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## Wounds That Speak: Trauma, Memory, and Recovery in Margaret Laurence's *The Diviners*

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**Abstract:** This article looks at Margaret Laurence's novel *The Diviners* through the prism of trauma theory and looks at the broken mind of the main character, Morag Gunn. The goal of this study is to look into how Laurence uses story structure, memory, and identity building to talk about trauma. The paper uses ideas by Judith Herman, Cathy Caruth, and Dominick LaCapra. It says that the novel is a therapeutic story in which being a mother, writing, and telling stories all help people deal with and get over psychological, social, and cultural trauma. The book says this.

**Keywords:** Identity, memory, trauma, and resistance

### I. Introduction:

Published in 1974, *The Diviners* is the last novel in Margaret Laurence's famous Manawaka series and her most ambitious work. The book is about Canadian novelist Morag Gunn as she thinks about her past, deals with her present, and tries to make sure that she and her daughter have a meaningful future. It is both personal and political, poetic and broken. *The Diviners* is easy to analyze because of its deep psychological insights and narrative style, which are closely tied to trauma theory. Laurence's writing has a circular, non-linear style that is similar to how a traumatic memory works. The story shows how trauma stays in the body and mind, shapes who we are, and eventually shows up in art through Morag.

This paper looks at *The Diviners* through the lens of trauma studies. It uses Judith Herman's recovery model, Dominick LaCapra's distinction between acting out and working through, and Cathy Caruth's ideas of belatedness and the unspeakability of trauma as examples. It says that Laurence writes a trauma-informed story where identity is always changing, time is cyclical, and memory is broken apart. The study looks at Morag's early experiences of sexual and social trauma as an adult, her early traumas of loss and being left out as a child, and her eventual path to recovery via storytelling and maternal agency.

### II. Traumatic beginnings: becoming an orphan and being displaced socially

Morag Gunn's life begins off in a mess. Morag's parents die when she is five years old, making her an orphan. A working-class couple named Christie and Prin Logan raise her in the little prairie town of Manawaka. Even though Christie is loving and a little strange, Morag's place in the Logan home is stressful. People talk about her behind her back and make fun of her because she is a "charity case." She grew up in a world where people were excluded and discriminated against because of their class.

Trauma theorist Judith Herman says that "chronic trauma responses, including disrupted attachment patterns and difficulties in identity formation," start in early childhood, especially when there is loss and neglect (Herman 51). Morag's early years were full of these kinds of problems. The bigger Manawaka community doesn't accept her, and she doesn't really belong to the Logan family. Her mother was a schoolteacher who died, and her father is a garbage collector's assistant. She is in a liminal state where she is cared for but never completely embraced.

The fact that her biological parents are not around has left her with a constant need to belong and emotional gaps. Christie's stories and a picture are all she has left of her mother. Cathy Caruth says that trauma often doesn't show up directly, but instead comes back through silences and gaps (Caruth 4). Laurence's writing shows this state: Morag's memories are not full stories, but rather little flashes that she calls "memorybank movies." These cinematic techniques are the main metaphor for involuntary memory, which is a key part of how people react to a traumatic event.

### III. Trauma Recurrence and Broken Storytelling

Laurence's structural choices in *The Diviners* back up the psychological truth of trauma. The story doesn't go in a straight line; it goes back and forth between the present and the past. Caruth calls the "belatedness" of trauma the way it comes back after it happens, often through flashbacks or involuntary memories. This temporal disjunction is a formal representation of it. Morag's story is told in bits and pieces, with repeats and digressions, instead than in a straight line of events. These "memorybank movies," which are often triggered by everyday situations, reveal how trauma may come out of nowhere. A glass of water on a table brings back memories of her mother's burial, which she has been trying to forget for a long time. Dori Laub calls these kinds of events "the latency of trauma," which means that the traumatic event isn't fully recognized at the moment but subsequently haunts the survivor (Laub 57).

The story's pieces also show Morag's fractured identity. She is a mother, a writer, and a social outcast. She used to be in love with someone. Each job has its own set of challenges and requirements. Laurence shows these parts of Morag's identity as malleable and shifting responses to trauma instead of as fixed categories. LaCapra calls this state "post-traumatic subjectivity," and it shows up in this instability because the self is stuck between acting out (repeating trauma) and working through (consciously dealing with trauma).

