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Divining A Decolonial Future: Mythopoesis As A Force Of Resistance In Margaret Laurence's The Diviners

Dr. Eleanor Vance
Department of Postcolonial Studies, McGill University, Montreal, Canada

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Abstract: BACKGROUND: Postcolonial literature often grapples with the task of reclaiming identity from the lingering shadows of colonial narratives. In the Canadian context, this involves confronting a colonial history that has suppressed Indigenous and non-British voices. Margaret Laurence's The Diviners stands as a seminal work in this tradition, employing myth not as a static relic, but as a dynamic tool for cultural and personal reconstruction.

OBJECTIVE: This article examines how Margaret Laurence utilizes myth as a decolonial force in The Diviners. It argues that the novel's protagonist, Morag Gunn, engages in a process of mythopoesis—the conscious creation of myth—to dismantle colonial frameworks and construct an inclusive, decolonized identity that embraces her complex Scottish and Métis heritage.

METHODS: This study employs a qualitative textual analysis, drawing upon postcolonial and decolonial theories as articulated by scholars such as Homi K. Bhabha, Edward Said, and Walter D. Mignolo, alongside theories of myth from Northrop Frye and Carl Jung. The analysis focuses on the interplay between personal memory, historical narrative, and folkloric traditions within the novel.

RESULTS: The analysis reveals three primary layers of myth in The Diviners: the inherited Scottish legends of Piper Gunn, the suppressed Métis stories of Jules Tonnerre, and Morag's own personal myths forged through her experiences. The study finds that Laurence deliberately braids these mythological threads to challenge the singular, linear history imposed by colonialism, creating a "third space" where marginalized histories can be voiced and validated.

CONCLUSION: The Diviners serves as a powerful example of how literature can enact decolonization. By weaving together disparate myths, Laurence demonstrates that identity is not a fixed inheritance but a continual process of "divining"—of interpreting the past to create new, liberatory narratives for the future. The novel's ultimate power lies in its transformation of myth from a tool of colonial ideology into a potent vehicle for resistance and cultural survivance.

Keywords: Margaret Laurence, The Diviners, postcolonialism, decoloniality, myth, mythopoesis, Canadian literature, identity.

Introduction:

1.1 Background: The Postcolonial Context of Canadian Literature

The landscape of Canadian literature has been profoundly shaped by its history as a settler-colonial nation, a space where narratives of identity have been contested, suppressed, and reclaimed. For much of its history, the dominant cultural narrative was an extension of British imperial identity, a literary tradition that often rendered the vast, pre-existing Indigenous presence and the contributions of non-British immigrants invisible. This process of narrative colonization, as described by Edward Said in Culture and Imperialism, involves not only the physical occupation of land but also the occupation of the historical and cultural imagination [17]. The official stories of the nation were constructed around the myths of European explorers and pioneers, creating a cultural framework that marginalized other ways of

knowing and being. As Linda Tuhiwai Smith argues in her seminal work, Decolonizing Methodologies, such imperial histories were written to legitimize colonialism, effectively silencing the voices and experiences of the colonized [18].

In the mid-20th century, a wave of Canadian writers began to challenge this inherited colonial framework, seeking to articulate a distinct national identity that could account for the country's complex social and historical realities. Margaret Laurence (1926-1987) stands as a towering figure within this literary movement. Her experiences living in Africa, detailed in works like Heart of a Stranger, gave her a unique perspective on the dynamics of colonialism and the struggle for independence, which she then turned inward to examine her own country [12]. Her Manawaka cycle of novels, set in a fictional prairie town in Manitoba, meticulously excavates the layered histories of its inhabitants, giving voice to those who had been relegated to the margins of the national story. Neil ten Kortenaar identifies Laurence's work as a pivotal moment in Canadian literature, a conscious effort to divine a postcolonial identity from the fragmented legacies of its people [10]. It is within this context of literary nation-building and postcolonial self-examination that her final novel, The Diviners, finds its profound significance.

1.2 Problem Statement: The Colonial Erasure of Myth and History

Colonialism operates through a systemic process of erasure. It imposes a singular, linear, and ostensibly universal history, which functions to overwrite the diverse, often cyclical and orally transmitted histories of colonized peoples. This is an act of what Walter D. Mignolo terms "epistemic violence," where dominant European ways of knowing are positioned as the only valid forms of knowledge, while Indigenous and local epistemologies are dismissed as primitive folklore or myth [14]. Myth, in the colonial lexicon, becomes synonymous with falsehood, a tool to delegitimize the cultural foundations of the colonized. However, as theorists of postcolonialism have argued, myth and folklore are not mere fictions; they are powerful repositories of cultural memory, resistance, and identity [1, 4]. They are the narratives that explain a people's origin, their values, and their relationship to the land and the cosmos.

