

The Architectonics of Narrative: A Chronotopic Analysis of *Let the Great World Spin* by Colum McCann

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Abstract

Let the Great World Spin by Colum McCann introduces a new form of narration, one that problematizes the traditional role of voice and technique. Therefore, to simply label the text as polyphonic is to do half the work. This paper tends to examine the multi-person narration in the novel exploring its nature and function in the immediate context of the novel. By employing Bakhtin's concept of chronotope the paper analyze the spatio-temporal setting of the novel. The paper posits that polyphonic narration in the novel ruptures the socio-economic hierarchies as they are presented in the 1970s American milieu as depicted in the novel. It makes unusual connections between the reader and the text by evolving a non-linear structure in which characters, despite being located in different positions are threaded together through a single event. It also creates a link between the fact and fiction because McCann has designed his textual plot around a real event of aerial artistry which in turn is linked with various imaginary characters. Thus it not only ensures broader social analysis of the American society but also introduces a new form of narration in which divergent voices despite contesting for a semantic space in the text converge on a single event; one which not only metaphorically unifies them but also ties and unties the knots of the plot.

Keywords: Architectonics, Narrative, Chronotope, Spatio-Temporal Setting, Organizing Center, Vertical Narrative Axis.

This paper tends to investigate the underlying descriptive patterns of the narrative along with a detailed analysis of the text by using Bakhtin's concept of chronotope. The in-depth study of the text through the lens of chronotope will help to interpret the text in a vertical narrative axis which in turn defines the spatial-temporal setting and the places that the writer and reader take up to interpret the text. This aspect widens the horizon of the text and liberates it from the restricted and encircled world of the text. Generally, architectonics refers to that how something is build up and investigates its constituents which relate to one another. On a larger scale, it highlights the manner in which the author has described various components which forge a complete whole out of them in the form of a text. Chronotope is a term coined by

Bakhtin in his two hundred page monograph on *'The Chronotope'*. He defines it as "it is the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature". (84) He further describes it as, "The chronotope is the place where the knots of narrative are tied and untied". (250) It tries to point out what the author has written in one given time and one given place and what a reader can extract out of it in his particular space and time enabling new meanings to emerge. It helps to put the idea of meaning into play, negating the fixity and rigidity. Every text uses indicators to give text a proper meaning and to construct a plot and chronotope inquires the indicators of 'here' and 'there' and 'before' and 'after'. The chronotope does not merely specify the internal structure of the narrative but also shows a connection between the textual content and socio-cultural context of the narration. Bakhtin states, "In literature and art itself, temporal and spatial determinations are inseparable from one another, and always colored by emotions and values. Abstract thought can, of course, think time and space as separate entities and conceive them as things apart from the emotions and values that attach to them. But living artistic perception makes no such divisions. . . Art and literature are shot through with Chronotopic values of various degrees and scope." (243)

Colum McCann has also made use of this pattern in his text under discussion *Let the Great World Spin*. He has delineated this concept of chronotope as a recurring motif in his text. The text is made up of different individual stories yet connected to one another through the uniting force of the chronotope of tightrope walking. McCann starts his narrative with a detailed account of the strange act which is going to take place and the various responses from the crowd in New York back in 1970s. The event sets the construction of plot in which different individuals portray their lives with a particular ideological stance and the way they cope with their life by walking on their respective tightropes. McCann has tried to make a link between the real event of tightrope walking between the twin towers of World Trade Center and the imaginary lives of the twelve lifelike and life-size characters. The story revolves around this brave aerial act and all the threads of the narrative are linked with it. It provides a meaning to the text and also enables the reader simultaneously to derive multiple interpretations out of it. As chronotope serves in multiple ways it creates meaning for the text. It also acts as an organizing center for various narrative events. It figures the narrative in a way to facilitate particular interpretations. It has the ability to show forth-coming events. As it is quoted in *Narrative Dynamics: Essays on Time, Plot, Closure and Frames* that "All the novel's abstract elements – philosophical and social generalizations, ideas, analyses of cause and effect – gravitate toward the chronotope and through it take on flesh and blood, permitting the imaginary power of art to do its work such is the representational significance of the chronotope". (22)

