

Chapter IV

Chapter IV

The Confined Duties and Forgotten Spaces in *The Fire Dwellers*

The Fire Dwellers written in England between 1966 and 1968 from the Manawaka series is considered to be the most important text written by Margaret Laurence. It portrays the survival of a woman to attain a codified form of identity. The text focuses on the acquisition of ultimate salvation by a person when she confronts the modern cultural persona. The central character Stacey MacAindra is a homemaker who alienated her selfhood due to her personal and social problems.

The novel's protagonist, Stacey MacAindra, is the sister of Rachel Cameron. An ordinary woman who belongs to a contemporary middle-class family in Manawaka is worried about all the possible and impossible dangers that await her family. She overcomes stereotypes of life with her recognizable and improvisational narrative voice. The narrative technique in *The Fire Dwellers* is more complex in its structure and form. The protagonist Stacey listens to her inner voice, and at a certain point, she feels startled when the external reality broadened the fantasies of her mind.

The protagonist Stacey is not an outrageous person. Instead, she considers herself to be a normal social being, despite her apocalyptic fears. However, the world in which she lived was surreal. The chilling events in the lives of Stacey's neighbours and friends are counterpoised by the daily news coverage of the Vietnam War. Her two-year-old daughter Jen is unable to speak. She is a symbol of Stacey's inability to speak and also her fears. When Stacey hid his drink in the Mix-Master, her inner dialogue convincingly

portrays a compassionate woman with a steady sense of humour that makes the limited assertion of the conclusion realistic.

Stacey is a perfect example of a woman who is trapped by the roles that are imposed upon her. It is challenging as well as demanding. The struggle that she experiences in her daily chores is austere. She has to play the role of a mother as well as a wife. Managing four kids together along with a husband of unstable income is not an easy job. She has complete knowledge about her limitations and also about society. She is not surreal, instead, she is a mother who fears the domestic and social - chaos as a “personal hell- fire and nuclear holocaust” (Laurence, *TFD* 10). Alastair Mabbott in the review published in *The Herald* about *The Fire Dwellers* explains that:

Stacey MacAindra, far from being a relic of a rapidly receding decade, springs to life from the moment the book is opened, as real and relevant as a reader could want. Switching between third-person narration and Stacey’s inner thoughts, Laurence forensically probes the most uncomfortable areas of an unfulfilled life and a crumbling relationship (Mabbott).

The novel is set in an environment of turbulence that prevailed within society. Stacey always considered the world to be frenzied. She had always tried to shield her children by being a protective mother. Her maternal instincts always pushed her to be apprehensive regarding their safety. She struggles to find time for herself due to the roles of a daughter, wife, and mother. She is juggled between her early life and the present. She is numb to the busy household chores that take most of her valuable time. Apart from that she is represented as a subjugated mother, who likes to have a bond with her children.

But at the same time, she behaves like her own mother who was very strict. In order to be a good mother, she tries to impose her children into the same system that she went through.

Stacey is not a person who depends on others for meeting her daily chores. In fact, she has never sought the help of her husband Clifford MacAindra in her daily life, because his nature of job is such that he reaches home late. Hence she has to carry the family responsibilities all by herself. Clifford gets very little time to interact with the family. Even during that short period, he is engrossed with his own duties. This has led to dreariness in their lives. He would just probe about the children and would continue to ponder on his own work. The dreariness in their relationship has invoked a sense of envy in Stacey. Their physical relationship was also under compulsion. This resulted in the arousal of negative thoughts in the minds of Clifford and Stacey. This also had an adverse impact on their children.

The theory of psychogeography is a way of outlining, planning and traversing the multifaceted identities of metropolitan environments. It gives a chance for a person in exploring an environment and outgrows spatiality by connecting it with his identity. Space and location are crucial aspects in determining a person's identity. The place helps in the creation of an identity that is unique in its form. It is therefore considered the muse of a person's self-identification and includes ideas and emotions evolved through a regular encounters with bodily spaces. A feeling of identifying an accurate geographical space in terms of living occurs only after continuous interaction with the same. It is then the location offers a sense of belongingness and a meaningful purpose in delving into its soul. In the essay titled "Identity in the Fire-dwellers", it is said that: "Stacey is worried about the real self who underlies the diverse persona. It is the changing mass that she

resents in the long run, but she understands the need to work out her realization within the confines of a family”(Bailey 13).

Living in Vancouver, Stacey was not exposed to the urban lifestyle until after her marriage. She gets confused about historical and social issues as she watches TV or reads newspapers. The advertisement, the news of the Vietnam War, and all other illegal activities that took place within the society contributed to her sense of disaster. Stacey is a firefighter caught in the flames of contemporary society. She could not confront the trivialities of trauma. She is unable to accept a world that she considers to be chaotic and threatening. Vancouver, as a place of identity determinant, is rooted in Stacey’s experience with objects, people, and the environment. Here, the skills of being social and maintaining relationships are learned by Stacey. It helps in the creation of a lens through which she recognizes, evaluates, and chooses an ideal space that matches her identity.

Stacey often wants to be publicly identified as the child’s mother or Mac’s wife. She assured herself: “I am not a good mother. I am not a good wife. I don’t want to be. I am Stacey Cameron” (Laurence, *TFD*12). She meets a young man named Luke Venturi when she drives a long distance to escape from her home. She has a very close relationship with Luke. Stacey was comfortable in the presence of Luke. Their relationship did not have the flaws of ego and domination. Therefore, she could talk to him without any reluctance.

