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„Manawaka cyklu“ Margaret Laurence

**A Voice of One's Own:
The Construction of Identity and Gender in
Margaret Laurence's "Manawaka Cycle" Texts**

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Prohlašuji, že jsem tuto diplomovou práci vypracovala samostatně a výhradně s použitím citovaných pramenů, literatury a dalších odborných zdrojů.

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1. Introduction

I'll tell you what kind of a writer she was. She was my kind of writer. She was a storyteller first, foremost, and absolutely. Everything else is a matter of skills, acquired skills, acquired with great labour, some of them, but honed to perfection. She was a storyteller in the grand tradition, and the story she was telling was the story of my country, my people, so the combination to me was irresistible. I think she's the greatest writer we've ever had.

(Farley Mowat)

Margaret Laurence (1926-87) has been called "Canada's most successful novelist,"¹ "the most significant creative writer in Canadian literature,"² as well as "the most renowned writer in Canadian literary history."³ A bearer of the distinguished Molson Prize, and of the Governor General Award twice,⁴ a Nobel Prize in Literature nominee in 1982,⁵ a receiver of a number of honorary doctorates from prestigious Canadian universities, and a Companion of the Order of Canada,⁶ she played a key role in establishing the canon of the newly emergent Canadian literature and placing it on the global literary map.

As Kristjana Gunnars argues, Laurence "has been a founding mother of Canadian literature. She has given voice to the Manitoba prairie. She has raised the value of all sectors of society by showing the full humanity of the most neglected and forgotten among us. From her example, we have learned the value of Canadian literature and culture; the importance of art to that culture; the necessity of honesty in a dangerous time in history; the truth of fiction and poetry."⁷

¹ Nora Foster Stovel, *Divining Margaret Laurence: A Study of Her Complete Writings* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2008) 3.

² J. A. Wainwright, ed., *A Very Large Soul: Selected Letters From Margaret Laurence to Canadian Writers* (Dunvegan: Cormorant Books, 1995) vii.

³ James King, *The Life of Margaret Laurence* (Toronto: Knopf Canada, 1997) xix.

⁴ Both in the category of Fiction: in 1966 for *A Jest of God*, in 1974 for *The Diviners*.

Canada Council, "Cumulative List of Winners of the Governor General's Literary Awards", 2008, 1 Mar 2009 < <http://www.canadacouncil.ca/NR/rdonlyres/CCA1B1A6-59E5-4748-BFEE-B64313E92624/0/CumulativeWinners2008.pdf>>.

⁵ Greta M. K. McCormick Coger, ed., *New Perspectives on Margaret Laurence: Poetic Narrative, Multiculturalism, and Feminism* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1996) xvii.

⁶ William Toye, ed., *The Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature* (Oxford: OUP, 1983) 435.

⁷ Kristjana Gunnars, ed., *Crossing the River: Essays In Honour of Margaret Laurence* (Winnipeg: Turnstone, 1988) viii.

In the 1960s, when Laurence published most of her Manawaka texts, Canadian literature was just coming into its own. Contrary to Laurence's own schooling in the 1940s, when "of course literature meant British literature,"⁸ two decades later Canadian literature was beginning to be recognized as a legitimate subject at universities across the country, as well as gaining a reputation both on the domestic and international literary scene. Laurence attributes this development to a climate of cultural post-colonialism. As she asserts in her essay "Ivory Tower or Grassroots?: The Novelist as Socio-Political Being:" "[compared to Africa] In Canada, our dilemma was perhaps more subtle. We ostensibly gained our independence in 1867, and yet we remained colonial in outlook for many years. In literary terms, our models remained those of Britain and more recently of America."⁹

The recognition of Canadian literature; by Canadians, as full-fledged national literature is essential for nation's self-realisation, self respect, and cultural autonomy, argues Margaret Atwood in her seminal work *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature*:

A piece of art, as well as being a creation to be enjoyed, can also be a mirror. The reader looks at the mirror and sees not the writer but himself; and behind his own image in the foreground, a reflection of the world he lives in. If a country or a culture lacks such mirrors, it has no way of knowing what it looks like; it must travel blind. If, as has long been the case in this country, the viewer is given a mirror that reflects not him but someone else, and told at the same time that the reflection he sees is himself, he will get a very distorted idea of what he is really like. He will also get a distorted idea of what other people are like: it's hard to find out who anyone else is until you have found out who *you* are.¹⁰

Discovering who one is, where one comes from, and what defines her or him; are essential steps in the process of getting to know oneself and the world around and, of course, fundamental measures towards defining one's identity. It is, as Margaret

⁸ Margaret Laurence, *Dance on the Earth: A Memoir* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1989) 77.