McCann's narrative sets the plot in a way that the chronotope of tightrope walking becomes a point where different strands of the plot are

unveiled and interpreted as well. In his book *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* Bakhtin insisted on the fact that "every character in a text is unique and irreplaceable. Every character enjoys his uniqueness whether he wants it or not, it is something which is given to him and the purpose of presenting multiple consciousnesses is to actualize this uniqueness of each and every character in the text. Thus a text assumes a position in which different perspectives and ideologies are intermingled. Plot in Dostoevsky's polyphonic novel is absolutely devoid of any sort of finalizing foundations. Its goal is to place a person in various situations that expose and provoke him, to bring people together and make them collide and conflict-in such a way, however, that they do not remain within this area of plot-related contact but exceed its bounds". (276- 77) It also covers both objective and subjective nature of characters.

Let the Great World Spin is a novel which is comprised of several consciousnesses or characters whose ideologies and truths are introduced and interconnected in the text through a major event which is based on a real tightrope walk of Philip Petit between the twin towers of World Trade Centre back in 1974. Colum McCann has masterfully captured the spirit of that time and presented the social life of New York at that time in a lifelike manner. Each of eleven characters mentioned in the text have their individual ideas and truths and they are connected with each other knowingly or unknowingly. At the very beginning of the novel, there is a vivid description of the tightrope walker who is standing at the height of one hundred and ten stories and is all prepared to walk on the wire which is tied between the twin towers.

There is a detailed account of his body language which is a clear indicator of his determination. His act has joined people from every walk of life; there were "Lawyers. Elevator operators. Doctors. Cleaners. Prep chefs. Diamond merchants. Fish sellers. Sad-jeaned whores . . . Stenographers. Traders. Delivery boys. Sandwich board men. Cardsharks . . . a locksmith . . . a bike messenger . . ." (McCann 4). These people were gathered there and were responding to the act of tightrope walking in their own way in which they apprehend the reality. Tightrope walker is like magnet whose charismatic personality has brought these differing 'consciousnesses' together on the same platform. "The man above was a word they seemed to know, though they had not heard it before" (7). He thus appears to be a man of predetermined ideology; the one who wants to affirm his ideological authenticity through his brave act of tightrope walking. He is a man with an independent nature and he wants to establish his uniqueness through this very act. He is a man who wants to explore reality himself without any authorial dictation. The mob is also described according to their individual ideologies; there is a sense of integrity that is given to them through the shared act of watching tightrope walker "the air felt suddenly shared" (7). Their subjective mental states are also delineated as:-

Would he jump, would he fall . . . was he solitary, was he a decoy . . .
he was an Arab, a Jew, a Cypriot, an IRA man, that he was really a

publicity stunt, a corporate scam . . . or that he was a protester and he was going to hang a slogan . . . (5-6).

The opinion of every character gathered there, has its own validity and carries its own narrative weight. It is representative of the fact that there is a kind of realistic mutual social activity going on in which everyone is taking part having his own particular thinking but at the same time it is not a same experience for everyone. Though they are witnessing a combine spectacle but they are free to respond to it in their own way. The complete freedom of every character ensures his individual existence because if a character fails to possess this independence, he will not understand the objective reality and as a result it would be difficult for him to exist. Thus, Philip Pettit's walk serves as a unifying force for all the characters in the narrative because his aerial act provides a link to every character and joins them in the story narration.

