

A Study on Piquette in *The Loons* from The Perspective of Spivak's Post-colonialism

LIU Wen-tao

Yunnan Minzu University, Kunming, China

The Loons is one of the famous short stories of Canadian female writer Margaret Lawrence. In this story, the author portrays an Indian woman—Piquette, who is a tragic figure and lives as a marginalized group. This article will analyze Piquette in *The Loons* from the perspective of Spivak's Post-colonialism, revealing the fate of colonial women under the imperialist and patriarchal discourse and deepen the reader's understanding of this work.

Keywords: spivak, post-colonialism, *The Loons*, piquette

Introduction

Margaret was a representative female writer during the Renaissance of Canadian literature in the 1960s and 1970s. She was famous for her Manawaka story series, in which she used some unique writing techniques to show the female's pursuit for self-value and growth. *The Loon* is a short story written by Margaret. It tells the tragic life of an Indian woman who tried to survive in a white-dominated society but finally died in a fire. At the same time, this story represents the tragic fate of the marginal group under the imperialist and patriarchal discourse. The most prominent feature of Spivak's post-colonial theory is her feminist perspective. She pays more attention to the situation of post-colonial women in the Third World and believes that these women are the most marginal group under the control of patriarchy and white man. This article will analyze the character called Piquette in *The Loon* from Spivak's post-colonial theory, revealing the situation of female marginal figures under the rule of mainstream culture, so as to strengthen readers' understanding of this work and bring them some inspirations.

Spivak's Post-colonialism

Spivak is a well-known post-colonial critic, and called as "Three Musketeers" of post-colonial critics with Edward Said and Homi Bhabha. Spivak's post-colonial theory has a distinctive feature, which includes her feminist and deconstructive ideas. In the post-colonial theory camp, only Spivak is really willing to label herself as a "Post-colonial Intellectual" and a "Post-colonial Female Intellectuals" (Li, 2008, p. 172).

Firstly, Spivak's post-colonial theory is closely related to her feminist thought. Post-colonialism and feminism have certain similarities. Both of them focus on the study of "Others", who are marginalized by the white-dominated and patriarchal society. These critics want to safeguard the rights of marginalized groups and

allow them to make their own discourses. As a feminist critic with a strong desire to protect women, Spivak's attitude towards feminism is contradictory. She criticized traditional Western feminism from the perspective of women in the third world. She believes that on the one hand, Western feminism resist Western male hegemony from the perspective of female, exposing the oppression of Western male power on women; on the other hand, it is difficult for Western feminists to get rid of the ideology of white-dominated culture and see the real situation of women in the third world. For quite a long time, Western feminists focused mainly on white women and post-colonial theorists focused on third-world men, so the situation of third-world women was always ignored and unable to present their own discourses. At this time, the post-colonial theory of Spivak triggered a new understanding and discovery of the women in third-world.

Secondly, a key word in Spivak's post-colonial theory is "Subaltern". This term appeared in her article *Can the Subaltern Speak?* (1985). In this article, Spivak explores the ancient Indian custom of widow's death, revealing the distorted discourse of colonial women under the imperialist and patriarchal discourse. "Subordinate" refers to those marginalized groups who have no right to speak and cannot express their feelings. Imperialism rejects and reshapes the colonial culture through the discourses such as science, universal truth, and religious redemption, etc. On the one hand, epistemic violence complemented the imperialist political and military occupation of the colonies and made this violence legalized. On the other hand, this approach makes the colonial people lose their culture and the possibility of expressing themselves, and can only be in a state of attachment. Because of the oppression of imperialism and patriarchal discourse, colonial women are often pushed to the most marginal areas of society.

In a conclusion, Spivak's post-colonial theory makes us pay more attention to the situation of women in third-world. What's more, her theory breaks the traditional Western feminism and enriches the post-colonial criticism, revealing the oppression of patriarchy and white-dominated society.