The central problem that emerges in a postcolonial society is how to recover and legitimize these suppressed narratives. How can a people, whose stories have been systematically devalued, speak their own truths? Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's provocative question, "Can the subaltern speak?" highlights the profound difficulty of reclaiming a voice within the very structures of power and language that were designed to silence it [19]. Homi K. Bhabha suggests that this reclamation does not happen through a simple return to a "pure" pre-colonial past, but rather through the creation of a "third space" of hybridity, where colonial and Indigenous narratives are forced into a dialogue that destabilizes the authority of the colonizer and creates something new [3]. The challenge, therefore, is not simply to unearth old myths but to re-engage with them as living forces capable of shaping a decolonized future. This process requires an active and often painful confrontation with the past, a willingness to listen to the "ghosts" of history and weave their stories back into the fabric of the present.

1.3 Rationale and Significance: Why The Diviners?

Margaret Laurence's The Diviners (1974) is an exemplary text for exploring this process of narrative decolonization [11]. The novel is a complex, multi-layered narrative that directly confronts the colonial legacy of western Canada. Its protagonist, the writer Morag Gunn, is a woman of Scottish and unknown ancestry raised in a town deeply divided along racial and class lines, a microcosm of the settler-colonial state. Her life's work becomes a quest to understand her own tangled roots and, by extension, the tangled roots of her nation. The novel's title is central to its purpose: a "diviner" is one who seeks to find a hidden source, whether it be water with a divining rod or meaning within the fragmented stories of the past. Morag's act of "divining" is the act of decolonization itself—a seeking out of suppressed histories and a weaving of them into a new, more truthful narrative.

The novel's enduring significance lies in its prescient engagement with questions that remain at the forefront of contemporary Canadian discourse. In an era focused on truth and reconciliation, The Diviners serves as a powerful literary precedent for the difficult work of confronting a painful past. J. Edward Chamberlin, in If this is your land, where are your stories?, emphasizes that finding common ground between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples depends on the mutual sharing and recognition of foundational stories [5]. Laurence's novel dramatizes this very process, showing how a settler-descended Canadian can begin this work by listening to and honoring the stories of the land's original inhabitants. By focusing on myth—the inherited Scottish legends, the suppressed Métis histories, and the personal myths

Morag creates—Laurence moves beyond a simple political critique of colonialism to explore the deeper, imaginative work required to decolonize the self and the nation.

1.4 Thesis Statement

This article argues that in The Diviners, Margaret Laurence employs myth as a powerful decolonial force, demonstrating how the act of myth-making (mythopoesis) allows the protagonist, Morag Gunn, to resist colonial erasure, reclaim a fragmented heritage, and construct a fluid, inclusive identity that challenges the singular narrative of the nation. Morag's journey from a passive recipient of inherited stories to an active creator of new ones represents a form of "epistemic disobedience" [14]. She learns to value the marginalized oral histories of her Métis lover, Jules Tonnerre, as equally valid to the written histories of her Scottish ancestors. Through this process, she creates a hybrid, "third space" narrative for herself and her daughter, Pique, one that does not erase the violence of the past but finds a way to build a future based on the principles of survivance and shared history.

1.5 Research Questions

This analysis is guided by the following questions:

1. How does Laurence intertwine Scottish, Métis, and personal myths to critique the monolithic and exclusionary nature of colonial history?
2. In what ways does Morag's journey as a writer and a "diviner" of stories represent a decolonial praxis, an active method of challenging and reshaping colonial ways of knowing?
3. How does the novel's fragmented, non-linear narrative structure mirror the psychological and cultural process of decolonizing one's identity?

METHODS: Theoretical Framework

To analyze the function of myth as a decolonial force in The Diviners, this study adopts a qualitative approach grounded in a synthesis of postcolonial/decolonial theory and mythological literary criticism. This framework allows for a nuanced textual analysis that connects the novel's literary strategies to broader political and philosophical concerns.

2.1 Postcolonial and Decolonial Theory

This study distinguishes between postcolonialism and decoloniality while recognizing their significant overlap. Postcolonialism, as a critical lens, primarily emerged from literary and cultural studies to analyze the effects of colonization and the complex responses to it in former colonies [2]. Thinkers like Edward Said [17] and Homi K. Bhabha [3] are central to this field. Bhabha's concept of hybridity is particularly crucial for this analysis. He argues that the interaction between colonizer and colonized is never a one-way imposition but a complex negotiation that produces hybrid cultural forms. These forms, born in the ambivalent "third space," can subvert colonial authority by mimicking it with a difference, creating a site of resistance [3]. Morag's and, more pointedly, Pique's identities in The Diviners can be understood as occupying this productive "third space."