⁹ Margaret Laurence, "Ivory Tower or Grassroots?: The Novelist as Socio-Political Being," *A Political Art: Essays in Honour of George Woodcock*, ed. William H. New (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1978) 18.

¹⁰ Margaret Atwood, *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature* (Toronto: Anansi, 1972) 15-16.

Laurence assesses in her eponymous essay on writing and identity, “a place to stand on,”¹¹ from which the rest of the world may be explored.

The focus of this diploma thesis is the construction of identity and gender in Laurence’s Manawaka cycle texts. As Laurence’s writing is firmly connected to her life experiences, I will commence with a brief biography, as well as an overview of the Manawaka cycle works and short summaries of the novels that will be discussed in detail: *The Stone Angel* and *The Diviners*. In this chapter I will also outline the cultural climate in Canada in the 1960s and suggest the reasons for Laurence’s pivotal influence on Canadian literature as well as national consciousness.

In the third chapter, I will focus on the construction of identity in the selected texts. I will examine the tension between structure and agency, between the social and personal, objective and subjective factors of identity formation within post-colonial context. I shall examine how Laurence portrays the socio-cultural climate and its effect on the characters: how the social environment shapes her heroines and heroes, how they gradually achieve awareness of this shaping, and how they eventually overcome the externally imposed restraints on their self-expression and take an active role in defining themselves. My examination will focus on three aspects of identity development: first, on the combined influences of a small-town location, social class and profession; second, on the relationship between collective and private history, truth and myth; and third, on cultural and ethnic diversity inherent in defining the self against the Other. Another factor of identity formation, that of gender, I consider of such significance that I will devote a separate chapter to it.

In the fourth chapter, I will focus on the construction of gender and its influence on identity formation in Laurence’s writing. Firstly, I will define the term and briefly overview its significance in creation as well as perception of literature. I shall then examine Laurence’s political and literary attitudes in relation to gender and the reception of her writing in this aspect. Then I will explore in detail the construction of gender in *The Stone Angel* and *The Diviners*, discussing the methods she uses to address the issue and the effects achieved. I shall especially focus on the tension between language and silence, inner censorship, on the importance of names and labels, and

¹¹ Margaret Laurence, “A Place to Stand On,” *Heart of a Stranger* (Toronto: McClelland-Bantam, 1988) 1.

finally on the effects of patriarchal gender order on romantic love and sex. The objective of this part is to analyze how Laurence's treatment of the gender issue contributes to the formation and development of her characters' realization of their own self and autonomous self-determination in the post-colonial framework.

The underlying objective of this diploma thesis is two-fold. First, as suggested by the title metaphor, it is to examine the psychological development of Laurence's characters': the process of their overcoming imposed, externally-defined identity and attendant gender roles, and the formulation of their independent self-determination. Second, utilizing a different level of the title metaphor, it is to argue a parallel between the characters' self-realisation and the emergence of full-fledged, autonomous Canadian literature in the post-colonial¹² framework. I claim that the process is analogous and doubly relevant to the gender issue.

Although Laurence's Manawaka cycle comprises of five texts, as outlined further below, for the purpose of this diploma thesis I will only discuss in depth two of these, the novels *The Stone Angel* and *The Diviners*; that frame the Manawaka cycle. The selection was partially based on the limiting scope of this diploma thesis, but primarily on the fact that the structure of both novels is comparable, and the prevailing themes of the Manawaka cycle, such as freedom, survival, ancestry and self-definition are most prominent. As the novels mark the beginning and end of the Manawaka cycle, they also demonstrate Laurence's maturing as a writer, as well as the development of her social and political consciousness, demonstrated in the increasing urgency of her themes.

