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Abstract

According to *The Cambridge Companion to Canadian Literature*, Margaret Laurence's Manawaka cycle "presents a history of the Canadian West in the feminine" (Howells 199), due to the famous white female protagonists. Nevertheless, this article brings to the fore the Métis women present in her prairie books.

Paraphrasing Daniel Francis's theory, the Métis should no longer be stereotyped and perceived as a "White man's fantasy" (5), but accepted as simply distinct. Laurence allows various voices to be articulated within her texts and I have undertaken the role to comment on how the voice of the marginal, "the other," makes itself heard throughout her books.

The aim of this analysis is to speak about the oppression and the double (or triple) colonisation of the non-white women, depicted as secondary characters or not commonly analysed in racial terms.

Résumé

D'après le *Cambridge Companion to Canadian Literature*, le cycle Manawaka de Margaret Laurence « présente une histoire du Ouest Canadien au féminin » (Howells 199), grâce à ses protagonistes féminines blanches. Cependant, cet article met en évidence les femmes Métisses présentes dans les livres de prairie.

En paraphrasant la théorie de Daniel Francis, les Métis ne devraient plus être stéréotypés et perçus comme « la fantaisie de l'homme blanc » (5), mais acceptés tout simplement comme distincts. Laurence permet à des voix variées d'être articulées dans ses textes et j'ai pris le rôle de commenter la manière dont la voix du marginal, « l'autre », se fait entendre partout dans ses livres.

Le but de cette analyse est de parler de l'oppression et de la double colonisation des femmes non-blanches, décrites comme des personnages secondaires ou pas habituellement analysées, d'après la communauté dont elles font partie.

According to *The Cambridge Companion to Canadian Literature*, Margaret Laurence's Manawaka cycle (1964–1974) "presents a history of the Canadian West in the feminine" (Howells 199). Probably unexpectedly, this paper will not analyze the five famous white heroines depicted by the author in her four novels and the short-story collection set in the prairie: Hagar, Rachel, Stacey, Vanessa or Morag, respectively. My analysis will bring to the fore other female fictional figures, either secondary characters or not commonly analysed in racial terms. Focusing generally on the presence of the Métis in Laurence's imaginary prairie town, Manawaka, and particularly on the Métis women, this paper depicts the oppression and the double (or triple) colonisation of the non-white women. The aim is to demonstrate that as early as 1964

(when the first book of the cycle, ***The Stone Angel,*** was published), the writer was already imagining a democratic and diverse society where all minority groups were equally represented and various voices were articulated.

From my perspective, Laurence's choice to depict a world she was not connected to, either racially, or in terms of class is one of the most intriguing aspects of her writing. Thus, approaching the topic from general to particular, I will analyse the fictional threads that describe the dichotomies between clashing worlds in the prairie, white versus Métis, and the perception of the Métis women by white settlers at personal, but mainly at collective level.

The first question that might need a researched answer is the reason why Laurence chose to populate her prairie town with Métis characters. There are two essential moments that Lyall Powers draws our attention to, which might have triggered the author's interest in the First Peoples (including the First Nations, Inuit and Métis) in the prairie. The Indigenous were not present in Laurence's life in Neepawa but a certain Métis hockey player, Pate Chaboyer, had an influence at the time probably due to his fame and the popularity of the game. Unfortunately, not giving further details, Powers simply mentions Pate, stating that his image "rumbles like a thunderclap through the Manawaka fiction of Margaret Laurence" (Powers 18). Secondly, in 1969, Laurence's collaboration with Jim Bacque on recording the life of Duke Redbird, an Indian, was a project which marked "a resurgence of Margaret's interest in the First Nations Canadians, including the Métis" (Powers 354). By 1969, the Métis family, the Tonnerres, had already been present in the social organisation of Manawaka, briefly mentioned but still part of this miscellaneous world. Powers also remarks that Laurence had already demonstrated her interest in Louis Riel, the Métis leader, comparing him with the Somali leader Mahammed 'Abdille Hasan in "The Poem and the Spear" (1965, to be published later on in ***Heart of a Stranger***). It seemed that a more profound and complete Métis portrait was already in her mind, ready to emerge, and ***The Diviners*** was about to become its lasting proof. However, in an interview with Michel Fabre, the author confessed that