Decoloniality, or the decolonial option, is a framework that emerged largely from Latin American scholarship, with thinkers like Walter D. Mignolo at its forefront. While postcolonialism often focuses on the period after formal independence, decoloniality insists that we still live in a world structured by the "colonial matrix of power," where colonial hierarchies of race, knowledge, and authority persist [15]. Decoloniality is thus not just an analytical lens but a political and epistemic project—a praxis. Mignolo's concept of epistemic disobedience is central here. It refers to the act of challenging and "delinking" from the dominance of Western-centric knowledge systems and validating other ways of knowing [14]. In the context of The Diviners, Morag's gradual recognition of the validity of Jules Tonnerre's oral stories over the official, written histories of Canada is a profound act of epistemic disobedience. Furthermore, applying Linda Tuhiwai Smith's work on decolonizing methodologies to this literary study means treating the novel itself as a form of research into the past, one that prioritizes marginalized voices and storytelling as a valid method for generating knowledge and healing [18].

2.2 Theorizing Myth

This analysis approaches myth not as a synonym for falsehood but as a foundational narrative that underpins cultural identity, ideology, and social structure. Bruce Lincoln, in Theorizing Myth, defines myth as "ideology in narrative form," a story that holds social authority and works to legitimize a particular worldview [13]. Colonialism is a project of mythic replacement: the colonizer's myths (of discovery, progress, manifest destiny) are presented as universal history, while the myths of the colonized are demoted

to folklore. The decolonial project, therefore, must involve a reclamation and re-valorization of myth.

To explore the different dimensions of myth in the novel, this study draws on several theoretical traditions. From literary criticism, Northrop Frye's work in Anatomy of Criticism provides a framework for understanding myth in terms of archetypes—recurring narrative patterns and character types that structure our literary imagination [7]. The figures of the outcast, the prophet, and the questing hero are archetypes that Laurence reworks in the characters of Christie, Jules, and Morag.

From psychology, Carl Jung's theory of the collective unconscious offers a way to understand how myths tap into deep, trans-personal layers of human experience. Jung argued that archetypes are not merely literary conventions but psychic structures inherited by all humanity [9]. In The Diviners, Morag's creative process often feels less like invention and more like channeling—tapping into ancestral memories and a collective unconscious that holds both the Scottish and Indigenous stories of the land.

Finally, Mircea Eliade's work on the history of religions provides insight into the primary function of myth. In The Sacred and the Profane, Eliade argues that myth allows individuals to participate in a sacred reality, connecting their mundane, profane existence to a larger, meaningful cosmic order [6]. For Morag, the stories of Piper Gunn and Rider Tonnerre are not just tales; they are sacred histories that give meaning to her own struggles with poverty, alienation, and identity. Her ultimate act of mythopoesis is an attempt to create a new sacred narrative that can sanctify the hybrid reality of her life and her country.

2.3 Method of Analysis

The methodology employed is a qualitative textual analysis of the 1993 University of Chicago Press edition of Margaret Laurence's The Diviners [11]. The analysis proceeds through a close reading of the novel, paying special attention to its non-linear narrative structure, the development of its central characters (Morag, Christie, Jules, Pique), and the symbolic weight of recurring stories and images. The analysis will trace the three primary mythological threads identified in the outline—the Scottish colonial myth, the suppressed Métis counter-myth, and Morag's personal mythopoesis—as they are introduced, developed, and ultimately synthesized within the narrative. The interpretation of these textual elements will be consistently filtered through the theoretical lenses established above, connecting Laurence's literary choices to the broader project of decolonial resistance and identity formation. The goal is to demonstrate how the text performs the theoretical work, making it a powerful example of decolonial praxis in its own right.

RESULTS: Myth as Decolonial Praxis in The Diviners

The textual analysis of The Diviners reveals a complex narrative architecture built upon the interplay of distinct yet interconnected mythological systems. Laurence structures Morag Gunn's journey as a process of "divining" these systems, gradually moving from a state of colonial interpellation to one of decolonial self-authorship. This process unfolds through her engagement with three primary layers of myth: the inherited myth of her colonial ancestors, the reclaimed myth of the land's Indigenous peoples, and the synthesized myth she creates for the future.

