

ANALEPSIS AND PROLEPSIS AS EPISTEME IN MARGARET LAURENCE'S THE DIVINERS

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Abstract

Margaret Lawrence, in her fiction distorts time to expose the background of the story. The time frame of *The Diviners* is less than a year, but the entire story covers forty-seven years in the life of the protagonist. To present the events of the period, Margaret Lawrence adopts the technique of prolepsis and analepsis.

Keywords: Analepsis, Prolepsis, Snapshots, Memorybank Movie, Innerfilm.

Retrospection and anticipation that happen in fiction is technically termed as analepsis and prolepsis. In motion picture, the equivalent terms are flashback and flashforward. Definitions from Oxford Languages terms Analepsis, as "a literary device in narrative, in which a past event is narrated at a point later than its chronological place in a story". The Dictionary of Literary Terms And Literary Theory defines Prolepsis as "a figurative device by which a future event is presumed to have happened".(702)

Analepsis shifts the time from present to past and highlights the primary sequence of the story. Analepsis can be both internal and external. Internal analepsis is reference to past incidents that happen after the onset of the story. External analepsis is a time shift to a point prior to the commencement of the narrative. Whether the time shifts forward or backward, the reader must be alerted so that the continuity of the story is not lost. This is beautifully done by Margaret Lawrence in *The Diviners*. Snapshots, Memorybank Movie, tales told by various characters, tales told and letters and written by the protagonist-narrator and her imaginary conversation with Catherine Parr Traill, take the story to the past. Prolepsis is aided by innerfilms, which are in fact, interior monologues. The introduction of the episteme begins to flourish with the novel opening in medias res.

The river flowed both ways. The current moved from north to south, but the wind usually came from the south, rippling the bronze-green water in the opposite direction. This apparently impossible contradiction, made apparent and possible, still fascinated Morag, even after the years of river-watching. (3)

The narrator-protagonist, Morag is aged forty-seven and is an established writer. She lives by the river. As the story proceeds, she recollects her past and anticipates the future. The narrative oscillates back and forth. The past and future are linked to the present with the aid of analepsis and prolepsis. The strategic use of analepsis and prolepsis is an essential feature of story- telling.

The very first instance of analepsis is in the form of six snapshots that Morag has preserved in tattered envelopes: “These photographs from the past never agreed to get lost” because, as Morag herself admits “...they ‘re my totems, or contain a portion of my spirit” (5). The snapshot, distort the chronology of the story, but they themselves are presented by the author in a chronological manner. The first snapshot shows Morag’s pregnant mother. So this snapshot shows not the child Morag but the unborn Morag. The subsequent ones show Morag, the child aged two, three and five. Thus the first set of snapshots shows Morag’s life with her parents. The snapshot part of the storyline ends with questions that are not answered but statements that hint the death of her parents. The snapshots thus sum up the life and death of her parents. For instance, this following passage is indicative of the cycle of life.

The child, three years old, is standing behind the heavy-wire-netted farm gate, peering out. The person with the camera is standing unseen on the other side. The child is laughing, acting up, play-acting goofily, playing to an audience of one, the picture-taker. (7)

When the narrative has to be carried on beyond the death of Morag’s parents, Laurence introduces the innovative technique of Memorybank Movie. Consequently, Memorybank Movies reflect her recollections after the death of her parents. It is a trip down her memory lane. Her past is collectively stored in her memory. From the cache of her past, she picks up persons, places and incidents to aid free flow of narration.

Snapshots and Memorybank Movies differ in that, snapshots present Morag’s life before the death of her parents and Memorybank Movies present Morag’s life after the death of her parents. Snapshots show her life till the age of five. From then on, till the age of forty-seven, recollections come in the form of Memorybank Movie. All the Memorybank Movies are titled as per the content. Throughout the story, these movies come either individually or serially. However, they are well aligned with the plot of the story. Christie, Morag’s foster father, is her mentor and first tale-teller. His tales lament their lost ancestry and past glory. As a child, Morag listens to these tales attentively. As an adult, she recounts these stories and they are embedded within the Memorybank Movies.

Prolepsis, the anticipated future in the novel is titled “Innerfilm”. In fact, they are interior monologues that run through the mind of the narrator. Being herself a writer, the protagonist had saved imagined stories in her memory. The fear and anxiety of a work going unpublished or being published posthumously is an inevitable part of a writer’s vocation. Thus, the inner thoughts, fear and anxiety of future, death and funeral that may or may not happen are presented through innerfilms.

Prolepsis lends suspense to the story. The future happenings are deliberately delayed. When the story opens, Morag's daughter, Pique had gone to the West. The purpose of the trip is not revealed to the anyone. Morag, as an anxious mother expects to hear from her day after day. Before Pique's call, Morag receives two calls-one, an enquiry from an aspiring writer and another from her "daughter's father", Jules. These calls help build up suspense.

In The Diviners, analepsis and prolepsis takes turn to bind up the series of the story. Analepsis serves to explain the characters with their settings and background. Prolepsis works well to hold the readers attention till the end.

Works Cited

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