Due to Laurence's hallowed status within Canadian literature as well as her importance on the international literary scene, an extensive body of scholarship exists covering all aspects of her writing. Owing to the scope of this diploma thesis, I have only consulted those relevant to my arguments. Unless stated otherwise, all quoted texts have been transferred exactly as they appear in the source documents, including idiosyncratic punctuation, capitals or formal accentuation.

¹² The hyphenated and nonhyphenated terms are not always used consistently, but in general 'postcolonial' refers to the consequence of colonialism from the time of its first impact – culturally, politically, economically. Thus 'Postcolonial Studies' usually takes in colonial literature and history, as well as the literature and art produced after independence has been achieved; whereas 'post-colonial' with a hyphen tends to refer to the historical period after a nation has been officially recognized as independent and is no longer governed as a colony.

C. L. Innes, *The Cambridge Introduction to Postcolonial Literature in English* (Cambridge: CUP, 2007) 239.

2. Margaret Laurence: a Writer, an Activist, a Canadian

Margaret Laurence was born in 1926 and grew up in Neepawa, Manitoba, a small prairie town that inspired her fictional town of Manawaka. On graduating from United College, Winnipeg, she followed her engineer husband to Africa, where they lived from 1950 to 1957.¹ This period was essential to Laurence's development as a writer as it not only gave her an insight into the lives of different cultures, the workings of colonialism, and the experience of tribalism, but it also enabled her to acquire crucial distance, both physical and psychological, from Canada, as she was fully aware of:

I went abroad because I was married to a civil engineer. And it was just a stroke of enormous good fortune that we went, first, to East Africa, and then to West Africa – for two reasons. First, I was so captivated by the different cultures and so fascinated by the Somali people and then the Ghanaian people, and their cultural background and religions and so on, that I really wanted to write out of that experience, and I did, of course, write three books out of it. The other thing was that it saved me from writing about my own people at a time when I would have been too close to them, really too immature... [...] I think that by the time I got around to writing about a small prairie town, I could see it with a much better perspective, and I could see it with a great deal more compassion and understanding than I had as a kid.”²

Laurence perceived her African-based works, a novel *This Side Jordan* (1960), a collection of short stories *The Tomorrow-Tamer* (1963) and a memoir of her life in Somaliland, *The Prophet's Camel Bell* (1963) as crucial to her artistic and political development, but at the same time realised the inherent limitations of her position as an outsider writing about a foreign culture: “I had written three books out of Africa, out of those experiences, and I really knew that I didn't want to go on writing about Africa, because otherwise my writing would become that of a tourist.”³

From 1957 to 1962 the Laurences lived in Vancouver, where Margaret wrote her African-themed works. She also confirmed her African observations of colonialism, by stumbling across “a book called *Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization* by Dr. Dominique O. Mannoni, a French Psychologist. That book was a revelation. Mannoni

¹ William Toye, ed., *The Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature* (Oxford: OUP, 1983) 434.

² Rosemary Sullivan, “An Interview with Margaret Laurence,” *A Place to Stand On: Essays By And About Margaret Laurence*, ed. George Woodcock (Edmonton: NeWest Press, 1983) 62-3.

³ Sullivan 68.

said things about colonialism and the people who had been colonized that struck me deeply.”⁴

Shifting her focus to her homeland, Laurence began writing *The Stone Angel* in 1962. On separating from her husband later that year, she moved with her children to England, where she lived for the next decade and where most of her Manawaka cycle texts were written. The final novel in the cycle, *The Diviners*, was written in her cottage on the Otonabee River near Peterborough, Ontario.

On returning permanently to Canada in 1974, Laurence became an influential and revered public figure. She served as a writer-in-residence at several universities, played a key role in the founding of the Writers’ Union of Canada and served as its first president,⁵ and was actively involved in speaking and writing about issues that concerned her such as nuclear disarmament, the environment, literacy, censorship, sex education and other social issues.

She wrote no more adult fiction, but published three books for children and a collection of essays, *Heart of a Stranger*. She also published a number of book reviews and corresponded profusely with a large number of Canadian authors and critics. Margaret Laurence died in her home in Lakefield, Ontario, in 1987. Her memoir, *Dance on the Earth: A Memoir*, was published posthumously.