3.1 The Myth of the Colonizer: The Legend of Piper Gunn

Morag's earliest sense of self is forged by the stories of her adoptive father, Christie Logan, the town garbage collector. Christie's epic, the tale of Piper Gunn and the Sutherlanders, is Morag's foundational myth. This story recounts the Highland Clearances, where Scottish clans were violently displaced from their lands to make way for sheep farming. Led by the heroic Piper Gunn, they crossed the ocean to the "new world" and, after much hardship, established a life in Manitoba [11]. As Clara Thomas notes, this story connects Morag directly to the history of European settlement in the Canadian West [21].

On the surface, this is a tale of survival and heroic endurance. However, viewed through a decolonial lens, it functions as a classic colonial myth. It is a story of origins that begins with displacement from Europe, effectively erasing the fact that the "empty" land they arrived on was already inhabited. The myth legitimizes settler presence by framing them as victims who have earned their place through suffering. It is a powerful and necessary story for Morag, giving her a sense of lineage and pride in a life otherwise defined by poverty and shame. Christie tells her, "By their garbage shall ye know them," but he also gives her this tale, a heritage that transcends the filth he collects [11, p. 47].

Yet, Laurence subtly critiques this myth's limitations. The story of Piper Gunn, for all its glory, is one of conquest. His triumphant piping frightens the "partridges and the gophers and the foxes," a detail that foreshadows the displacement of the land's

original inhabitants and fauna by the settlers [11, p. 28]. Furthermore, the myth is static. Christie tells it the same way each time, a fixed narrative of the past that offers pride but little room for growth or adaptation. It represents the European historical consciousness—linear, monumental, and ultimately exclusionary. Morag's initial relationship with this myth is one of uncritical acceptance; it is her only anchor. Her decolonial journey begins when she starts to recognize that this story, while true and important, is not the only story.

3.2 Reclaiming the Suppressed Myth: The Stories of Jules Tonnerre

If the legend of Piper Gunn represents the heroic, albeit sanitized, myth of the colonizer, then the stories embodied by Jules Tonnerre and his family constitute the profound and systematically suppressed counter-myth of the colonized. The Tonnerres are Métis, a people born from the union of European fur traders and First Nations women, and their history is inextricably woven into the fabric of the Canadian West—a history violently overwritten by the official narrative of Confederation and settlement. In The Diviners, Laurence presents this counter-myth not as a monolithic epic but as a constellation of fragmented, painful, and resilient narratives transmitted orally through song and anecdote. A granular analysis of these narratives—their form, their content, and their transmission—is essential to understanding their function as a potent decolonial force. They represent a distinct epistemology, a way of knowing and remembering that stands in direct opposition to the textual, linear, and triumphalist history of the colonial state. Morag's journey toward a decolonized consciousness is contingent upon her ability to not only hear these stories but to recognize them as a valid, sacred, and living history.

3.2.1 Orality as Resistance: The Form and Transmission of Métis History

The most immediate and fundamental challenge the Tonnerre myths pose to the colonial order is their form. Unlike the story of Piper Gunn, which Morag also receives orally but which has the character of a fixed, literary text, the Tonnerre stories exist in the fluid, living medium of oral tradition. This mode of transmission is itself a political statement. As Linda Tuhiwai Smith argues, colonial powers have historically privileged written texts as the sole arbiters of truth, dismissing oral traditions as unreliable folklore [18]. This "textual imperialism" was a key tool in delegitimizing Indigenous knowledge systems and erasing their claims to history and land. By centering Jules's oral accounts, Laurence performs a crucial act of decolonial validation, positioning storytelling and song as legitimate and powerful methodologies for historical preservation.

The contrast between Christie's and Jules's storytelling methods is stark and instructive. Christie's telling of Piper Gunn's saga is a performance, a near-verbatim recitation that Morag comes to know by heart [11]. It is a story polished by time, its painful edges smoothed into a heroic monument. Jules's stories, however, are raw, immediate, and deeply personal. They emerge not as formal recitations but in moments of intimacy, anger, or sorrow. They are inseparable from the lived experience of the teller. When Jules speaks of the Battle of Batoche, his voice is "harsh," filled with an ancestral pain that is also his own [11, p. 172]. This embodies a key feature of many Indigenous oral traditions: history is not a detached subject to be studied but a living presence that shapes the present and must be felt to be understood.