The embarrassment she experienced while being with Max disappeared when she was with Luke Venturi. She always tried to escape from the realities of her life and took a great time in involving in this new affair. Her spiritual background in Manawaka made her guilty even though she was consumed by the flames of lust. Later, Luke invites her on a trip to the North. It is then her maternal instincts got revived and she started to think

about her children. She returns home by resisting her spirits to go with Luke. It is then she finds her children spoiled and troubled.

The prime reason for this was her troubled marriage life, as her children lacked the love and care of a father and mother. The eldest daughter Katie indulged in a promiscuous lifestyle. Her sons Ian and Duncan were spoiled by the unnecessary cuddling and the youngest two-year-old daughter Jen could not speak. The novel thus advocates the role played by the family in shaping the characters of the children. A home is a place where an individual's basic character is formed. It is the essence of a person's identity and survival within the living world.

A person's identity is shaped by many different aspects. Family, culture, friends, personal interests, and surrounding environments are all factors that tend to help in forming a person's character. As a person grows up in a family, they are influenced by many aspects of their life. Family and culture may affect a person's sense of responsibility, ethics and morals, tastes in music, humour, sports, and many other facets of life. Identity, especially female identity, was a major theme held in high esteem by the literary forms of the past.

The Fire Dwellers is the best example of a work modelled on female identity. Laurence describes Stacey as someone who struggles to fulfil her duties as a wife and mother and at the same time maintains her sense of self as a unified subject in the face of an unreceptive culture. She is portrayed as a woman who plays the multifaceted roles of a wife, mother, daughter, and a sister. She has forgotten about her role as an individual person.

Stacey's quest for a life filled with happiness and freedom is timeless. It is described as a way to recover her spirit from the ambush of social constraints and

disparities. The concept of marriage as a key to motherhood is another theme that the novel throws light upon. Society always has a tendency to tag mothers as a symbol of sacrifice. The idea of casting a person as a symbol of detriment is a kind of victimisation.

In the novel, the protagonist Stacey being an example of an ordinary housewife is relatable to many women who live across the globe. She is portrayed as a very confused and suspicious contemporary housewife. Her mind is the workshop where the actions and deeds took place. She struggles with herself and also in performing the roles within the household and the society. Stacey often tackles the inadequacies of culture and social systems. When the novel ends, she gradually tries to develop a sense of identity that will adapt her to a new path of observing reality. In *The Psychogeography*, Andre Breton, surrealism's arch-theorist offers a definition of surrealism in his 1924 manifesto when he writes:

I believe in the future resolution of these two states, dream, and reality, which are seemingly so contradictory, into a kind of absolute reality, a surreality, if one may so speak. 'Surrealism, like its four bear the Dada movement, and in common with many of the avant-garde groups that flourished in the aftermath of WWI, was guided not merely by the aim of producing works of arts, but by the hope of transforming our experience of everyday life and replacing our mundane existence with an appreciation of the marvellous. (Breton 13)

The relationship between time and space varies according to the context. The ideas of space and time are measured and created on the basis of human experience and memories. There are different ways through which they can be interpreted. But, the absoluteness of space and time exists only when confronted by reality or geographical space. So, a piece of deep knowledge of the environment of living is important in

validating the ambiguity of time and space. In the novel, Stacey is contradicted by the everyday reality of her life and surroundings. When the novel begins she leaves the house and goes downtown. She has been living in this city for more than twenty years but is not aware of the places over there. As quoted in the novel:

The streets are just beginning to waken. They keep late hours at night in this part of town. A few men in windbreakers and Jeans are hanging around the cafe door. At Ben's Economy Mart, the windows are full of little penned cards - Get a load of this bargain only \$10.95, How about this at \$ 4.75? We're Cheating Ourselves at \$9.95, and other pieces of folk literature, propped against suitcases, kit bags, lumberjacks' boots, Bush knives, thermo flasks and shiny double -bitted axes.
(Laurence, *TFD* 5)

When she walks through the streets, she observes the things around her. So, here Stacey takes up the role of an urban wanderer who is involved in the cosmic observation of the geographical space around her. But what she lacks is involvement and experience. From the above-mentioned quote, it is assumed that Stacey even after living in a city for many years has never got a chance to enjoy everyday reality. When she describes the streets, the curiosity of a beginner lies in her narration. She also feels that this space does not belong to her. For twenty years, she has been living in the same city and doesn't know anything about the place or do not have a feel of a home. She never wants to discuss her perceptions of the city with others. The complex of being from a small town lurked in her thoughts.

The difference between past and present is always perceived as a temporal idea. The disparity of events from the past to the present can be observed from the perspective

of a chronology where the time and the manner of events are given importance. Time is therefore a primordial factor in establishing a link between an event and an agent. So, living in a space for a long period of time could evoke a sense of belongingness in a person. This increases as time changes. It is the key formula to survival and proportional existence. But in the novel, an opposite version of survival, where time and space never goes in hand, which ultimately leads to a sense of alienation is shown.

It is the open-ended geographical automatism that characterises Stacey as a protagonist whose corresponding uses, coincidences, and uncanny juxtapositions characterize the drive of psychogeography. Her actions were dominated by the spontaneous and unexpected reflections which govern the entire outlook of the persona. Stacey's encountering of the past and present events of her life opens the way for spatial temporality in connection with time. *The Fire Dwellers* is therefore an illustration of the uncanny of the past and the present in the life of Stacey.