The next character introduced in the narrative is of John Andrew Corrigan, a priest in the Bronx living among the cast-offs of the society. His narration provides a background to all the upcoming events and narrations for the rest of the text is based upon these characters and their acquaintances. His ideology is that despite all the ugliness and the hardships of this world, there is still a room for 'small beauties' in life. (20) The life of Corrigan is presented in the novel with all its ups and downs. He is shown as participating in different activities throughout his life. His dialogues with his acquaintances and even with strangers are described to show his subjective and objective point of views. It not only confirms his ideological authenticity but also justifies his existence in an objective world. As there is no finality of the self, because it is always in the process of evolution so is the case with the character. There is always an element of unfinalisability for as a character engages him in social activities his personality also changes therefore, no fixed and stable definition of the character is possible. At one hand, Corrigan is completely aware of his surroundings; he not only adjusts himself but also justifies his awareness of these stark realities. On the other hand, he is also a keen observer of his own self and often comments on his individual ideology in front of his brother. He says, "I'm supposed to be a man of God but I hardly ever mention Him to anyone . . . I keep these thoughts to myself. For my own peace of mind. The ease of my conscience." (30) The problem with Corrigan is that he wants to live with other people's miseries and hardships in order to forget his own. This is the reason that he provides whores with all the possible facilities and they love him back.

McCann has successfully delineated the subjective nature of Corrigan and the objective consciousnesses around him. All the characters that are acquainted or linked somehow with Corrigan are free to express their words and ideas according to the situation they are put in. A hindrance comes between him and his bond with God which can also be called a rupture in his pious and innocent easy-going life is his falling in love with Adelita, a non-Catholic, nurse by profession. He tries very hard to avoid her but fails. He

continually keeps himself reminding that “strengthen yourself against this, this is a test, be ready, be ready” (51). This is because he does not want to lose his faith and belief in God. He compares his condition to a person who has fallen from height and has lost his innocence. As Corrigan says, “I’m descending, sinking like a hopeless swimmer. And I’m saying, God don’t allow this to happen . . . But it was so pleasant. I wanted to keep my eyes closed and pry them open at the same time.” (51) His consciousness and his dilemmas are described to us in a realistic manner and from multiple points of views. With every changing voice his personality also undergoes a change and a new layer is added to his character. With his individual thinking he confirms his presence among other characters and his connection with other people around him makes him understand the fact that other have their own validity of opinion and he is one among them. He says:-

I don’t even judge myself by my actions. I judge myself by what’s in my heart. And it’s rotten because it wants to own things, but it’s not rotten because it’s the most content I’ve ever been, and it’s the most content she’s ever been too . . . you know my vows. I used to think there was no other man in me, no other person, just me, the devoted one . . . and maybe it’s not even a matter of losing faith. (55)

Corrigan’s life-long devotion to God enabled him to see a brighter side of everyone, be it pious or not. His interaction with Adelita makes him understand that though she is non- Catholic yet she understands the rules of being in Order. She also accepts things with an open heart. And in the depths of his heart, Corrigan knows that ‘she had an interior order, and for all her toughness there was a beauty that rose easily to the surface’ (64-65). His brother Ciaran says, “yet nothing was simple, certainly not simplification. Poverty, chastity, obedience – he had spent his life in fealty to them, but was unarmed when they turned against him” (67) The similarity between him and the tightrope walker is that as the tightrope walker was maintaining balance on the rope to reach the other side likewise Corrigan tries to gain balance throughout his life between his personal codes of morality and the rules of being in Order. The thing is that nothing is fixed and stable in this world, everything is in a process of evolution and transformation. There can be no final word about anything.

The next character in the narrative is Claire Soderberg who is a grieved and bereaved mother and has lost her only son in the Vietnam War. With her voice the narrative shifts from masculine to feminine perspective. This male/female dichotomy in narration stresses upon the authority which is being given to the different narrators irrespective of their gender because all the narrators add something new in the narrative. Though she is not related directly with the main events of the narrative yet her voice unfolds some of the important threads that help enhancing the plot. Through her voice we are able to get another point of view about the tightrope walker as he is trying to establish his identity through his rebellious aerial stunt likewise she is