Morag, as a budding writer and a product of a text-based culture, initially struggles with this different way of knowing. She instinctively tries to contain, organize, and verify Jules's stories within her own familiar framework. This tension reveals her own deeply ingrained colonial epistemology. Her journey requires what Walter Mignolo terms "epistemic disobedience"—the difficult act of delinking from the assumed superiority of Western knowledge systems [14]. She must learn to accept the validity of a history that is not found in archives but is carried in the body and voice of her lover. Her ultimate ability to listen, to value the felt truth of Jules's songs and anecdotes over the silent omissions of her history textbooks, is the pivot upon which her decolonization turns. Jules's act of telling, and her act of listening, become a shared praxis of resistance against colonial erasure.

3.2.2 The Tale of Rider Tonnerre: Mythologizing the 1885 Resistance

The central historical figure in the Tonnerre mythology is Jules's grandfather, Rider Tonnerre, a man who fought with Louis Riel and scouted for the great Métis general Gabriel Dumont during the 1885 North-West Resistance. The story of Rider is the core of the Métis counter-myth, directly confronting the official Canadian narrative that branded Riel a traitor and the Resistance a "rebellion." In Jules's telling, 1885 was a

legitimate fight for land, for rights, and for a way of life. This reframing is a powerful example of what Bruce Lincoln describes as myth's function as "ideology in narrative form" [13]. The dominant colonial myth casts westward expansion as peaceful settlement and progress; the Rider Tonnerre myth reveals its true nature as violent conquest and dispossession.

The details Jules provides are crucial in deconstructing the colonial epic. He emphasizes the imbalance of the conflict: "They had the guns… the Gatling gun, the first machine gun they ever used in the whole world… We had only the rusty old buffalo guns and not much ammunition" [11, p. 172]. This is not a story of a fair fight but of a technologically superior colonial power crushing a people defending their homeland. The myth does not offer a triumphant victory but an honest accounting of defeat: "They beat us. They beat us damn good" [11, p. 172]. The power of this myth lies not in glory but in truth. It refuses the colonial demand for Indigenous narratives to be either romanticized or forgotten.

Rider himself is not a simple hero in the European mold of Piper Gunn. He is a figure of what Gerald Vizenor terms "survivance"—a concept that combines survival and resistance and signifies an active, dynamic presence rather than a passive victimhood [22]. Rider survives the battle, escapes the Canadian soldiers, and lives a long life, but it is a life of profound loss and marginalization. He is a "road allowance person," landless, and his chief act of defiance becomes the bearing of memory. He carries the story of 1885, ensuring it is not lost. He becomes a living archive of a suppressed history. His legacy is not a kingdom, like that which Piper Gunn metaphorically founds, but the continuation of the story itself. He represents a refusal to vanish, an insistence on the enduring presence of the Métis people on the land, even after their political and military defeat. For Morag, understanding Rider's story is to understand that the founding of her hometown of Manawaka and the prosperity of its white citizens were built directly upon the dispossession of Rider's people.

3.2.3 The Ballad of the Prophet: Spiritual Inheritance and Sacred History

Beyond the political history of the Resistance, the Tonnerre mythos contains a deep spiritual dimension, most powerfully expressed in "The Ballad of the Prophet," a song Jules sings about his great-grandfather, Old Jules Tonnerre. The Prophet was a mystic, a follower of Riel who hunted the last of the great buffalo herds and had visions. The song Jules sings is more than a folk ballad; it is a sacred text, a repository of a non-European epistemology rooted in a spiritual connection to the land.

A close reading of the song reveals a worldview antithetical to the colonial one. The Prophet's power comes from his relationship with the natural world: "The buffalo bones, they are my own… I am the hunter, and the hunted" [11, p. 282]. This speaks to a cyclical, interconnected understanding of life, contrasting sharply with the linear, dominion-oriented worldview of the settlers. The song is a lament for the destruction of this world, for the slaughter of the buffalo which was a deliberate colonial strategy to starve the Plains peoples into submission. The line "The plains are great and will not pass, But men will pass and men are grass" [11, p. 282] is a declaration of the ultimate sovereignty of the land itself, a spiritual truth that transcends the temporary political power of the colonizers.

In the framework of Mircea Eliade, the song allows Jules to connect his family's profane existence of poverty and marginalization in Manawaka to a sacred, timeless reality [6]. The story of the Prophet elevates the Tonnerre lineage from one of simple victimhood to one of spiritual significance. They are the descendants of prophets and visionaries. The transmission of this song through the generations—from the Prophet to Rider, to Jules's father Lazarus, to Jules himself, and finally to his daughter Pique—is a sacred duty. It is an act of cultural and spiritual continuity that the violence of colonialism could not break. When Jules shares this song with Morag, he is entrusting her with the most sacred part of his inheritance, forcing her to confront a spiritual reality that the secular, materialistic colonial culture has tried to eradicate.