In the narrative what one could see is a representation of Stacey who tries to get hold of her past as well as present it is explained as follows. Whenever a person new to a space meets the other, he is always asked about the place from which he comes. The question of asking a person's whereabouts has become a facet of identity. It is even relevant to the study of geographical space. Identity and space are interconnected. It is quoted in the novel as follows:

On the train, a New found land woman with six kids, going to join her husband in an army camp in Chilliwack. None of them had ever seen a train before. One of the kids vomited in the Ladies, and Stacey started to help her wipe it up. Then the porter came in and said he'd do it. He was brown and big and he looked at Stacey

with amusement. It hadn't occurred to her that on a train you weren't expected to clean up as you were at home. (Laurence, *TFD* 7)

During the train journey, the porter asked Stacey about the place that she is going. As her journey was towards Vancouver, the man also asked about the status of her accommodation. He even suggested her to go to the Y.W.C.A. From her looks and mannerisms, the porter was able to recognize Stacey as a person from Prairie. The term prairie has become an inseparable part of her place identity.

Conceptually, place identity refers to a facet of a person's self-identity because it is said to, and wedged by, the place wherever that person has lived, with the understanding that the setting during which we have a tendency to live impacts however we have a tendency to relate to the globe. In the quote explained above the term 'small town girl' or 'prairie girl' (Laurence, *TFD* 7) describes the terrain as a marker of her identity. In reality, it should not be like that. Therefore, the place is always a tool for estimating a person's self. For geographers, human interactions with a geographical environment are part of gaining abstract information.

Stacey's children are not familiar with city life. In the novel, the children's activities are surrounded by the household. Mostly they play in the backyard by climbing up the trees and hiding in the alleys. The best way of making the children interact with the cityscapes is by taking them for a short trip and also traversing through the spaces that provide fun and enjoyment to them. The transmission between cultures leads to the creation of an identity in the form of flux. One of the fine approaches to mastering an area is with the help of taking long walks through the city. A public form of transportation and also travelling in cars leads an individual in analysing the hidden aspects of the environment. By traversing

through different spaces, one is able to retrace identical routes of the same. The familiarisation with such routes enables a sense of attachment to the city.

It is during the 1950s; the situationist group opted for a movement claiming the importance of change. The movement was set in the city of Paris. The ideology was to create awareness in the people who live around the premises of the city about the importance of architecture and human behaviour. As a result, Guy-Debord a French philosopher coined the term Psychogeography. The theory had its beginnings in 1955. It aimed to define how an urban environment helps in influencing the attitudes and behaviours of every individual who is part of a geographical space. The theory always put forward the idea of traversing through different spaces and how the experiences are formed. The collective experiences thus gained help in the transformation of human life.

The theory of psychogeography was formed to disturb the capitalist system. The utilisation of public spaces by the common man by keeping in mind the marginalised aspects of a city was the reason behind the emergence of such a concept. During the 1950s, the city was becoming unreachable. The psychogeographers revolted against the existing condition by delving themselves into the cityscapes. So, the Situationists developed a series of experimental strategies to effectively unlock the city in revolt. A flaneur is considered to be a wanderer in the modern city. He not only gets immersed in the crowd but also gets isolated by it. Therefore, the motifs of the flaneur remain hidden. The wanderer, therefore, is a bearer of both the emergence of modern urban space and also ephemeral wandering within the environments.

Stacey as a wanderer is walking in a very quick manner. Then she finds she is beside the harbour. She observes several things over there. At first, the gulls are spinning

high, freewheeling. Then, she sees the wings that look like white arcs of light crescenting above the waterfront. She also hears several voices mocking piratically at the city's edges. She feels that the city is too much shrieking itself to hear the gulls. She even has the thought if they're prophets in bird form, they might as well save their breath. They are not prophets though. They only look it, angelic presences and voices like gravel out of a grave. (Paraphrased, *TFD68*)

So through the process of walking, Stacey is able to delve into the city and shift her perception of everyday life into a new altitude. As a flaneur, she tries to transform the surroundings and tries to provide connectivity between the past, and tries to retrieve the city as a venue for socio-political reactions. Eva Clifford argues in "Walking and the Mind: Psycho Geography" that:

Psychogeography and its reimagining of the city also have roots in Dadaism and Surrealism – both art movements which explored techniques of unleashing the subconscious mind. Surrealism, like Psychogeography, shows how by shifting our perspective just slightly, the real and the extraordinary collide, or as André Breton put it, they become communicating vessels. (Clifford 14)

Architects are familiar with the different patterns of landscape. Even if it is urban or cultural, landscapes are often a mixture of patterns and are rich in terms of their function. For the creation of original spaces, one must apprehend the baseline situations and richness of the selected space. The uniqueness of the space is attained through the remarkable sensorial capabilities of every individual. The contemporary era always aims at the maximum utilization of the chosen spaces. In the past, the priorities in choosing a space were based on human perceptions. The conventional mode has always caused a

retrospective of geographical inventions that focused on human awareness and enjoying the environment. In the opening section of the novel, the geographical description of the building space is clearly mentioned by the author:

The buildings at the heart of the city are brash, flashing with colours solid and self-confident. Stacey is reassured by them, until she looks again and sees them charred, open to the impersonal winds, glass and steel broken like vulnerable live bones, shadows of people frog-splayed on the stone like in that other city.

(Laurence, *TFD* 9-10)

Here she is relieved by the views of the city and starts to explore her role as a social being. The human experience and the creation of an emotional apparatus in spite of the results generated always stigmatize the importance of time. The day-to-day responses of every human activity within a geographical space are therefore a perfect example of how an individual enjoys the role of a social being.