struggling to reinstate her social identity after the death of her only son; in the company of other ladies who belong to different stratas of society. She tries to maintain her uniqueness among them. Her narration starts with a commentating voice that informs us about Claire's life, her social status and her daily routines. Her personal narrative is comprised of her memories about her son. She is a grief-stricken mother who has lost her son in the war. Though she is living a luxurious life but her abundance of money cannot bring her dead son back to life. All the comforts are meaningless to her and she is living an artificial life which has lost its vitality. She tries to lessen her grief and sorrow by spending some time with her friends but in the end she always finds herself in despair. She has some friends who have either lost their sons in the war or share her grief that life has become colorless for them. Her life is like a tightrope walk upon which she is walking where she has left her past behind and is grappling with present which is leading her towards an unknown destination, and it is also uncertain that she will pass through these difficulties. Her snobbish life is an attempt to show that she is leading a contented life but in reality she joins these gatherings to blow out her sorrows in the smoke of tobacco. War has done a great harm to her; she has hated its existence from the core of her heart "War. The disgusting proximity of it. Its body odour. Its breath on her neck all the time, two years now pullout, three, two a half, five million, does it matter? Nothing's over. The cream becomes the milk. The first star at morning is the last one at night." (85)

When Marcia informs them about the tightrope walker, all of them have their individual opinions about him. Their dialogues are truthful justification of their existence in the world, in which they have suffered a lot and which has challenged their identities. They are struggling to re-establish their identities to give their existence some sort of meaning. They are afraid of the idea that a young man is up in the air and what could happen to him. This reminds them of their lost sons and the very idea of his fall from the height frightens them. Each of them expresses her reaction after hearing the news of their son's death. By the end of her story, Claire succeeds in figuring out that what is the connection between her and the tightrope walker.

She knows what it is about the walking man. It strikes her deep and hard and shivery. It has nothing to do with angels or devils. Nothing to do with art, or the reformed, or the intersection of a man with a vector, man beyond nature. None of that. He was up there out of a sort of loneliness. What his mind was, what his body was: a sort of loneliness. With no thought at all for death. (112)

She realizes the fact that life with all its sufferings is worth living and that death is the ultimate end of everyone so one should enjoy this life because if it gives you sorrows it has a lot of good things to offer too. This belief makes her forget the hardships of her life. She says "Let's pull back the curtains and allow light through . . . we hurt, and have one another for the healing" (114)

The next chapter *A Fear of Love* introduces two more characters, an artist couple, Lara and Blaine. They are connected with the mainstream of the narration in a way that they are responsible for the accident which took lives of Corrigan and one of those hookers Jazzlyn. Their extravagant life is described in detail in the text before and after that accident. Life becomes altogether changed for them as there is a visible change in their stances and perception before and after the mishap. After that she is caught in a condition in which “you want to arrest the clocks, stop everything for half a second, give yourself a chance to do it over again, rewind the life, uncrash the car, run it backward . . . unshatter the glass, go about your day untouched” (128). Lara’s sense of guilt takes her to ‘Metropolitan Hospital’ where Corrigan and Jazzlyn were brought after the accident. The narrative voice describes Lara’s condition and her feelings of remorse when she receives late Corrigan’s possessions. “I had taken it out of embarrassment, out of a sense of duty to my lie, an obligation to save face, and perhaps even to save my hide” (136). Though Corrigan is an unknown person for her and she also knows nothing about Jazzlyn, but she feels herself forced to pick up the possessions of Corrigan from the hospital. Perhaps she is doing this to compensate for the wrong which is committed by Blaine and Lara herself. Her guilt leads her to the Bronx with which she had no connection before. This is how the accident on the FDR links her life with that of the inhabitants of the Bronx. Lara returns the possessions of Corrigan to Ciaran and afterwards accompanies him to the funeral of Jazzlyn. She feels a kind of affinity with Ciaran ‘we were the only white people there’ (144). Soon after her arrival in the Bronx, she comes to know that Jazzlyn was a prostitute which reduces her guilt for some time but then her conscience scolds her of cheap thinking and she realizes that her life is totally different from that of Jazzlyn’s. Though living in New York, Jazzlyn was known because of her identity as a black, her social status as being a prostitute and her belonging to the lower outcast strata of the society. She was forced to do such things because society offered very few opportunities to the outcasts. As the priest says in the cemetery:

Young girls like Jazzlyn were forced to do horrific things . . . this was a vile world. It forced her into the vile things. She had not asked for it . . . she was under the yoke of tyranny. Slavery may be over and gone, but it was still apparent . . . and now she is on her way to a place where there were no governments to chain her or enslave her . . . (145).