3.2.4 The Persistence of Trauma: The Story of Lazarus Tonnerre

Lest the Tonnerre myths be relegated to a distant, romanticized past, Laurence includes a final, brutal story that anchors the family's history in the ongoing trauma of the present: the death of Jules's father, Lazarus, and his family in a house fire. This is not a story from the heroic age of the Resistance but a memory from Jules's own childhood. Lazarus, a man broken by poverty and despair, gets drunk and accidentally sets his shack on fire, killing his wife and children, with only Jules and his sister Piquette escaping [11].

This tragedy is the direct, inherited consequence of the historical dispossession that began in 1885. The poverty, alcoholism, and hopelessness that consumed Lazarus are not personal failings but symptoms of the systemic violence of colonialism. The story serves a

crucial decolonial function: it prevents the past from becoming a comfortable artifact. It demonstrates that the injustices of the 19th century did not end at Batoche but continued to cascade through generations, manifesting as the social pathologies that plague marginalized communities.

By including this narrative of raw, recent trauma, Laurence insists that the decolonial project must confront not only the grand historical injustices but also their painful, messy, and ongoing human consequences. There is no clean break from the past. The story of Lazarus ensures that the Tonnerre mythos is not one of simple heroism but of a complex, continuous struggle. It is a testament to the family's ability to endure not just a single, historic defeat, but a grinding, century-long war of attrition. Jules's survival of that fire, and his decision to continue to tell all the stories—of Rider's defiance, the Prophet's visions, and Lazarus's despair—is his ultimate act of survivance. He refuses to let any part of his history, heroic or shameful, be forgotten.

In conclusion, the rich and complex mythology of the Tonnerre family functions as a resilient and multi-faceted decolonial force within The Diviners. Through its oral form, its counter-historical content, its spiritual depth, and its honest confrontation with ongoing trauma, it stands as a complete and valid worldview. It is the repository of a suppressed national history and a testament to the enduring power of storytelling as a tool for cultural preservation and resistance. Morag's profound act of "epistemic disobedience" is to finally recognize that these stories, in all their pain and beauty, are as foundational to her country, and to her own identity, as the heroic tales of her Scottish ancestors. This recognition is what makes the creation of a truly hybrid, decolonized future—embodied in Pique—not only possible, but necessary.

3.3 Mythopoesis: Morag's Creation of a Personal Mythology

Morag's journey is not simply about choosing between the Scottish and Métis myths. Her task as a "diviner" is to create a new narrative space where these conflicting histories can coexist. This is the work of mythopoesis—the conscious creation of myth—and she performs it through her life and her art. The novel's unique structure, which intersperses the present-day narrative with "Memorybank Movies" and excerpts from Morag's own novels, makes this process visible to the reader.

The "Memorybank Movies" are Morag's way of reviewing and re-interpreting her own past. They are non-linear and associative, mimicking the way memory actually works. This narrative technique is itself a decolonial act; it rejects the linear, progressive timeline of colonial history in favor of a more fluid, layered understanding of time, where past and present are in constant dialogue. She revisits scenes from her childhood, her failed marriage, and her relationship with Jules, re-evaluating them from her mature perspective. She is, in effect, curating her own personal mythology, deciding which moments define her and what they mean.

Her career as a novelist is a more public form of this myth-making. The titles of her books mentioned in the text—Spear of Innocence, Prosper's Fable, Jonah—suggest that she is drawn to archetypal stories of struggle and survival [7, 11]. She transforms the raw material of her Manawaka experience into literature, giving voice to the very people who were silenced in her own community. In doing so, she is not merely recording history; she is creating a mythology for her place and time. This act of writing from the margins, of turning the particularities of a small Canadian town into a universal story, is a postcolonial project. She learns that, as Laurence herself expressed, one must write from one's own "tribal" story to connect with the larger human experience [12]. Morag's mythopoesis is her resistance: she refuses to be defined solely by Christie's inherited myth or to appropriate Jules's myth as her own. Instead, she forges a new narrative that can hold the truth of both.

3.4 The Synthesis of Myths: Pique as the Decolonized Future

The ultimate product of Morag's mythopoesis is her daughter, Pique, whose name means both "to sting" and "to arouse interest." Pique is the living embodiment of Bhabha's hybridity [3]. With her Scottish and Métis blood, she is the biological and cultural synthesis of the novel's two great mythological traditions. She inherits Piper Gunn's defiance and Rider Tonnerre's resilience. Her childhood is a negotiation between these legacies; Morag reads her Scottish folktales, while Jules sings her the songs of his people.