This idea of inclination to dissect our daily responses is best expressed in the novel, when Stacey sits quietly on the bus, looking out the window with the belief that if she doesn't look into people they would not look at her. It's her feminine coat, hat, and gloves that create their self-conscious. She feels additional reception in flex however cannot wear them down city just in case it ought to embarrass her kids to understand what she has done, therefore. Psycho geography as a subject aims at the possibility of defining the psychological effects upon an environment. In today's context, the concept always seems to port within the muddle of elements that are unrelated. But, still, it is easy to recognise identity and ideas in this context. In literal terms, it is an amalgamation of

psychology and geography. The new ways of detaining our environment analysed under this theory:

Are the small-town whores so glamorous? And anyway, it's only my conditioned reflex. I don't worry that much, whatever he does out there. It doesn't seem all that earth-shattering. It's jealousy, baby, admit it. He can and you can't. So okay. But apart from that angle, I'd like to be on the road. Not for anything but just to be going somewhere. (Laurence, *TFD* 18)

The idea of being on the road acts as a link to open the doors of psychogeography. It is a point where psychology and geography intersect. The emotional and behavioural impact of this concept put forwards helps in the creation of a new urban environment. It also acts as a reflection of an impending city that facilitates the desires of its citizens. The book entitled *Places of Heart: Psychogeography of Everyday Life* states that:

Now, perhaps more than ever before, engaged citizens of the world are keen to understand how the place works and even to contribute to the work of building better places. In part, this is because we know we stand on the precipice of enormous change. Urbanization, crowding, climate change, and shifting energy balances are challenging us to rethink how we can shape our own environments not only to ensure our survival, but also to guard our mental health. (Collard 13)

In the novel, *The Fire Dwellers* the author has tried to convey the fact of human beings living and thriving the mechanisms of their habitat. It is easy to analyse the inner mental state of human beings and the type of setting they prefer. Here the residence of Mac and Stacey is an example of their choice of habitat selection and varied psychological experiences:

The MacAindra residence on Bluejay Crescent is not classy, but it is not rundown, either. Mac and Stacey have lived for twelve years within this large square structure with its high gabled grey shingled roof, its evergreen-painted cedar-shake-covered walls and its only slightly sagging screened veranda. Stacey is attached to it, partly because she fears new house and partly because her own veins and skin cell seem connected with this one. (Laurence, *TFD* 30)

This concept is better understood when another part of this new urge to participate in the making of the settings of our lives stems from new tools that are available for us to connect with one another, share ideas, images, and even aspects of our inner mental and physiological states with one another via devices such as smartphones and the Internet.

The very human response to a physical structure is not an act of coincidence. These buildings were designed keeping in mind people's emotions and how they enable them in reconsidering their relationship with the divine cosmos. It also necessitates the idea of how an individual is able to restrict his emotions towards a space even after leaving it. In fact, studies have shown that being exposed to magnificent scenes, supernatural phenomena, or an architectural element can have a discernible impact on an individual's perception of themselves, how they treat others, and the lessons they learn within the passage of time. In the novel, there is a description of Mac living in a one-bedroom apartment.

Mac, in a one-room flat above a store, near the docks. Going through the spiel.

You, too, can travel to London, England, or Paris, France, or the frangipani-perfumed South Seas, through these spectacularly scenic pictures in *Once-Over World*,

given free with every contract for a full set of encyclopedias, agreeable monthly or weekly terms. (Laurence, *TFD* 20)

The regular stories of the region are not normally in sublime. When strolling right into a courthouse, at first one should pay a parking ticket. The excessive ceilings, ornate decoration, and heavy pilasters help in creating a sense of smallness within side the presence of a load of authority. Again, psychological research has cautioned that the shape of such areas now no longer best have an effect on how one feels. However, the attitudes and conduct of a person become the means of making one greater compliant and equipped to comply with a more and greater effective will.

Jen is scribbling around on the veranda floor. The afternoon has the feverish damp warmth of early summer, and Stacey is swinging in the brown and white striped hammer, with tasselled edges, which Mac refers to as The Anachronism. She is studying the front door, which is a lilac colour. (Laurence, *TFD* 30)

The process of scribbling on the veranda floor and swinging are all part of the day-to-day experience in the life of the characters. It, therefore, affects their behaviour and also the urge to transcend dreams into reality. While visiting a shopping mall or a department store, every person who walks in has the habit of looking for a specific item. This may lead him in entering to a hypnotic state with lowered fortifications, and a heightened inclination to spend money on something that is not needed. While walking down a wide suburban street surrounded by patterned- buildings the experiences of achingly slow passage time and a state of boredom not qualitatively different from that experienced by pioneers of sensory deprivation are generated.

A walk through an urban street market teeming with colourful wares, the delicious aroma of food, and a hubbub of human activity, on the other hand, can cause the moods to soar. The contrast between the reactions to such spaces can be read easily from individual bodies. It is seen in posture, eye patterns, head movements, and even in human brain activities. While visiting very new spaces, the nervous systems and minds are altered by the experiences gained. Stacey on a particular stage says that she could not wait to be in her hometown and out of Manawaka. She then says:

Those damn freight trains - I can still hear them, the way they used to wail away far-off at night on the prairies, through all the suffocating nights of summer when the air smelled hotly of lilacs, and in winter when the silence was so cold-brittle you thought any sound would crackle it like a sheet of thin ice, and all the trains ever said was Get on your way, somewhere, just so something will happen, get up and get out of this town. (Laurence, *TFD* 31)

Here, Stacey wishes to be in a space of her own. She wants to alienate herself from her daily chores and living environment. This occurs due to the concept of anxiety in building the modern environments. Modern urban life persuades every individual to be in close proximity to strangers. In spite of the time and memories, the state of living an unfamiliar life is strange for human beings. The biological heritage, and the style of living for which much of the human psyche is adapted always focus on how people live within different social groups that are familiar and constant. The habit of considering rudimental things in the form of possessions is a factor observed by every psychogeographer. In the novel, Stacey is also having an attachment to things at her

home. This is one of the prime features in analysing the role of a person in connecting to his house.