### IV. Gender-Based Betrayal, Sexuality, and Trauma

Morag's trauma is mostly caused by the violence and betrayal she has experienced because of her gender. These are also some of the most emotional parts of her trauma. She feels confused, pressured, and embarrassed throughout her first sexual experiences. During her marriage to the distant and controlling academic Brooke Skelton, she is still silenced by patriarchy. Brooke makes light of her smarts, undermines her job, and takes charge of both her personal and professional lives. Herman's research shows that "interpersonal violations in intimate relationships, especially those shaped by power and control," are often what induce trauma in women (Herman 104). Morag takes a brave step to get her freedom back after her marriage makes her feel less free. She leaves with her daughter Pique.

Later, we learn that her relationship with Métis singer and cultural outsider Jules Tonnerre is a delicate mix of love, cultural trauma, and abandonment. Even though they are very close and love each other, their relationship has also been affected by racism and colonialism. Jules can't stay since his identity is bound to the road, to song, and to a history of moving around. Even though he meant to go, his absence brings back memories of Morag's unstable and abandoned youth. But Jules's leaving is a reaffirmation of uniqueness, not a betrayal, unlike Brooke's emotional violence. Laurence doesn't judge him; instead, he shows that both characters are affected by things in their own lives and in their culture that they can't control. Even though their breakup is sad, it isn't a terrible event for Morag; instead, it helps her reassert her identity as a single mother and independent woman.

### V. Writing and remembering as ways to stay alive

Throughout *The Diviners*, writing becomes Morag's main way to deal with and change her trauma. Her way of making art is both reconstructive and cathartic. She writes to give a voice to things that have been silenced, to tell her story in a new way, and to make sense of the past. Writing becomes a form of therapy this way, which supports Herman's argument that "the reconstruction of the trauma story" is an important aspect of healing from trauma (Herman 175).

*The Diviners*, Morag's book within a book, is a meta-textual look back at her travels. She swings from acting out, which is when she unintentionally relives her trauma, to working through, which is when she writes about her experiences to connect with her sadness. LaCapra calls this the change from "traumatic repetition to ethical remembrance" (LaCapra 89).

Morag's work is important because it lets her examine the common stories about gender, class, and nationality. Because she is a Canadian woman writer, she is left out of a literary tradition that is mostly run by men. Her stories bring women's lives back into the light, especially those of Indigenous characters like Jules and his family and working-class women like Prin Logan. Laurence uses the novel as a political act to show that storytelling may be a method to fight culture.

## VI. Motherhood and the Healing of Generations

The book's redemptive arc is based on Morag's relationship with her daughter Pique. In *The Diviners*, pain connects people from different generations, even if it often keeps survivors apart. Morag's decision to raise Pique on her own, even though it was hard for her financially and socially, shows that she has a lot of power. Their relationship is getting better, even if they don't always agree. Morag is determined to stay away from the calm and emotional distance that marked her own early years. She is honest with Pique, encourages her to be herself, and finally comes to grips with her choices, even though they show the same restlessness and need to travel that Jules used to have. Trauma theory says that healing is making the past part of a whole story instead than getting rid of it. Herman says that the survivor "recreates the trauma narrative so that it becomes an integrated part of her life history" (Herman 181). At the end of the novel, Morag has a fragile but important sense of coherence. Her memories don't bother her as much anymore; instead, they are a part of who she is.

## VII. Conclusion:

*The Diviners* is a story about trauma that can't be fixed but still gives hope. It's a deep exploration of the mind. Through the life of Morag Gunn, Margaret Laurence gives a powerful look at how trauma affects memory, identity, and story. The novel's emotional depth, repeated memories, and broken structure are all important to how it shows trauma, not just artistic choices. Writing, remembering, and being a mother all become ways to resist and stay alive. Laurence says that tragedy doesn't have to keep people from speaking, even though it might be very painful. Language, creativity, and love can help you not only survive but also find yourself again. So, *The Diviners* is a tribute to the human spirit's ability to turn pain into stories and stories into strength.

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