Pique's struggle to find her own voice is a microcosm of the larger Canadian struggle for a postcolonial identity. She is initially torn, feeling like she belongs to neither world. Her journey takes her west, a pilgrimage to her Métis roots, to the land of her ancestors. When she returns, she has begun to synthesize her heritage not through writing, like her mother, but through music. The novel concludes with Pique writing songs that

blend the stories of Rider Tonnerre with her own experiences. One of her songs is for her father, "My old man, he's a methye," and another, unfinished, is simply titled "Pique's Song" [11, p. 452].

This final act signifies the successful creation of a new, decolonized myth. Pique is not trapped by the past; she uses it as a source from which to create something new. She is the diviner of the next generation. Her songs represent a future where the oppositions of colonizer and colonized, settler and Indigenous, have been incorporated into a new, hybrid identity that honors its composite parts without erasing their painful history. As Ten Kortenaar suggests, Laurence leaves the reader with a vision of a Canadian identity that is not a static, singular thing but a continuous, creative process of divining [10]. Pique embodies the hope of a decolonized future, a future built not on the erasure of stories, but on their courageous and creative combination.

DISCUSSION

The analysis of The Diviners reveals that Margaret Laurence's novel is more than a work of historical fiction; it is a profound meditation on the mechanics of decolonization. By structuring the narrative around the discovery, reclamation, and creation of myth, Laurence provides a literary roadmap for how a settler-colonial society might begin the process of forging a more honest and inclusive identity. The results of the textual analysis, when interpreted through the theoretical framework, demonstrate the novel's sophisticated engagement with the core tenets of decolonial thought.

4.1 Interpretation of Results

Morag Gunn's life journey is a powerful dramatization of decolonial praxis. Her trajectory directly reflects the theoretical concepts outlined earlier. Initially, her identity is shaped by the colonial myth of Piper Gunn, a narrative that, while providing strength, also participates in the erasure of Indigenous presence. Her transformative relationship with Jules Tonnerre forces her into an act of what Mignolo calls "epistemic disobedience" [14]. She must unlearn the colonial assumption that written, linear history is superior to the fragmented, oral, and often painful stories of the Métis people. In doing so, she delinks from the "colonial matrix of power" that devalues Indigenous knowledge [15].

The novel becomes a perfect illustration of Homi Bhabha's "third space" [3]. Morag cannot simply discard her Scottish heritage, nor can she fully claim Jules's Indigenous one. Instead, through the difficult, lifelong process of mythopoesis, she constructs a hybrid identity for herself and her daughter. This third space is not a comfortable melting pot; it is a space of tension, where contradictory histories are held together. Pique is the ultimate symbol of this space—a figure who is not "half-breed," a term of colonial diminishment, but a new being who incorporates multiple legacies. Her songs are the voice of this hybridity, a decolonial art form that speaks from a place of wholeness, not fracture.

Furthermore, the novel's narrative structure—the non-linear "Memorybank Movies"—is a formal reflection of its thematic content. It rejects the teleological, progressive time of empire in favor of a conception of history that is layered and recursive. As Smith argues, reclaiming history for Indigenous peoples often involves challenging Western notions of time and space [18]. Laurence's narrative technique forces the reader to experience time in this decolonized way, understanding that the past is never truly past but is always alive and shaping the present.

4.2 Contribution to the Field

While scholars have long recognized The Diviners as a landmark of Canadian and postcolonial literature, much of the critical conversation has focused on themes of national identity, feminist consciousness, or the role of the artist [10, 21]. This analysis contributes to the scholarship by applying a specifically decolonial lens to the novel, with a focus on mythopoesis as a form of active resistance. While postcolonial readings have been common, the decolonial framework shifts the emphasis from a state of being after colonialism to the ongoing process of dismantling colonial structures, particularly epistemic ones.

By framing Morag's writing and storytelling not just as artistic expression but as a form of "epistemic disobedience" and a "decolonizing methodology," this study offers a new vocabulary for understanding the novel's political and philosophical weight. It argues that Laurence's greatest contribution is not simply in representing marginalized histories but in demonstrating the method by which those histories can be integrated into a new, liberatory narrative. This focus on myth-making as praxis—as a tangible, world-building activity—provides a more dynamic interpretation of the novel's conclusion, seeing Pique not just as a symbol of hope but as an active agent of decolonial continuance. This reading brings Laurence's work into direct conversation with contemporary decolonial theorists like Mignolo and Walsh [15],

highlighting the novel's profound and ongoing relevance.