Thor motions Stacey to a royal blue canvas-looking chair shaped like an upside down tent. She sinks down nervously. On the floor, a black and white fur rug looks as though it had been made from the skins of stillborn monkeys, softly eerie. The coffee table top is grey-veined marble. Voluminous white drapes are like the heavy fine linens of ancient Rome. (Laurence, *TFD* 38)

Every human being within side the globe has a favourite location to head to. It is the place that captivates his mind by giving him the feeling of comfort and safety. There are few spots that people visit during sad situations. Even, one has a location to throw worries away or an area that could remind the lovely moments of life. People try to elevate their mood by spending time in the above-mentioned places.

The love towards a building or a place is very similar to loving a person. Love develops over time and also through repeated positive experiences. In the same way, one's experience and likes towards a place is the result of constant interactions and associations. Here in the novel, we can Stacey expressing her love for small-town people. It is expressed in the following manner: "I've always liked people from small towns. There's something about them. Friendliness, I guess you might say. Some of our best salesmen are from the prairies. They all like to get transferred out here" (Laurence, *TFD* 39).

Architects and designers are now familiar with a variety of methods and building materials when compared to the past. The social impact of architecture is global in its operations. As a result of that, the subject has deviated from its original status and is inclined more toward the socio-political factors applicable to every design. The dominant

factors of culture and geography, therefore, play a very active role in saturating the emotional connectivity of a person toward architecture. It also helps in bringing one steadily closer to an understanding of the basic building blocks of mental experience that is so sufficiently nuanced. The experience and attachment towards the physical structures enable a person to predict their behaviour in the chaotic settings of everyday life.

Memory episodes are shaped by ideologies transferred through socio-cultural factors that facilitate curiosity in knowing about the history and importance of the place where an individual resides. The main question is whether and under what conditions the emotional bonds that the present inhabitants of a setting developed with their new habitation. A geographical space thus helps an individual in inspiring them to know about the history and also in refurbishing the memories related to the place. In the novel, Stacey says:

I couldn't have, at one time, of course, but I find now my memory potential was hardly being tapped at all, before. Alertness-wise, the change has been really gratifying. I always had a good memory; mind you, but not what you would call really excellent. Now I think I can honestly and truthfully say it's reached the excellent mark. (Laurence, *TFD* 41)

In the present world, technologies that permit an exploration of the emotional lives of individuals during a certain period are accelerating rapidly. One is inundated with new devices that can read the minds via heartbeats, facial expressions, and eye movements. Such technologies represent a tremendous boon to researchers to understand exactly how geographical environments help in determining the identity of a person. So, the ultimate human response towards a geographical space is considered to be a factor that shapes their conduct.

The design of the world and space is based on the canonical translation of both the semiotic and actual environment of man, making it difficult to interpret. As quoted in the novel: “The Buick zooms lightly over the bridge, and Stacey, looking back, can see the lights of the city, rearing neons in lightning strokes of colour, jagged scarlet, blue like the crested heart of a flame” (Laurence, *TFD* 44).

Rebecca Solnit once commented in her book *Wanderlust: A History of Walking* that: “The only problem with the flaneur is that he did not exist except as a type, an ideal, and a character in literature...no one quite fulfilled the idea of the flaneur, but everyone engaged in some version of flâneury” (Solnit 116). A flaneur is considered to be an urban wanderer. By engrossing themselves in the city spaces, the flaneur strolls around the city aimlessly. The process of exploring a geographical space becomes their motto. So, here Stacey is also portrayed as a version of flaneuring. She therefore by watching the sights of the city is becoming an alien to her own inhabitant and also by exploring a new place from the perspective of a tourist rather than an inhabitant. Thus, as a result, the city becomes characterised as an unchartered bush. As quoted in the novel:

Last month in this city two lawyers and one doctor killed themselves. The lawyers used the exhaust pipes on their cars; the doctor simply swallowed the appropriate pills. Come on, Stacey, let me freshen your drink. That’s what Tess says. Yes, she does. She is a very dainty type. Freshen, indeed. Let me give you another slug of this drug - she doesn’t say that. She is also wont to say, in such places as the City Hall or the Hudson's Bay Company, that she wonders where the Little Girls’ Room is, making the john sound like a council hall for countless nymphets.

(Laurence, *TFD* 49)

The human interaction towards a place is driven by biological requirements mutual to humans as well as animals. Every human being enjoys the comfort of being within their loved space. Here, in the novels also one can see Mac relishing the cosiness of his personal space in his home. It is said that: “After Buckle has gone, and even Katie is now reluctantly in bed, Mac emerges from the study which is his retreat, the place where he can shut himself away, amid his business files and racing car magazines and Playboy, away from the yammering of his wife and young”(Laurence, *TFD* 63).