The preacher’s words ‘behind you will be a life that you never want to see again’ (145) reminds Lara of her previous life which was full of wrong-doings and to which she does not want to move again. She now realizes that all the difficulties in life lead you to some sort of ‘beauty’ in the end which purifies you and alters you in a new person.

With the next chapter the narrative voice also shifts from Ciaran to the tightrope walker again; thus making connections with all the voices of the

narrative. This abrupt shift of voice helps the reader to dissociate them from the main action. It prevents the readers to get engaged and identify with the characters and thus allows more elasticity of meaning to the narrative. It also suggests that more positive changings are possible in the lives of these characters because they are carrying and shifting their lives from one point to the other and are not obstacle or hindered by the losses which came into their way. Thus the voice of tightrope walker helps to advance the plot and adds a new string in the course of narrative. His walk is an act of defiance because he tries to supersede laws and put his life in danger which is prohibited by laws and by his act he wants to ascertain his individuality by breaking social orders and defying human limitations.). He wants to walk over the rope 'beautifully' (160); to him, it was like a faith to walk upon the wire facing all the dangers and difficulties with a hope to get on the other side of the wire. It can be a kind of metaphor for the life which is being lived by all the people, introduced to us through the narrative voices. The life which is uncertain, full of disturbing and troublesome events for many of the characters; 'what he had to do was reimagine things, make an impression in his head, a tower at the far end of his vision, a cityline below him' (161). As the priest has talked about the purification and lightness of soul after passing through the difficulties so is the case with tightrope walker, he feels himself floating as if he has got wings, a process of purification.

Within seconds he was pureness moving, and he could do anything he liked. He was inside and outside his body at the same time, indulging in what it meant to belong to air, no future, no past, and this gave him the offhand vaunt to his walk. He was carrying his life from one side to the other . . . the core reason for it all was beauty. Walking was a divine delight. Everything was rewritten when he was up in the air. New things were possible with the human form. It went beyond equilibrium. (164)

The idea behind this is the fact that after the sufferings one gets purification of soul, worldly upheavals remain unimportant and what gains prominence is the vision of 'beauty' beyond that. When the soul is purified the person becomes 'uncreated' (164) free from shackles of the world.

There comes two characters the imagist Fernando Marcano and the phone hacker Sam Peters which have nothing deeper in their characteristics yet they contribute in the advancement of the plot. They are not given a continuing role and appear momentarily in the action still their individuality sets the mood and gives the narrative a more complete shape. . They act as an excellent tool to explore and analyze the main characters. They are there to heighten tension of the plot and also help moving the action ahead. As phone hacking provides the hackers a chance to connect with various people whom they do not know; they may symbolize the multitude of people who were brought together by a single act of tightrope walking. There were people who were not even acquainted with one another yet this single event tied their lives together either directly or indirectly. Similarly, the imagist who is fond of taking photographs in the darkened tunnels may symbolize Corrigan who is

also interested in the dark and shadowy lives of the social outcasts. And his liking for the ordinary tags may be taken as his concern for the ordinary people who are doomed into darkness. The tunnels may also symbolize the lives of Tillie and Jazzlyn whose unlit lives were captured by Corrigan and his endeavors to bring them to light by extending his helping hand towards them. We can say by analyzing their narrations that these minor characters serve as plot advancement and character revelation respectively.

Tillie Henderson is the next most important character in the narrative. She is a hooker in the Bronx, neighbor of Corrigan and mother of Jazzlyn. Her voice explains the social status of prostitutes as being on the periphery of the society which offers them nothing or very little. Their position as social outcasts allows them no advantages at all. The narrative of Tillie is full of flashbacks; her memory serves as a tool to remember her past experiences in order to complete her tasks the whole of her life comes before her eyes when she hears the news of her daughter's demise. She re-constructs the memories to fit her current needs and motives. This formation and organization of memories help structuring the identity and they have influence on an individual's development. Tillie is so much grieved on her pathetic life that she is all determined to ask God about it if she ever get the chance to meet Him. 'I'll get Him to tell me why He done what He done to me and what He done to Corrie and why do all the good ones die and where is Jazzlyn now and why she ended up there and how He allowed me to do what I done to her' (230). It is not the world which is despicable and evil but the people in it as Tillie says, 'If you think of the world without people it's about the most perfect thing there ever is. It's all balanced and shit. But then come the people, and they fuck it up' (230). In the end of Tillie's narrative, she thinks that she is not sure that the world will pardon her of the guilt of thrusting Jazzlyn in the stroll but she is sure of one thing that her grandbabies are never going to do this thing ever.