> ... in ***The Stone Angel*** ... [t]here is some sense of the Tonnerre family being the outcasts and, of course, I did not think at all of it coming into all my Canadian novels, but it does. Apparently I felt quite haunted. I never really knew any family exactly like that, but I apparently was not satisfied until I wrote a more complete story about it in ***The Diviners***. (Fabre 201)

My approach remains centred on the minor characters, in spite of the lack of proper criticism of the encounters described by Laurence between the white and the Métis. The same absence can be noticed of representations of the Métis in general in either Canadian literature or criticism. Emma LaRoque's articles on the Métis and Maria Campbell's novel, ***Halfbreed***, reiterate the confusion that is generally made between Indians and Métis or between Métis of different origins. Therefore, in order to discover those images of the racialized other that could be linked to Laurence's work and make up for this need of proper differentiation, we will sometimes have to make do with criticism on Indian people as if it also included the Métis, forcibly persisting in the ambiguity.

The most relevant assertion to the present discussion is the fact that the author does not either distinguish between Métis and Indians, considering all of them the true owners of the land, traditional beneficiaries of its fruits but never its possessors in the European way:

> ... the Métis, who were once the prairie horselords and who gradually were dispossessed of the lands which they and their Indian brothers had lived on and from and with, although not owned, for no man could own the land– the land was God's. Little did they know the concepts of the incoming European culture. They learned, however, in sorrow and pain. (Laurence, "Ivory" 25)

Laurence hints here at one of the painful moments in the history of the Métis in the prairies, Louis Riel's rebellion, without ignoring the connections with the much more numerous Indian communities. The historical background of the conflict was related to the property of the land. The area around Hudson Bay, called Rupert's Land, and the bay itself were exploited by the Hudson Bay Company, a right granted by King Charles II in 1670 by a royal charter. By 1869, the area of present day Winnipeg was populated by both Indians and Métis. In August 1869, without prior notice, the Hudson Bay Company announced they would give up on the region and that they would sell it to the government in Ottawa. The Métis of the Red River Settlement and on the banks of Qu'Appelle had already shown their concern about the future of their titles to the lands and had sent petitions in order to be involved in the transactions. They had not been heard and representatives of the government began to take possession of the land and "to measure and divide parcels of land in the English-style square lots, ignoring the fact that the Métis, long inhabitants of this place, divide the land in the seigneurial way, each lot narrow and having access to the river" (Boyden 22).

In spite of all the warnings that the Métis rights must not be overlooked, Prime Minister Macdonald's government set the date for closing the transaction for 1 December 1869. Even if it might sound like a cliché, extreme situations require extreme measures; therefore, the Métis organized the "Métis National Committee" and adopted a policy of inclusion convincing other communities to fight for their lands. An open conflict erupted and Louis Riel, "the dreamer, the prophet, the spiritual leader" (Laurence, ***Heart*** 227) and his four hundred supporters seized Fort Garry. This led to a sequence of terrible events of what was called The Rebellion of 1885, armed conflicts, deaths and injured people on both parties, an unfair battle between arrows and stones and guns and cannons, which could not have had a happy ending.

The outcome had probably not been anticipated by any of the conflicting parties: Riel was sentenced to death by hanging for high treason, and Gabriel Dumont, his expert in field work, the actual commander of the army, "the huntsman, the man of action, the military leader" (Laurence, ***Heart*** 227), was a run-away until July 1886 when he was given amnesty, but did not return to Canada until 1888.

On a different level, Patricia Morley suggests that the Métis rebellion had a beneficial result, probably the only tangible one, as it made the government much more aware of the necessity of building a connection across the country, the Canadian Pacific Railway, long ignored for lack of finances (Morley 143). It is true that the presence of the Métis continued to be ignored for several more years and that the merits of Louis Riel were only acknowledged in 1992 as a founder of Manitoba and a contributor to the development of the Confederation. However, the fictional and non-fictional testimonies of both Riel and Dumont's actions have contributed to the inclusion of the two heroes in the Canadian mentality, representing symbolically all the minorities of Canada (Woodcock 9), all those who have been marginalized by the white Anglo-Saxon Protestant.