The feelings a person experience while being in spaces that are luxurious or spectacular are entirely different from that of their homes. In a scene between Stacey and Mathew, there is a shift in the space. This seems to be a regular process. Here, Stacey is moving towards the kitchen and Matthew follows her. This is his routine. The moment she moves into the dining room, even momentarily, he also follows her. Irritation flares in her mind and it goes out quickly. She looks at him, without knowing what could be done about him at no personal inconvenience to her. Matthew does not have enough people to talk to these days, and practically nothing ever happens to him. He still attends the church where he once used to preach, but the people he knew are getting fewer. So, the kitchen space is being utilised as the path of shift between the temporalities of body and energy.

The art of exploring a spatial subject always begins by gaining knowledge about the same. It is done through the observation of maps and also by identifying the hidden aspects of such spaces. A home is the primary geographical space where the art of flaneuring begins. It is then transferred to the next level by wandering through the busy roads of a city. The human activity that occurs within a home and a public space is

therefore an act of geographical assessment. The interactivity between a physical structure and a human being is explained in the following quote:

The apartment is very close on these warm days. Mac's mother died eighteen years ago and remains a mystery to Stacey, who knows about her only through Matthew's remarks, which tend to semi-canonize her, and the occasional remark from Mac - She always went by what he said; She wanted me to learn to play the piano, but I wasn't very good at it. (Laurence, *TFD* 69)

As a result that a new kind of relationship begins with our living spaces or homes. The nature and style of a geographical space have a huge impact on changing human thoughts and mannerisms. People always have the habit of adapting according to the situation. Adaptiveness is therefore a path of deriving one's own capabilities. The concepts of space and place are always in debate. Because their purpose and efficacy are different. It is mentioned that: "Matthew has lived alone. As long as he was preaching, he had a housekeeper. When he retired and moved into the small apartment, he began making his own meals. Mac's sister is married and now lives half a continent away" (Laurence, *TFD* 70).

In the above-mentioned line, the idea of space is given a theoretical approach, while the place is attributed in a philosophical manner. The factors taken into consideration while becoming part of a space within a place are the architecture, the mindset of the people living within it, and also the sense of belongingness generated after being part of the space for years. In the process of deriving, individuals drop their relations and other socio-political activities and permit their physical bodies to be a part of the terrain they travel and confront the realities of their visual- sights.

The method of deriving is not letting go of all the pleasures of life. Instead, it is the act of identifying one's potential in accepting and adapting to the possibilities of a space. The meaningful way of giving wings to one's ideas, feelings, and capabilities through the process of traversing through different spaces is the motto behind psychological derive. In the novel, the possibility of Derive is well explained When Ducan tries to crumple the waste paper in the basket placed upstairs. It is further explained as follows:

There is a rainbow-tinted picture of a sweetly innocuous and vacant-faced St. Francis surrounded by feathered companions. Around the edges, where there was a little blank paper, Ducan has put cramped and secretive pencil drawing - the various stages in the launching of a spaceship, its journey past moons and constellations, its arrival on a planet beyond our stars. (Laurence, *TFD* 72)

The process of walking into an unfamiliar space where no one speaks our language is an act of discomfort. As Colin Ellard suggests in *The Places of Heart: Psychogeography of the Everyday Life*:

When we walk down a wide suburban street with huge setbacks and monotonous tracks of identical cookie-cutter houses, we experience the achingly slow passage of time and a state of boredom not qualitatively different from the experienced by pioneers of sensory deprivation experiments in the 1960s. (Ellard 16)

Walking through a new neighbourhood can also create a similar sort of gut-wrenching anxiety. But one should have confidence in encountering the areas of an unknown space. A person should also have the freedom to experience space with the

outlook of a novice. It is not a chance he or she receives every day. Stacey MacAindra as part of her routine, takes her children to the beach. This is one way of exploring space:

Down on the streets near the beaches where Stacey often takes the children, there are rows of high old shaky timber houses, no proper fire-escapes. Dwelt in by whom? Sandalled artists courting immortality and trying to scrape by in this life? Extravagant-voiced poets preaching themselves? Semi-Prophets with shoulder length hair, baubled in strings of coloured seeds or grass, pseudo grmmery, maybe not pseudo for the purposes? Languid long-legged girls who speak a new tongue and make love when they feel like it, whoever, and no regrets or recriminations? —Its changes too rapidly for me to keep track. (Laurence, *TFD* 75)

The way Stacey travels on her own is an extension of her past life where she enjoyed the taste of freedom. Even after all these years she still loves to travel. “Stacey, travelling light, fearful in the sun, swimming outward as the sea were shallow and known, drinking without dignity, making spendthrift love in the days when flesh and love were indestructible” (Laurence , *TFD* 76).

Interaction towards a geographical space occurs only after the experience of being part of it. The human response to a space is thus generated in the form of affection, and belongingness toward the same. The attachments moulded thus help in the formation of memories. So, the prime factors that elevate geographical connectivity are obviously time and experience.

The long aisles of the temple. Side chapels with the silver flash of chrome where the dead fish lie among the icy strawberries. The mounds of offerings, yellow plants of grapefruit, jungles of lettuce, tentacles of green onions, arctic effluvia

flavored raspberry and orange, a thousand bear-graced mouse-legend space-crafted plastic-gifted strangely transformed sproutings of oat and wheatfields. Music hymning from invisible choirs. (Laurence, *TFD* 76)

People often live in different types of geographical environments. The idea of living in a city home often gives the space for more socio-political approaches. A sentient space, by learning one's habits and having a window to our physiology is more proactive in caring for a person. Here in the novel also mention of such a space is added:

The room is large, old-fashioned, plush, velvet-draped, and full of people. Stacey straightens her back cocktail dress with perspiring hands. At one end of the room, there is a long bar, behind which three waiters are being kept busy. Stacey pats her hair. In the middle of the room is a bandstand, from which members of a small and bored-looking orchestra are dispensing waltzes and slow foxtrots. (Laurence, *TFD*102)

Stacey as a psychogeographical flaneur tries to continue her quest by travelling to the city in order to provide a document that lists out the process of exploration.