The next voice is about tightrope walker again. His voice puts him in the centre of the towers and of the narration too. In the start of the narrative, the tightrope walker exemplifies the purpose and focus which is missing from the character's lives but in the end he reflects that very purpose and focus which propels these characters to move on. As far as the space is concerned, the narrative moves from the centre to periphery and vice versa. The only purpose of his performing this tightrope walking is to forget everything about existence. He wants to become unidentified to himself. 'The wire was about pain too . . . but the joy was losing the pain so that it no longer mattered' (241). He wanted to feel the condition of losing himself on the wire. After he was seized by the sergeants, he was asked by the crowd and reporters of the reason but he felt himself inclined to ask that why they were asking him the reason. It was a journey to forget the pains and agonies of life and to stop thinking about one's existence in the world.

The next voice is that of Mr. Soderberg, a judge in New York; his voice tells us about the happenings in the New York City. "New York had a

way of doing that. Every now and then the city shook its soul out. It assailed you with an image, or a day, or a crime, or a terror, or a beauty so difficult to wrap your mind around that you had to shake your head in disbelief.” (247) Mr. Soderberg is of the view that in this city things repeat to happen because it does not feel any liability to the past. It is moving forward continuously because it never cares about what happened in the past. It is sad because the city will also not remember Corrigan as a modern day reincarnation of Christ. This is the reason that there are not so many memorials in this city. People are used to live in “every day present” (247) and they are not concerned with what occurred yesterday. Mr. Soderberg thinks that what would be the reason which triggered the tightrope walker to perform this kind of strange thing between the Twin Towers. To him, the tightrope walker has generated a kind of monument for himself. The narrative voice tells about the judicial profession; “most people thought that he lived in some sort of mahogany heaven, that it was a highfalutin job, a powerful career, but the true fact of the matter was that, beyond reputation, it didn’t amount to much at all” (252). He thinks of himself as a person who is wearing a dark wrap, on a ladder drawing out all the decayed leaves from the gutters with his bare hands. He came into this profession with the thoughts of turning around the system but he has now realized that “The greatest part of the law was the wisdom of toleration. One had to accept the fools” (255). He acknowledges his position as a man who is there to protect people and their rights, who is there to maintain peace and justice in the city but despite all his endeavors the happenings in the New York City were very much disgusting.

New York City also has been described as character by Colum McCann. It is the place where almost all the action of the narrative takes place. It connects the characters with one another. The city proves fruitful and promising for some characters and unfavorable and inauspicious for others. Soderberg’s voice tells that,

How it lifted babies by the hair, and how it raped seventy-year old women, and how it sets fire to couches where lovers slept . . . and how the union men ran roughshod over their bosses, and how the Mafia took a hold of the boardwalks and how fathers used daughters as ashtrays . . . and how whole families got blown away, and how paramedics ended up with crushed skulls, and how addicts shot heroin into their tongues . . . and how shop-keepers gave back the wrong change, and how the mayor wheezed and wheedled and lied while the city burned down to the ground, got itself ready for its own little funeral of ashes, crime, crime, crime. (257)