In this context, a clarification of the term "Métis" is necessary. In Emma LaRocque's informed opinion there are still several accepted definitions of the Métis: "half white, half Indian" persons or "halfbreeds," "people who have some combination of both white and Indian ancestry," or "distinct Aboriginal peoples, neither First Nations or [*sic*] Inuit," according to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples 1996 (LaRocque 381). Her further distinctions refer to other very precise differences. At the same time, Alvin Kienetz also differentiates between "Métis proper," mixed-blood people from parental French-speaking, Roman Catholic descendants and Indian women, and "half breeds" whose fathers were mainly of Scottish origins (Kienetz 5).

The title of this paper was inspired by Daniel Francis's book entitled ***The Imaginary Indian: The Image of the Indian in Canadian Culture*** (2004) whose theory on Indians could also be perfectly applied to the Métis. Going back to the classics, Edward Said was arguing that the person who is simply different from "us" can only be defined by a Western Orientalist whose views exclusively have the authority to create images of the Oriental. I believe there cannot be a better comparison than replacing Said's Oriental, Arab, or Semite with Canada's Indian/Métis. The Indian becomes an "***object studied by the Occidental-white***" (Said, 228, emphasis in the original), "the bottom of all 'our' troubles" (286), although such a person does not exist elsewhere than in the imagination of the Occidental who speaks about all kinds of Orientals. Shifting to the North American continent, Daniel Francis states that the Indian is a white man's creation ever since Christopher Columbus thought he had reached the East Indies and had thus named the Natives, "Indians" (Francis 4).

> The Indian began as a White man's mistake, and became a White man's fantasy. Through the prism of White hopes, fears and prejudices, indigenous Americans would be seen to have lost contact with reality and to have become 'Indians'; that is, anything non-Natives wanted them to be. (Francis 5)

But what did Canadians expect of the First Nations? What were they supposed to be like? On the one hand, they represented a point of attraction for what the white people wanted to see, "the Imaginary Indian," stereotyped images massively disseminated by the Hollywood productions and comic books of the 1940s and 1950s. Several prejudiced representations were especially favoured as early as the eighteenth century. One of the images depicted in paintings was the Indian as Noble Savage, half-naked but pensive (for example Benjamin West's paintings ***The Death of General Wolfe*** and ***Penn's Treaty with the Indians*** or Edward Hicks's ***The Peaceable Kingdom***). Other common stereotypes were the face-painted and feathered Chief who was popular as the Cigar Store Indian, or noble Indian princesses (inspired by the Pocahontas history) or the sexually available and immoral woman, the "squaw."

So, the Indians were expected to keep to the historical image that they were associated with, not at all adaptable to the modern world, likely to perish, thus, the theory of "the Vanishing Indian" (Francis 23), but on the other hand, efforts were made for them to be assimilated in the white society, ceasing to be Indians, a distinct racial group.

While Francis paraphrases the American dictum "the only good Indian was a dead Indian" (Francis 59), stating that the Canadian equivalent is "the only good Indians were traditional Indians" (60), Margaret Laurence's exemplifications will attempt to represent individuals and

not stereotypical images, encouraging the change and renewal of the Métis world, allowing her characters, although briefly and sometimes unsuccessfully, to assume professions and statuses within the white people's society which had never before been assigned to them.

Piquette and Valentine Tonnerre

The portrayals of the Tonnerre girls, the two younger sisters of Jules Tonnerre are not as minutely depicted as his and they remain secondary characters. But their presence, or rather their absence, by which I particularly mean Piquette's tragic death, casts a shadow on the image of the "Promised Land" that I am optimistically trying to recover from Laurence's writings.

Piquette and Valentine Tonnerre are cast in the last three books of the cycle, more often being spoken about than speaking themselves, a sign of marginalization on behalf of the whites who commonly perceive the Tonnerres, by mentioning: "People in Manawaka talk about them but don't talk ***to*** them" (Laurence, ***Diviners*** 56, emphasis in the original). Piquette as a little girl is mentioned in ***A Bird in the House*** (1970) in her relation with Vanessa MacLeod and in ***The Diviners*** (1974) as Morag Gunn's classmate. Valentine is depicted as an adult when she meets Stacey MacAindra in ***The Fire-Dwellers*** (1969).