2.1 Laurence, Canadian Literature and Post-Colonialism

Northrop Frye, in his preface to *The Bush Garden*, famously states that Canada is “practically the only country in the world which is a pure colony, colonial in psychology as well as in mercantile economics.”⁶

Literature naturally reflects the situation: up until the 1960s, Canadian literature was virtually unknown, both in the larger literary sense and as a canon of works written by Canadian authors and published in Canada. Caught between the continuation of English cultural tradition and American influence, Canadian literature was viewed as an

⁴ Margaret Laurence, *Dance on the Earth: A Memoir* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1989) 155.

⁵ Lyall Powers, *Alien Heart: The Life & Work of Margaret Laurence* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2003) 408-9.

⁶ Northrop Frye, *The Bush Garden: Essays on the Canadian Imagination* (Concord: Anansi, 1995) xxiii.

appendage to British and American writing, both at home and abroad. With the combined factor of scarcity of Canadian publishing houses, books by Canadian authors were absent from university syllabi as well as from bookstores. Canadian authors experienced great difficulties in getting published,⁷ reviewed and recognized more often in their own country than abroad. As Laurence notes, “[T]he Canadian writers just before my generation – Ernest Buckler, Sinclair Ross, Morley Callaghan, Hugh MacLennan, Ethel Wilson, W. O. Mitchell, Howard O’Hagan, Hubert Evans, and others – all laboured for many years with hardly any response from their own people and hardly any recognition unless it were first accorded in either England or America.”⁸

Laurence explains this lack of recognition for Canadian literature at home by the prevailing climate of cultural colonialism. She notes that “[M]y people’s standards of correctness and validity and excellence were still at that time [late 1950s] largely derived from external and imposed values; our view of ourselves was still struggling against two other cultures’ definitions of us.”⁹ As a result, “[W]e still had for many, many years a kind of colonial mentality, a great many people felt that a book written by a Canadian couldn’t possibly be good. It had to come from either New York or the other side of the Atlantic to be any good.”¹⁰

In the 1960s, however, the cultural climate in Canada changed dramatically. The adoption of the maple leaf flag in 1965 marked a symbolic detachment from Britain. In Quebec, the Quiet Revolution was overthrowing the oligarchy of francophone clergy and anglophone businessmen. The Canadian economy was at its post-war peak, and many of the most important elements of Canada’s welfare state were coming on-line, such as Medicare and the Canada Pension Plan. The status of women, First Nations and minorities was coming under scrutiny; homosexuality ceased to be illegal. The wonderful year of 1967 saw the hugely successful Expo in Montréal, as well as 100th anniversary of Confederation, which marked increased funding for arts and literature.

⁷ Laurence recalls in her memoir that McClelland & Stewart, her Canadian publishers, agreed to publish her first novel, *This Side Jordan*, only “if an American or English firm would also pick it up.” Margaret Laurence, *Dance on the Earth: A Memoir* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1989) 155.

⁸ Margaret Laurence, “Ivory Tower or Grassroots?: The Novelist as Socio-Political Being,” *A Political Art: Essays in Honour of George Woodcock*, ed. William H. New (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1978) 18-19.

⁹ Laurence, “Ivory Tower or Grassroots?: The Novelist as Socio-Political Being,” 23.

¹⁰ Interview with Graeme Gibson, in *Eleven Canadian Novelists*, ed. Graeme Gibson (Toronto: Anansi, 1973) 198.

This led to the establishment of a number of literary journals and awards for young writers, and the founding of small presses throughout the country.