The next character introduced in the narrative is that of Adelita. It focalizes mainly on her relationship with Corrigan. With him, Adelita learns about his habits, like he used to cool his cafe with three short and one long blow. That he cannot feel the taste of cereal and that “he’s good at fixing toasters.” (283) All she wanted was that he may accept both his Order and her. She is never

able to understand that what he means by the word beauty he whispered to her in his last moments. "I can only hope that in the last minute he was at peace." (283) Her voice also notifies that she has heard of the man who walked between the Twin Towers. She remains in the confusion as to choose between her responsibility towards her children and her affiliation and attachment with Corrigan. There came some times when she wanted her children to disappear for some time so that she may spend some time with Corrigan alone, without any disturbance. "But just let me be alone, with him, this man, Corrigan, for a tiny while, just me and him, together" (282). In the end of her narrative she says, "Things are tangled, there are no answers, maybe he thought she deserved another chance, he was angry, she shouldn't have gone to jail. Or maybe something else got to him" (284). She says that Corrigan used to say that there is no better faith than a wounded faith. And sometimes she thinks that perhaps Corrigan was trying to wound his faith by living with her. Perhaps he wanted to test his faith. At times when she is completely broken she thinks that perhaps he was driving so rashly because he wanted to tell her that he is finished with her. And in her ecstatic moments she thinks that perhaps he was coming to inform her that he is ready to leave his Order just to live with her. In the very end of her narrative, she says that even in his absence, Corrigan was there in her clapboard house. He is there with his arms spread around Eliana and Jacobo. Her voice echoes:-

Nothing will ever really take him from the couch. It is just a simple brown thing, with mismatching cushions, and a hole in the armrest where it has been worn through, a few coins from his pocket fallen down into the gaps, and I will take it with me now wherever I go, to Zacapa, or the nursing home, or any other place I happen to find. (284)

Gloria is the character that comes next to Adelita. Her narrative tells about her history right from her childhood to her old age in the Bronx. She is a close friend of Claire Soderberg. Gloria lost her two husbands and her three sons in different ways. And the state of being alone has broken her. She now tries to find peace of mind in the company of the grieved mothers who have also lost their sons in the war. Gloria's narration is also replete with flashbacks. She expresses her feelings as,

Some people think love is the end of the road, and if you're lucky enough to find it, you stay there. Other people say it just becomes a cliff you drive off; but most people who have been around awhile know it's just a thing that changes day by day, and depending on how much you fight for it, you get it, or you hold on to it, or you lose it, but sometimes it's never even there in the first place. (304)

Being a colored woman and having gone through stressful events in her life she decides to move to New York City. In the streets of New York, she observed that there were a lot of fences and wires, people had put their radios in the windows. Women were looking out of the high windows in the streets

and down there were beggars who were gathered there at the traffic signals in wait of getting something from the cars that would stop there. “. . . everything in New York is built upon another thing, nothing is entirely by itself, each thing as strange as the last, and connected” (306). In Bronx she never tries to get acquainted with those hookers. But when some social workers bring Jazzlyn’s twin babies out after her accidental death she is caught in the feeling of compassion for those innocent faces. She decides to give them shelter and a respectable future. And she thought, “Nothing felt better than that, not in a long time.” (322)

The narrative takes a shift forward and jumps from 1970s to 2006 again in the New York City. This time we are introduced with Jaslyn one of the twin babies adopted by Gloria. The narrative starts with Jaslyn looking at the picture of tightrope walker walking between the towers; she found this picture four years before in San Francisco in a sale. She bought it from there and got it framed. She has developed a certain affinity with this picture because it was taken on the same day when her mother died. She decides to go to New York to see Claire who was on her death bed. It was her responsibility because almost six years ago Claire has spent her time with Gloria on her death bed. One thing which she still kept to herself was that her mother and grandmother belonged to the line of hookers. She remembers that when she was young she used to walk along the pavement with one foot on it and one on the road. She imagines that Claire and Gloria were like that walking on the same pavement but one of them on it and the other on the road. She has heard about the Irish priest Corrigan, who also died with her mother. She was curious to know more about him. Her sister Janice, however, opposed the idea. She had nothing to do with the past; she was rather ashamed of her past and wanted to forget that. But Jaslyn wanted to come to terms with her past; she was in search of her identity to live her life peacefully. So, Jaslyn went to Dublin alone to inquire something about that man. There she meets Ciaran who informs her that Corrigan was just trying to lift up her mother’s life and that he was in love with another woman who belonged to South America. She, then goes to see Claire and goes towards the window, lifts up the curtains so that light may come in. she slides the window frame and feels breeze on her skin. She comes back to Claire and lies beside her thinking, “we stumble on, bring a little noise into the silence, find in others the ongoing of ourselves. It is almost enough.” (349) It seems to her that a life keeps going and it is lived in various ways. It has so many unopened covers. The world keeps revolving and there is no end to it. Sorrow and love are truths and they keep moving and twirling in human world and it continues in this way. The narrative of Jaslyn marks an end to the narrative but not to the life because life is an ongoing mystery. Things continue to occur and reoccur around ourselves and we cannot escape it. Life hooks us up with many people whom we do not know, never will be, but it arranges the events in such a way and ties us together. Thus, the story of one person never comes to an end; it goes on in a different way through another person.