I started from the assumption that the two characters are discriminated because they are Métis and women, but Keith Louise Fulton reminds us that class oppression must also be taken into account in these portraits (Fulton 110), which results in a triple oppression. We could not ignore the opposite perspective, studies of Métis history and culture emphasizing the important roles, "social, economic, and symbolic" (40) played by Métis women, Jennifer Brown suggesting a matriorganization of these communities (39). Their "traditional productivity" (41) and the "semi-autonomous female-headed family units" (42) need to be looked into carefully in order to understand the distinctiveness of the Métis, even if their community was in decay in the 1960s and 1970s.

Within the strict social organization of the Manawaka society, the Métis live far from the sight of the respectable white society, in very poor conditions. In Morag Gunn's words, Piquette and Jules Tonnere, her school mates, belong to "the only family in Manawaka that was less respectable than hers" (Atwood, "Face" 26) and for the garbage collector's little girl, having this term of comparison helps, despite the cruelty implied:

> She's not the worst dressed. Eva is worse … Also, one of the Tonnerre girls, half-breed from the valley, is worse dressed; she's away a lot because of TB in one leg but when she ***is*** at school she looks the worst because her dresses are long-gawky and dirty, and she has a limpwalk. (Laurence, ***Diviners*** 54, emphasis in the original)

Piquette's limping is caused by her suffering from bone tuberculosis. Because of her disease she misses school quite a lot and her actual presence is not constant in Morag's memories from the past.

However, there is one person, probably one single person in Manawaka who does talk ***to*** the Métis, and that is Doctor MacLeod, the father of Vanessa, the narrator of ***A Bird in the House***.

Belonging to another social class, Vanessa had not noticed the existence of the Métis family until the summer her father decided to take Piquette on holiday with his own family, in order to help the Métis girl recover from her illness. At school, the only place where Morag, Vanessa and Piquette could actually meet, she was just "a vaguely embarrassing presence" (Laurence, *Bird* 109). When the MacLeods and Piquette go to their summer cottage, Vanessa acknowledges the Métis girl's presence for the first time and becomes interested in her for what she imagines Piquette should be like and not for what she really is, illustrating the stereotype of the "Imaginary Indian":

> Unlikely as it may seem, I had only just realized that the Tonnerre family, whom I had always heard called half-breeds, were actually Indians, or as near as made no difference. … my new awareness that Piquette sprang from the people of Big Bear and Poundmaker, of Tecumseh, of the Iroquois who had eaten Father Brebeuf's heart – all this gave her an instant attraction in my eyes. … It seemed to me that Piquette must be in some way a daughter of the forest, a kind of junior prophetess of the wilds, who might impart to me, if I took the right approach, some of the secrets which she undoubtedly knew… (Laurence, *Bird* 112)

Vanessa's attempt to discover the hidden secrets that Piquette possessed fails due to the "misunderstanding … misperception … stereotypes … misrepresentation" (LaRocque 381) of the Métis in the Canadian society of the time. In the narrator's words, "[i]t became increasingly obvious that as an Indian, Piquette was a dead loss" (Laurence, *Bird* 114). From the white girl's perspective and paraphrasing Said, the crime was that the Métis was a Métis, thus behaving like one, not allowed however, to deviate from "what were considered the norms of" (Said 39) Métis conduct, norms imposed by the white people and not by the Métis themselves.