Piquette in *The Loons*

The Loons is a short story written by Margaret Lawrence that reveals the tragic fate of a Indian girl who struggled under the common oppression of patriarchy and white-dominated society. This story took place in the small town of Manawaca and showed a story of the Indian girl Piquette through the perspective of a little white girl. Piquette was born in a poor Indian family. Although she was my classmate, but the relationship between us was not very familiar. It was the first time for me to get along with her because my dad was her attending doctor. In order to take care of Piquette better, my dad invited her to spend the summer vacation with us in Diamond Lake. However, after this summer vacation, the relationship between us did not change much. In winter of this year, my father was died and I was busy with my father's funeral. And because of it, I scarcely noticed that Piquette was no longer at school. After four years, I met piquette again. She changed a lot and told me that she was about to marry a white guy. At the end of the story, after another four years, my mother told me that she divorced and returned to this small town, and died with her two young children in fire.

Firstly, Spivak focus on the situation of post-colonial female. As a female, Piquette could not feel the slightest warm and care in her family. When she was a little girl, she needed to do all the housework and took care of her father and brothers even she was suffering from severe tuberculosis of the bone. Due to the lack of good rest and care, her disease continued to recur and even could not be recovered in a long time. In addition, all

the sources of income of this family could only depend on men, and as a woman, Piquette had no opportunity to work outside. And in the end of the story, Piquette returned home after she divorced, but she suffered the indifference and discrimination from male citizens even included her father and brother. And in the home, she not only looked after her two young children but also had to manage the housework for her father and brothers. This living environment accelerated Piquette's tragic end. From the story of Piquette, we can know that the post-colonial female doesn't have the right to have their discourse and the opportunity for income. They always be the most marginalized group of this society and opposed by the man.

Secondly, Spivak focus on the situation of "Subaltern". As a girl of Indian descent, Piquette was discriminated against in the white-dominated society. In this short story, there was such a plot, my father held a family meeting about whether to take Piquette to Diamond Lake. My grandmother said that she disagreed this decision and even chose to abandon the vacation because of Piquette's existence. At the same time, my mother also didn't agree to go with Piquette at first, but agreed finally because of my grandmother's absence. For me, Piquette was just an embarrassing existence, and the relationship between us was not close. In short, white women of different ages had shown the indifference and discrimination towards Piquette, who was an Indian girl. Obviously, what the author written here was not only the discrimination of mainstream society against minorities, but also the deviation of the Western feminist movement. This also coincided with Spivak's post-colonial feminist ideas. The indifference and discrimination of Western white women towards the third-world women precisely illustrated the shortcomings of traditional Western feminism, because they hold the superiority as the white and could not understand the real situation of women in the third world. The reason why Piquette always appeared sullen and depressed was because of the common discrimination of men and women who lived in a white-dominated society. She used a mask of indifference to resist invasion and harm from the outside world, and refused to get along with other people. In order to change her destiny, she chose to marry a white male and was very happy about it. During this period, she was passionate and confident, and her eyes were full of hope for life. However, the marriage she longed for did not bring any good changes for her life. In the end, she divorced her husband and returned to her hometown with her two children. Unfortunately, she died in the fire accidentally. This tragic ending also indicates the difficult situation of the "subalterns" in the white-dominated society.

All in all, Piquette's survival dilemma comes from two aspects, one is the Indian identity marginalized by white-dominated society, the other one is the female identity oppressed by men from home and outside. From the perspective of Spivak's post-colonial theory, Piquette is a symbol of the subordinate image and the female in the third world. She is oppressed by the patriarchal and the white-dominated society, and belongs to the marginal figures of the society.

Conclusion

In a conclusion, the tragic end of Piquette was due to her female and Indian identity. According to analyze the character of Piquette from the perspective of Spivak's post-colonial theory, we can find that it is difficult for marginalized groups to survive in the patriarchy and white-dominated society. In addition, the post-colonial theory of Spivak triggered a new understanding of the women in third-world. What's more, if female in third world want to strive for the rights of themselves, they must try their best to have their own discourse in this society.

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