Thus in the text of *Let the Great World Spin*, the key force that unites all the voices together is that of the tightrope walker which has nothing to do with the lives of the characters presented in the novel still it enjoys a supreme condition and works as a unifying force in the narrative. Every character is, somehow, related to him and he affects their lives to some or great extent. The novel starts with the tightrope walker's narrative and there are two more chapters i-e *Let the Great World Spin Forever Down* and *The Wringing Grooves of Change* attributed to the walker. The walker remains anonymous to the readers and there is not even a single glimpse of his identity still he connects the lives of every character in the novel.

The tightrope walker has a connection with Corrigan because at the time of his accident, Corrigan was distracted by him that causes the untimely death of Jazzlyn and him. Claire, a grieved mother, who lessens her sorrow by talking to her friends and husband, is also related to the walker for it is he who steals the attention of her friends and husband, this makes her depressive and she gets infuriated with the tightrope walker. For Lara, he is something who has changed her life upside down. From the accident with Corrigan's van, she finds herself in great distress and no way to return from that. It encourages her to leave her extravagant life once and for all. For the young guys like Jose and Samuel, he is just an impressive entity but their adolescent minds will no longer keep him alive. Tillie encounters him in the court but she is unaware of his glamorous action, she is there to pay for the lifelong wrong doings; her indulgence in strolling and sex trade which lead her to the point of no escape. To Solomon, he is just a spice in the everyday's ordinary life. For Adelita, he is a person who distracted her lover on his way and caused his death, she also thinks about him as being a puzzle about which Corrigan has tried to inform her in his last moments but which remained understood. Gloria takes him as a story which is told to her by her friends. And, finally, Jaslyn takes him as a connection to her mother, for her mother died on the same day when he performed that aerial artistry.

The tightrope walker did not only connect the characters in the narrative but also the readers. He is also attached to us in a single or other way. Because we are also the part of same world and almost the same events and incidents recur daily around us. They do affect us whether we acknowledge it or not. Every day we meet different people, be it for a little time but we cannot understand that how they are connected to our lives. Still they have influence in our lives and this is not incidental but according to some plan which life has woven for every one of us. This also shows the internal structure of the narrative which is very skillfully carried out by McCann. The narrative presents Chronotopic analysis of the text to justify that "chronotope is a way not to take leave of reality; it is precisely the opposite, a concept for engaging reality." (278) Through the text, McCann has given voice to real life marginal voices with their hierarchical positions by giving equal access to every character and presented their particular stances and values in the open ended narration that makes room for further

exploration and interpretation of these characters on the behalf of the readers as well. Stories of every character are inter-linked and the plot progresses as the stories develop in relation with the respective spatio-temporal contexts. The concept of chronotope not only helps to understand the structure of the text but also facilitates the readers to comprehend the relation between the text and its time which helps in broader social analysis. Holquist describes chronotope in this way, "Chronotope, like situation, always combines spatial and temporal factors with an evaluation of their significance as judged from a particular point of view." (152) It also has some attached values which influence the subjects connected with it. It is evident through the text that the chronotope of tightrope walking influence the lives of all the individuals in one or the other way. To cap up the whole discussion, "Chronotope is a term, then, that brings together not just two concepts, but four: a time, plus its value; and a space, plus its value . . . chronotope describes something that has always been inherent in experience, . . . it is useful term not only because it brings together time, space, and value, but because it insists on their simultaneity and inseparability." (155)

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