As a young woman, Piquette "attempts to break out of the isolation imposed on the Tonnerres by white society" (Monkman 59) and marries a guy from Winnipeg, "an English fella … a very tall guy … blond wavy hair … handsome [with] this real classy name" (Laurence, *Bird* 117). Vanessa's mature voice comments that there was "a terrifying hope" when Piquette defiantly informed her about her future plans, as the Métis woman was forced to make choices that she would not have made under different circumstances (117). According to Jules who also gives these details to Morag, the husband is "a first-rate no-good," Jules hoping his sister would leave him first, for her own good (Laurence, *Diviners* 110). This time, similar to the white women, Piquette hopes that marriage and moving to the city will improve her living conditions and that she will at least leave behind the status of poor class, as the signs of a non-white race could not be erased. When the relationship fails, the young woman's only option is to return to Manawaka, with two babies, to live again with her family in the shacks in the valley, resuming the traditional roles of daughter and older sister, plus the one of mother. With no education and no prospects for the future, Piquette starts drinking the home brew the Tonnerres make, even getting in trouble with the officials "drunk and disorderly, of course" (Laurence, *Bird* 118). This part of the story told by Mrs MacLeod on Vanessa's return from her first year of college is based on hearsay, the only piece of genuine information being the way Piquette looked: "She'd put on an awful lot of weight, and she looked a mess … a real slattern, dressed any old how" (118).

But the one who witnesses the tragic end of Piquette and of her two children is Morag Gunn, particularly due to her official position of reporter for the local newspaper, ***Manawaka Banner***. As Morag had known about Piquette's marriage from Jules, when the Métis woman returned to the prairie town, although the two of them did not talk, Morag could not stop noticing her. ***The Diviners*** confirms the physical decay and details the cause of the woman's arrest: "for outrageously shrieking her pain aloud in public places, usually in the form of obscene insults to whoever happens to be handiest" (128). The choice of words is extremely relevant here, as there is "pain" implied which needs to be shared, connecting the daughter to what Lazarus, her father, had done before.

It was a winter day when Piquette and her kids perished in the fire. The pipes of the wood stove were very old and caught fire when no one else was at home. Piquette was probably drunk on "red biddy" and was not able to save either herself or the kids. Morag's presence at the scene is terrible, as there is no "genuine news story" (128) to be written in the newspaper. There is simply human drama, pain and death which cannot be even soothed by Morag's article she writes for the ***Banner***. Morag makes references to the Métis revolt in 1885, noting that Piquette was the granddaughter of one of Riel's supporters, but the editor of the newspaper rejects this part of her article, rejecting the heroic in the Métis as the white community believed they had fought on the wrong side (130).

Piquette's younger sister, Valentine, also leaves Manawaka and meets Stacey Cameron MacAindra, another Manawakan, in Vancouver some years later. The first impression and the physical aspect are again decisive:

> Coming towards her is a woman whose black hair has been upfrizzed until it resembles the nest of some large wild bird. Her dark eyes and her features are prairie Indian but not entirely. Her skin, or what can be seen of it under the thick crust of make-up, is a pale brown. Her mouth has been lipsticked into a wide bizarre cupid's bow. She is wearing a smeared hem-drooping mauve silkish dress which reveals her body's blunt thickness, the once-high breasts that are dugs now. (Laurence, ***Fire*** 239)

Valentine retells the death of her sister and her nephews, reminding Stacey of the same expression used to describe the Métis that Morag had also thought of when going to the valley, namely ***Bois Brûlés*** (Laurence, ***Fire*** 240; Laurence, ***Diviners*** 129). It is Leslie Monkman who considers that the Tonnerres were affected by the same "insularity and ignorance" that Stacey MacAindra herself, isolated in the big city, feels the burden of (Monkman 61), thus uniting the destinies of all the former female Manawakans, white or non-white.

When the two women meet accidentally, Valentine also reveals to Stacey the true identity of Mac's manager, Thor Thorlakson, the former Vernon Winkler, balancing the life of the MacAindras, almost terrorized by this company director. It has been interpreted that Vernon had abused her back in their teenage years "he took me[Val] into the bushes way back when he was in high school," or that Valentine worked as a prostitute in Vancouver as she indirectly suggests this when referring to Thor and "touching him for a few bucks" (Laurence, ***Fire*** 243). If we consider Thor's sudden change of plans, we can interpret Val's words as successful blackmail that determines Thor to move to Montreal, thus having a beneficial role in the white

family's destiny. At the end of their conversation, Val ambiguously talks about one last trip she will take, Stacey wrongly assuming it can be either heroin, or booze or sickness (Laurence, ***Fire*** 242) which will end Val's life. In ***The Diviners***, when visiting Morag and Pique, Jules mentions that his sister is sick and that she does not accept medical care (278).