All these factors combined contributed to a surge of nationalistic feelings as well as a sense of pride in Canada's own achievements. Laurence's work played an important role in the formation of the redefined, newly-emergent Canadian self-awareness, by the virtue of providing Canadians with a metaphorical mirror to measure themselves with. This, argues George Woodcock, was crucial to the process, for writers are essential to the formation of nation's consciousness, as providers of necessary myths, and:

[T]he novels of Manawaka, I suggest, are already playing this mythical role for Canadians. Hugh MacLennan was also a mythographer, presenting us to ourselves on the heroic level; it is amazing how many of his leading characters are sketched as Homeric giants (soldiers, boxers, crusaders, politicians, all larger than life). But the need to see ourselves as we are, as those who survive in that ordinary life where the only heroism is to endure – often to endure one's own given nature – and, to the best of one's ability, to create. It is thus that Margaret Laurence has shown us to ourselves in these superb novels, which are the best of our place and generation.¹¹

Laurence's work came at a crucial time in Canadian history. As J. A. Wainwright notes, Laurence's Manawaka world "was at the centre of national literary expression during its extraordinary development between the mid-1960s and mid 1970s."¹² Laurence's momentousness to Canadian literature was two-fold: apart from being an artist in her own right, she also "had a central influence during the literary renaissance of the 1960s and 1970s. Showing the way by example, she became a creative godmother to an entire generation of writers and poets."¹³

Certainly, Laurence's importance to the development of Canadian literature cannot be overestimated. As Alice Munro observed, "[I]t's easier for me than for her because she was the beginning of everything."¹⁴ Moreover, Laurence's importance exceeded her fiction, argues Wainwright further, as she "herself become the embodiment of that

¹¹ George Woodcock, "Preface," *A Place to Stand On: Essays By And About Margaret Laurence*, ed. George Woodcock (Edmonton: NeWest Press, 1983) 9.

¹² J. A. Wainwright, ed., *A Very Large Soul: Selected Letters From Margaret Laurence to Canadian Writers* (Dunvegan: Cormorant Books, 1995) xi.

¹³ Sam Solecki, quoted in Nora Foster Stovel, *Divining Margaret Laurence: A Study of Her Complete Writings* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2008) 4.

¹⁴ Quoted in Wainwright viii.

voicing [of national literary expression], the Canadian literary matriarch and our most revered cultural figure.”¹⁵

Laurence’s influence is significant due to her open criticism of colonial writing. Drawing on her African experience, Laurence parallels Canadian writers to those of the Third-World, as they all alike must “find [their] own voices and write out of what is truly [theirs], in the face of an overwhelming cultural imperialism.”¹⁶ In this aspect, Laurence’s work is in congruence with Elaine Showalter’s categorization of subculture writing¹⁷. Focusing on literature by women, Showalter argues that any subculture writing undergoes “three phases of development: *imitation* of the prevailing modes of the dominant tradition, *protest* against these standards and values, and finally, *self-discovery*, a search for identity.”¹⁸ Only the latter represents not merely mimicry or retaliation but “a literature of one’s own.”

Writing more than a decade before Showalter’s theory was formulated, Laurence achieved precisely that in her Manawaka texts, as she notes in 1969 with surprise:

A strange aspect of my so-called Canadian writing is that I haven’t been much aware of its being Canadian, and this seems a good thing to me, for it suggests that one has been writing out of a background so closely known that no explanatory tags are necessary. I was always conscious that the novel and stories set in Ghana were **about Africa**. My last three novels just seem like novels.¹⁹

In Canadian environment, the concept of colonialism is doubly complex, argues Miguel Nenevé, as “ties to Britain may have helped to foster the ‘superiority’ of British Canadians over ‘other’ Canadians. In this sense, ‘other’ Canadians may consider themselves colonized by Anglo-Canadians - ‘others’ meaning, for example, the Métis, the natives, and all those who manifest supposedly ‘primitive behaviour’ like Third World immigrants and other ‘inferior people.’”²⁰

¹⁵ Wainwright xi.

¹⁶ Laurence, “Ivory Tower or Grassroots?: The Novelist as Socio-Political Being” 17.

¹⁷ “Elaine Showalter,” Answers.com, 10 Apr 2009, <<http://www.answers.com/topic/elaine-showalter>>.

¹⁸ Sarah Gamble, ed., *The Routledge Companion to Feminism and Postfeminism* (London: Routledge, 2004) 131.

¹⁹ Margaret Laurence, “Ten Years’ Sentence,” *A Place to Stand On: Essays By And About Margaret Laurence*, ed. George Woodcock (Edmonton: NeWest Press, 1983) 33.