The mission of contemporary psychogeographers is to experience and record their geographical observances. The concept of flaneuring is therefore a wonderful way to remove the pain and ignite vision. According to Laura Teusink, in the book titled *The Art of Flaneuring*: "A two hundred hour-certified Teacher for both yoga and Meditation with an inspiring ability to put the feelings associated with meditation into words and teachings, flaneuring shares many similar qualities to a type of meditation called aimless wandering" (Teusink 123).

After being triggered by the thought of aimless wandering, Stacey turns the key and starts driving. She knew that she was driving too fast, but still doesn't try to slow down the car. She even expects her husband to be following her. But there was nothing behind her. She had no idea of idea where she was going. Then: "She heads into the city along streets now inhabited only by the eternal flames of the neon forest fires and a few old men with nowhere to go or youngsters with nothing to do" (Laurence, *TFD* 171).

The art of aimless wandering is the key feature of a flaneur. The distance covered, the duration, and the methods of traversing are not calculated by a flaneur. Instead, he delves into the process and forgets about personal things by giving a surreal feeling. In the novel When Stacey reaches the highway, she feels that she has reached a place far away from her home. There, she is welcomed by the narrow shores and the twinkling stars. "Only now does Stacey slow down, not because the road is too winding and hazardous to drive swiftly, although it is, but because she can now bring herself to drive more carefully. (Laurence, *TFD* 171)

Culture is defined as the constant negotiation of academic and veined beliefs, attitudes, values, and behaviours. It is always categorised as stable and unchanging. It is vibrant, and its changes can be outlined and analysed for a better understanding of society. It is learned and practiced the importance of socializing institutions like family, school, and the media. There exist similarities among people within a cultural group. There is also deviation to those patterns by individuals and subgroups within a culture. It is through this resistance that cultural patterns change over time

Culture influences one's personal beliefs on choosing right and wrong, attitudes, likes and dislikes, values, and behaviours. It is from these cultural influences that human

identities are formed. The identities make up an important part of the human self and can be divided into three main categories: personal, social, and cultural identities. One must always avoid the temptation to consider identities as a constant entity. In an article titled “Foundations of Culture and Identity,” it is mentioned that:

Instead, our identities are formed through processes that started before we were born and will continue after we are gone; therefore our identities aren’t something we achieve or complete. Two related but distinct components of our identities are our personal and social identities (Spreckels, J. & Kotthoff, H).

Personal identity is an important facet as it always includes elements of the self. Their primary function is to remain societal by associating with human experiences. The functioning of social identity works on a different level. They accept elements of the self, which is formed after active human participation within different socio-cultural groups. The ideologies of personal identities vary according to the shift in human interests. Every change in human outlook helps in the creation of new experiences.

The interpersonal commitments between individuals who are part of a social group help in the formation of social identities. Social identities are therefore fixed in their structure. It often takes a lot of time to develop a social identity, as it leads an individual to engage himself as an interpersonal agent. Cultural identity is flexible in its form. It aims at teaching an individual to be adaptive and flexible. It is formed by social beings that are part of the cultural division. It teaches the people who live across the world to monitor and act according to the environment they belong. Collier M.J. once mentioned in “Communication Monographs”:

Since we are often a part of them since birth, cultural identities are the least changeable of the three. The ways of being and the social expectations for behaviour within cultural identities do change over time, but what separates them from most social identities is their historical roots. (M.J.)

Margaret Laurence as an author has tried to showcase the cultural and social identities of the characters that exist in all the Manawaka novels. In the Manawaka cycle which comprises four novels and one short story collection, the Tonnerre family represents four generations of Métis, novel, after novel, and also quite credibly they seem “Manawaka’s social rejects” (Morley 83). In *The Fire Dwellers*, Laurence makes the reader think about the poverty, pain, disintegration, and destruction that have befallen the Métis through pithy sketches. The novel is set mostly in Vancouver but she gives a brief picture of Tonnerre's family here. It is through Stacey’s reminiscences that Laurence outspokenly brings the forceful exclusion and degrading of the Métis clan which ultimately led to their destruction.

In the novel, the marginalisation of the Metis clan is the key subject of meta-cultural influence. The author has tried to portray the frantic struggle of the natives throughout the narratology. The prime importance was given to voicing the pain and endurance suffered by the metis. The novel also discusses how a culturally active group can be removed from society without their consent. The marginalisation of the Metis clan from their own geographical space and means of living is discussed throughout the narrative.