However, the interactions between the Métis and the white people mark moments of truth. Throughout their lives, the Métis have stood for "living reminder[s] of the ravages of white civilization" (Monkman 61), signalling that it is the white society that has to be blamed for the terrible consequences that these marginalized people have to suffer. Consequently, Stacey does not stay too long in the company of Valentine because she cannot cope with all the questions that need to be asked and answered and she is "relieved" to go home to her kids (Laurence, ***Fire*** 244), as "ultimately the spectacle of Indian-as-victim embarrasses her" (Atwood, ***Survival*** 98). For Vanessa the incomprehensible presence of Piquette at their summer cottage remains "a reproach and a mystery" (Laurence, ***Bird*** 115), deepened by the silence of death and the look in her eyes (119).

The misrepresentations of the Native Peoples in general by Manawakans can be perceived even beyond the characters' level. Years later, when returning to the summer cottage where she used to spend her holidays as a child, Vanessa discovers an unknown place:

> The small pier which my father had built was gone, and in its place there was a large and solid pier built by the government, for Galloping Mountain was now a national park, and Diamond Lake had been re-named Lake Wapakata, for it was felt that an Indian name would have a greater appeal to tourists. (Laurence, ***Bird*** 119)

We cannot overlook this white/Métis reversed mirroring that Laurence captures here. On the one hand, it was stated that "it is not 'progress' nor change nor any technological developments per se that the Métis have feared, [but] it is the choicelessness that has always come with colonization" (LaRoque 392). But this time, the ones who reject "progress" are the white people, Laurence mocking their return to so-called Indian roots in changing the name of the lake. Thus, the author exemplifies a different biased image of the Natives, that is, the Indian as an (exotic) commodity, with commercial potential.

Pique Tonnerre Gunn

Nevertheless, the main reason in favour of what I consider to be the novel's optimistic perspective is that Morag and Jules's daughter, Pique Tonnerre Gunn is a representative of two races, two backgrounds, trying to be a part of both, aware of her Métis ancestry, but raised and educated by her white mother with Scottish roots. Pique stands for the future, in her attempt to accept her racial condition and also in trying to come to terms with herself. But this is not achieved without effort and suffering, as Pique's search for identity implies leaving school, running away from home, violence, the police, and a mental hospital.

The girl's first years of life run smoothly, under her mother's protection. However, Morag admits she did not consider any future difficulties considering her daughter's race, when

choosing to have her (Laurence, ***Diviners*** 81). When Pique was born, Morag wanted to see her instantly, similar to Laurence's own reaction when she gave birth to her son in Accra, terrified to have their babies mixed up with others. The visible signs of a different race are given by her "slightly slanted eyes" and her "pinkish tan" (250) skin, which surprise even Morag's friends who do not know yet who the father is.

Pique is initially portrayed as part of her mother's Memorybank Movies or as Snapshots which present her at the age of one, at three and a half, at four, while at five and fifteen when she meets her father she actively takes part in the action and the conversations. As Helen Buss suggests the daughter's first "round-trip quest" which opens the novel determines the mother's journey into the past and her "psychological equivalent" of the quest (Buss 68).

The distinctive signs of the Métis race are obvious even for the little girl who simply tells her father when she first sees him, "I know who you are" (Laurence, ***Diviners*** 277). Pique is familiar with and needs to hear the stories of both her ancestors, those of Christie Logan (her grandfather) and of her father, and Morag combines the versions of the stories, telling her daughter both the story of Piper Gunn and that of Lazarus Tonnerre.

At a certain moment, the young woman starts wearing braids, considered suitable for a "part-Indian" as she calls herself, but she realizes "it does have to be either/or" as she does not know where she belongs exactly (287). But she is a double dilemma: besides overcoming the inner struggles, being accepted by the society also turns into a battlefield, having to fight back people's prejudices. When Pique first runs away from home, she ends up in a mental hospital in Toronto, the sight of her mother causing an almost violent reaction of rejection. It is difficult to explain the causes which led to this, but afterwards Pique states she wants "to get her head together … by herself" (81), finding an answer to her mixed feeling towards her mother and trying to get more of the other side (287), meaning her Métis ancestry.

