one such which makes her different from other feminist modernists.

The Diviners

Morag Gunn is a forty-seven year old writer. She is the leading character of the novel *The Diviners*. Through Morag Gunn Laurence like to change the archetypal hero of modernist narrative, through her feminist modernist narration. In the novel her heroine changes the society, and become the representative of the women. After her parents died of poliomyelitis, Morag was left parentless at her young age and brought up in the small Manitoba town of Manawaka by Christie Logan, the hated town scavenger, and his gradually stout and lazy wife, Prin. They do not have much to give, but Prin is caring and Christie does provide Morag a rich store of tales of a (probably imaginary) Scottish hero, Piper Gunn. When She grows up she is strong-minded to leave Manawaka and to put pen to paper, Morag reaches the provincial university, where she was in love with Brooke Skelton and marries him. He is a good-looking Professor, fifteen years older to her. She precedes her life in Toronto, and drops reluctantly into the life of a Professor's wife. Brooke does not need children, and he supports her efforts to write. Afterwards facing ample tussle, Morag finalizes and issues her first novel. Writing for local, College, and Vancouver newspapers increases Morag's feelings about the Metis, the Gersons, and others. She engraved her stories, revised to make stories of

family history for her daughter, Pique. Her craving lead to create her a spirit of liberation makes her to leave her husband. Morag by chance meets Jules Tonnerre, a half-breed (Metis) who was her first lover in Manawaka. When Brooke responds derisively to her friend, Morag goes with Jules and devotes the night making love with him, an act which gets her marital life to a conclusion. She halts for a while with Jules but sees that he is a wanderer. Morag Gunn has bought a farm in rural Ontario, where she tries to inscribe a new novel. The detection of certain photos of her as a small child groups off a sequence of memories.

Strategy for Narration

Simultaneity is an important form of modernist feminist strategy that has been adopted by Margaret Laurence in her novel. She has made use of the so called memory bank movie as a major narrative strategy, in order to show feminist modernist strategy of simultaneity. Simultaneity represents the attitude of the self internally and externally. Helene Cixous says in *The Laugh of Medusa* "As subject for history, woman always occurs simultaneously in several places. Personal history blends together with the history of a woman, as well as national and world history" (882). This simultaneity occurs every woman's life without acknowledging the differences. A woman who sees herself in the story imagines the society of women who experience same problem. It is a kind of connecting the individual to individual and society to the society.

The simultaneity appears in the individual while connecting the memory and imagination. Simultaneity in narration is very important as Morag Gunn is a writer who connects one woman to another and society of women to another society. This feminist strategy paves the way for connecting people beyond boundaries and to discover themselves. This type of realization made them to stand unique. One aspect of moving beyond boundaries knows the multiplicity of presence. Knowledge is not simply limited in the present moment, but in

all the complicated connections that form this moment. Morag states of this main part as a personification of the present and past selves, as several, associated lives:

We think there is one planet called Earth, but there are thousands, even millions, like a snake shedding its skin every *so* often but with all the old skins still bunched around it. You live inside the creature for quite a while, so it comes as a shock to find you're living now in one of the husked-off skins, and sometimes you can touch and know about the creature as it is now and sometimes you can't.(188)

She is one of the individuals at the centre of these survives, but she cannot choose whether she desires to leave her other skins left as remnants, as indication to others of her existing or whether she needs to retain them close, as proof to herself that she has survived. This knowledge is a modernist state, for she is clumsily associated to the past while indecisively proactive about her place in the present and future. When Morag considers about the past, she ruminates about it as "Another shed skin of another me" (1 88).

Pique, a bearing sign

Morag Gunn's daughter Pique plays an important role in the novel. She is the one who has identity of a metis girl. She challenges and tries to transform the existing story of the dominated world through her individual multiple layered stories in order to make her community to think beyond their circle. Pique has made Morag to get in to her story where ever she goes she told the story of Morag and her travels makes Morag to remember her past. The fiction advances by the dual performances of Pique and Morag Gunn. When Pique leaves, Morag Gunn remembers her leaving in the past where she recollects her past and makes the story to continue. So pique lays an important role throughout the novel who stimulates Morag Gunn to recollect her memory. Pique decides and signifies her mother's attitude though she doesn't primarily appeared in the novel.

Snap shots

Another narrative strategy which was adopted by Margaret Laurence is narrating the story through Snap shots. Robert Kroetsch in his article *Beyond Nationalism: A Prologue*.

Snapshot as a mocking of authority because it depends on an amateur to provide proof, and it relies on memory to analyze this novice evidence: "The snapshot suggests the local it suggests the magic of recovery, the metaphysics of time stopped, the validation of art by art denied. And it admits, through its lack of intentionality, that even in knowing we cannot know".(69)

Snapshot are representatives of individual and collective history. Thus the writer Morag Gunn took those images and continues the narration of her past. She looks at the photograph where she could see the paradox of life and death revealing and hiding, future and past, mother and child and each photo carries her to the next stage and ultimately the development of the fiction narrated by Margaret Laurence. Morag Gunn thus finds her solution through writing

Conclusion

A Manawaka cycle, a collection of four novels aims to broadcast the voice of the unheard, both the individual and the society through highly commendable narrative technique. The story of the writer and her struggle in establishing identity narrated through the movement of her daughter and through the recollection of her memory. Margaret Laurence seems not only the literary fore mother of Canada but for the entire community of women.

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