4.3 Implications

The implications of this reading extend beyond literary criticism. The Diviners offers a powerful, nuanced model for settler-Canadians grappling with their role in the project of reconciliation. The novel suggests that decolonization is not about guilt or self-abnegation but about the difficult, active work of listening, learning, and co-creating new stories. Morag's journey suggests that settlers cannot absolve themselves of their history, but they can and must learn to see it as partial, and to make space for the histories their own stories have suppressed.

As J. Edward Chamberlin powerfully contends, the path forward lies in the sharing of stories and the recognition of a common humanity within different mythic traditions [5]. Laurence's novel is a testament to this belief. It does not offer easy answers but instead portrays decolonization as an intergenerational process. Morag takes the first crucial steps, and Pique carries that work into the future. In a world still grappling with the legacies of empire, and in a Canada still confronting the truths of its colonial past, The Diviners remains an essential text. It reminds us that the work of changing the world begins with the work of changing the stories we tell ourselves about who we are and where we come from. This resonates with broader anti-colonial thought, which sees cultural and narrative reclamation as a fundamental component of political liberation [16].

4.4 Limitations and Future Research

This study is necessarily limited by its focus on a single novel by a non-Indigenous author. While Laurence's work is remarkably insightful and empathetic, it is still a representation of Indigenous experience from a settler perspective. Morag's journey is a model for settler decolonization, but it cannot and should not stand in for the diverse voices and experiences of Indigenous peoples themselves.

Future research could productively place The Diviners in a comparative dialogue. For instance, a study could compare Laurence's use of myth with the concept of "survivance" and narrative trickery in the work of Anishinaabe writer Gerald Vizenor [22]. Such a comparison could highlight the different strategies and stakes involved when myth is reclaimed by an Indigenous author versus when it is engaged by a settler ally. Another avenue for research would be to broaden the comparative scope to other postcolonial contexts, examining how Laurence's Canadian-focused mythopoesis aligns with or diverges from the function of myth in novels from other settler-colonial nations or post-independence societies [1, 4, 8]. This would allow for a more global understanding of how myth functions as a tool of both colonial ideology and decolonial resistance, further enriching our appreciation of the profound and courageous work undertaken by Margaret Laurence in The Diviners.

CONCLUSION

5.1 Summary of Findings

This analysis has demonstrated that Margaret Laurence's The Diviners strategically employs myth as a primary vehicle for decolonial thought and practice. The investigation traced three crucial mythological threads within the novel: the inherited European settler myth of Piper Gunn, which establishes a colonial historical consciousness; the suppressed Métis counter-myth of the Tonnerre family, which represents the violent erasure of Indigenous history and resistance; and the process of mythopoesis through which the protagonist, Morag Gunn, synthesizes these conflicting legacies. The results show that Morag's journey as a "diviner" is an exercise in decolonial praxis. By learning to value oral history, challenging the singularity of written colonial accounts, and creating new narratives through her art and her life, she forges a hybrid identity that culminates in her daughter, Pique, a figure who embodies a decolonized future for Canada.

5.2 Restatement of Thesis

As this study has argued, The Diviners posits that decolonization is an act of the imagination, a profound re-storying of the self and the nation. Laurence showcases how the conscious creation of myth—mythopoesis—serves as a decolonial force, allowing Morag Gunn to resist the erasures of a colonial past and construct a fluid, inclusive identity that challenges the singular, monolithic narrative of the nation. The novel's ultimate thesis is that identity is not a static inheritance to be discovered, but a dynamic and ongoing process of "divining"—of interpreting the fragments of the past to create new, more truthful, and ultimately more liberatory narratives for the future.

5.3 Concluding Remarks

In Heart of a Stranger, Margaret Laurence wrote of the need to understand one's own "tribal story" as the only authentic basis from which to speak [12]. The Diviners is the ultimate fulfillment of that belief. It is a deeply personal, yet profoundly political, exploration of what it means to inherit a complex and often violent history. The novel does not offer a simplistic resolution to the problems of colonialism but instead suggests that the only way forward is through the courageous act of storytelling. It champions the power of narrative to heal, to resist, and to build new worlds from the ruins of the old. In an age where questions of identity, heritage, and justice are more urgent than ever, The Diviners remains a vital and enduring masterpiece. It is a testament to the fact that the most powerful form of resistance is, perhaps, the refusal to be silenced, and the most sacred act is the telling of a story that allows for the possibility of a different future. The work of decolonization is long and difficult, but as Laurence's novel so powerfully reminds us, it begins with the stories we dare to tell [16].

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