The second trip away from home takes Pique to Manawaka, her parents' hometown, which her mother had left without looking back. It seems that Manitoba in general has not changed much and a similar prairie town whose name Pique does not even remember is the setting of a violent scene where the young woman is in danger. Pique reports the incident to Morag on the phone, labelling the participants and the circumstances in objective terms. The oppressors are white and male, and presumably middle class, re-enacting the double discrimination of the non-white women: "it was this bunch of, like, you know, kind of middle-aged guys, pretty jowly and obviously the local businessmen or something" (87). The men pass by Pique who was walking and start throwing empty beer bottles at her. They first hit her guitar and then one of them manages to wound her, her arm bleeding heavily which scares them. Asking for help, at a house in the area, the owners call the police who take her to the station and give her a warning, in spite of Pique's attempts to explain what had really happened. The young woman confesses to her mother she had the feeling that the attackers would have wanted her dead, sensing an omnipresent anger that she later on discusses with Morag face to face. It is not only the incident with those men, but Pique also hints at some other places, other people whose anger scared her:

> They think they are sweet reasonableness, and it's ***you*** that's in the wrong, just by being, and not being like them, or looking like them, or wanting their kind of life. It's the anger you can feel, even

> if they don't lay a hand on you. It's, like – well, visible. You can see and taste and smell it. (Laurence, *Diviners* 191, emphasis in the original)

Morag confirms this terrible feeling that was also present in Manawaka when she was a girl, under different circumstances, and in another Memorybank Movie, Morag remembers a previous discussion with her daughter about the far greater implications of her visible racial difference. Although Morag was also discriminated as a girl mainly on grounds of her adoptive family's status, she cannot fully comprehend Pique's inner suffering, to which she had also contributed by means of the debates on her literary work, the reception of Morag's writing being as problematic as Laurence's:

> What do you know of it? You've never been called a dirty half-breed. You've never had somebody tell you your mother was crazy because she lived out here alone and wrote dirty books and had kooky people coming out from the city to visit. (Laurence, *Diviners* 343)

Retrospectively, Morag realizes that imperial London had welcomed them in a better way, as the primary school that Pique had attended there was populated by other visible minorities, from the empire's former colonies in Pakistan, Africa and West India, in addition some other parents being writers. She was considered there "normal and accepted, nothing unusual" (344). Back to Canada, in a different small town where they bought a house, the prairie prejudices are reiterated and Canadians are less willing to accept the Indians and the Métis they have displaced and dispossessed than the Londoners, and their former colonized peoples who willingly moved to the centre, from the margins of the empire.

In my opinion, what defines Pique best is following in her father's footsteps, consciously and maturely, in spite of the fact he was not next to her during her formation as an individual. Listening to his songs, accumulating them and employing her own creativity in order to compose her song, all these mark the young woman's greatest move towards self-knowledge and self-acceptance. Pique connects musically to her father the moment she hears his songs for the first time at the age of five, but when Jules visits them again ten years later, the girl has already started taking guitar lessons and the impact is profound and "nothing needs to be spoken" (Laurence, *Diviners* 348). Pique listens to the songs of her ancestors, finds out about the tragic death of some of them and cries, but has to listen to Jules's justification: "'Too many have died,' he says. 'Too many, before it was time. I don't aim to be one of them. And I don't aim for you to be, neither'" (351).

But in spite of all these aspects, the novel closes hopefully with Pique's departure to Galloping Mountain where her uncle Jacques lives and with a direct proof of the talent inherited from her father, her own ballad "which assert[s] her heritage and identity" (Pifer 150): "The valley and the mountain hold my name" (Laurence, *Diviners* 382).

Concluding my arguments, maybe the image of "the other" is not as optimistic as I wanted it to be, but realistic in Laurentian terms. We have to acknowledge that Margaret Laurence's contact with the other races was direct, as part of her stay in Africa or her own childhood in the prairie. What is differently pictured in Laurence's writing is the fact that she grasps these worlds coexisting and that her characters also come to know "the other" next to them,

by means of direct observation, co-habitation and not from the researcher's position who comes back to his own civilized and educated Occident to deliver a speech on the far away Oriental.

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