Memory can be identified as a factor that affects the culture of an environment. It is best portrayed through the form of a character’s experiences within a textual narrative. The flashbacks and highlighting episodes of a person’s life help in elevating the position

of memory within a time frame and culture. As a form of memory, culture provides orientation in a temporal horizon and a specific universe of meaning, that leads to the creation of individual and collective identity. She states:

Okay so in some ways I' m mean as all out. I'm going to quit worrying about it. I used to think there would be a blinding flash of light someday, and then I would be wise and calm and would know how to cope with everything and my kids would rise up and call me blessed. Now I see that whatever I'm like, I'm pretty well stuck with it for life. Hell of revelation that turned out to be. (Laurence, *TFD272*)

The Fire-Dwellers is a Manawaka novel that uses several narrative levels to convey the chaotic nature of Stacey MacAindra's life. Each level is distinguished by its physical appearance on the page, allowing the reader to feel the chaotic nature of Stacey's life while remaining essentially apart from it. Stacey is still obsessed with the age and size of her hips, and the nursery rhyme with which the novel begins still runs through her head. The ending of the novel strikes the same note of anxiety when Stacey feels the city receding as she slides into sleep. She also uses the word receiving in one of her more personal moments with her husband to describe her feeling of isolation. She even mentions it in *The Fire Dwellers*: "Yeh. Well, okay. I feel very strange. Sometimes. What do you mean, strange? Like as though everything is receding. Receding? As though I'm out of touch with everything. Everybody, I mean. And vice-versa. If you see what I mean" (Laurence 79).

Stacey suffers from an experience that her present self, now no longer best bodily but spiritually represents a decline from her beyond self, the young lady who changed

into nearly beautiful and who had hopes and ideals. She remembers the fact that she might now no longer repeat her dad and mom's mistakes. Time as a fast-changing process even creates an impact in Stacey's perspective towards life:

Okay, Dad. Here's looking at you. You couldn't cope, either. I never even felt all that sorry for you, way back when, nor for her. I only thought people ought to be strong and loving and not make a mess of their lives and they ought to rear kids with whom it would be possible to talk because one would be so goddam comprehending and would win them over like nothing on earth, and I would surely know how to do it all. So I married a guy who was confident and (in those days or so it seemed) outgoing and full of laughs and free of doubts, fond of watching football and telling low jokes and knowing just where he was going, yessir, very different from you, Dad Now I don't know. (Laurence 170)

Memory is defined as a collection of unique and personal experiences that individuals have accumulated over their lifetimes. It gives them the ability to learn and adapt from previous or past experiences. In addition, the ability to remember plays an important role in building and maintaining relationships. Moreover, it is also fashioned as a process that helps in the retaining of experience. It is a repository of material that we have learned and/or retained from experience. In addition, individuals, imagine current thoughts and ideas through short-term or working memory and store past experiences and learned values in long-term memory, also known as episodic or semantic memory.

The Fire Dwellers is a text that exemplifies the importance of memory in human life. But here Stacey is a bit skeptical about her memories. At the same time she does not want time to go fast. She is concerned about the changes that occurred to her physical

beauty over the period. The responsibilities engrossed in her life had kept her away from imagining the scopes of her past and future. But, in a later phase, she somehow comes out of the process and starts analysing the moments of her life again. In the novel, Stacey's kids continue to be pretty consistent throughout the narrative. This balance helps her in continuing a life full of tensions and responsibilities. Contrary to the fidelity of her reminiscences approximately her kids, Stacey's cycle of reminiscences of her recent activities turns into maximum adamant on the disaster factor with inside the novel, after Thor's first celebration Stacey's reminiscences of her conduct on the celebration increasingly distort her real behaviour: "It seems worse each time as she thinks of it". (Laurence, *TFD* 114)

In the very last institution of reminiscences, the outside stimuli input into the depths of Stacey's unconsciousness and surface periodically. The newspaper testimonies and pix of bomb shelters, Children scorched through napalm, murdered through their drug addict moms or who starved to demise via poverty. The escapists want that floor in each of her reminiscences and recognition-built fantasies have become much less pressing as she starts her affair with Luke. Her goals faucet deeply buried archetypal styles and snapshots. Stacey has no greater want to get away due to the fact she is gaining knowledge of to cope.

As an author of the novel, Laurence highlights the fact that Stacey has a newfound harmony in her relationship after surviving periods of self-imposed isolation and introspection. Stacey has always wanted her husband to speak to her in her language, but he cannot. After one of many family emergencies is overcome, Stacey recognizes that Mac and her oldest son speak the same language, a language that is foreign to her own.

Stacey learns to accept the uncertainties and risks associated with the future, as everyone is a fire-dweller.

The narratology in *The Fire Dwellers* adheres to the non-linear narrative technique used by Laurence. The novel focuses on the theme of women's life stuck in the prairies of Canada. The protagonist Stacey is the stereotype, a stubborn lady and a frantic middle aged house wife is an accurate psychological portrayal of Laurence. Her thoughts, fantasies and dreams surrounded in her life ultimately leads to the interior monologues. Laurence experiments variety of voices and uses language in multiple ways. Stacey could hear her inner and external voices -Her monologue, her voices of memories from the past, her challenges, threats and prayers to God. Laurence's narrative technique is more complex in *The Fire Dwellers* than her other works.

The Fire Dwellers is a novel that works upon the concept of psychogeography and culture. Here, psychogeography is considered a form of exploration. Stacey is the explorer of the spaces around her. By adapting to the different cultures and lifestyles of Manawaka and Vancouver, she is able to identify the difference between cultural, social, and personal identity. She even uses memory as a tool for escaping from the chaos of her daily life.

To conclude, Stacey is confined by her daily duties. She fails to explore her surroundings. But at a later moment, she identifies that the city she lives in seems to be strange and unknown to her. It is at that point, she is triggered by the flaueristic notions and starts to explore the geographical spaces around her through the process of walking. Stacey is therefore portrayed as an aimless wanderer, who breaks all the traps imposed on her. She is thus able to derive the essence of the place that she has been living in.