²⁰ Miguel Nenevé, “Can A White Canadian Write A Post-Colonial Text?,” *Ilha do Desterro* [Florianópolis] vol. 31, 1994: 110.

Labelling Canadian literature as postcolonial, however, is not without controversy. Linda Hutcheon, for example, argues that treating Canada as a postcolonial country demands further specification.²¹ She holds that there are significant differences between post-colonial Third World literatures and British Canadian, i.e. that of a settler colony, stressing that the term "postcolonial" is applied more accurately to the cultures of the Native people in Canada.²²

For the purpose of this diploma thesis, I will use the terms "post-colonialism" to describe a social and cultural climate as well as a psychological state of mind after the end of colonialism. The term "colonialism" will be used to describe a hierarchy of power; a domination imposed by a group of people over a culturally, racially, or sexually different group that results in a dispossession of the latter's self-determination and their acceptance of the dominant group's social, cultural, and religious values.

2.2 The "Manawaka Cycle"

Laurence's "Manawaka cycle" comprises of four novels - *The Stone Angel* (1964), *A Jest of God* (1966), *The Fire-Dwellers* (1969) and *The Diviners* (1974) - and a collection of interconnected short stories titled *A Bird In the House* (1970). The books feature a cast of loosely linked characters and are all based in or associated with Manawaka, a fictional town in the Manitoba prairies, that is, according to Laurence, "not my hometown of Neepawa - it has elements of Neepawa, especially in some of the descriptions of places [...] In almost every other way, however, Manawaka is not so much any one prairie town as an amalgam of many prairie towns."²³

The same, insists Laurence, goes for her characters and their fates. "I have been often told I write autobiographically. I have no objection to writers who do write straight out of their own lives, but apart from *A Bird in the House*, which is loosely based on my family and my childhood, I don't happen to be one of them."²⁴ Nonetheless, she

²¹ Linda Hutcheon, "Circling the Downspout of Empire," *Past the Last Post: Theorizing Post-Colonialism and Post-Modernism*, eds. Ian Adam and Helen Tiffin (Calgary: University of Calgary Press) 1990, 171.

²² Hutcheon 172.

²³ Laurence, *Heart of a Stranger* 3.

²⁴ Laurence, *Dance on the Earth: A Memoir* 209.

admits to drawing on her experiences and dealing with issues close to her heart, especially when it comes to her concluding novel, *The Diviners*, which she regards as “a kind of spiritual autobiography.”²⁵

The Manawaka cycle is often classified as “Canadian,” to distinguish it from Laurence’s African-themed work. Laurence, however, was unwilling to accept the label in the broader sense, as she feared its possible misuse for the purpose of propaganda: “I have no desire to write a ‘Canadian’ novel in that horrible nationalistic, stilted sense [...]”²⁶ Laurence strongly objected to phony Canadianism²⁷ and was relieved that “the strained nationalism of our early writing ultimately gives way to true writing which is concerned only with the creation of individual and unique life on the printed page.”²⁸

The Stone Angel and *The Diviners*, as well as other works in the cycle, feature strong heroines on a quest for self-determination. Hagar of *The Stone Angel* belongs to the Pioneer generation, whereas Morag of *The Diviners* represents the current (at the time of writing) generation of Canadians. Apart from their individual circumstances, it is the sense of the prevailing Zeitgeist that is essential to shaping Hagar’s and Morag’s respective consciousness and identity. If read together, *The Stone Angel* and *The Diviners* provide a thematic unity and a logical conclusion to the entire Manawaka cycle.

2.3 *The Stone Angel*

The Stone Angel (1964) marks the beginning of the Manawaka cycle. It tells the story of Hagar Shipley, born in Manawaka in 1870, who at the age of ninety attempts to make sense of her life.

The novel shifts seamlessly between two narrative lines: one in present, where Hagar battles with her son Marvin and his wife and runs away from home to avoid being sent to nursing home; and the other in the past. Through a series of flashbacks, Hagar’s

²⁵ Laurence, *Dance on the Earth: A Memoir* 208.

²⁶ Quoted in Powers 212.

²⁷ Nonetheless, Laurence enjoyed subverting phoney nationalism by humour. In a letter to Harold Horwood, she quotes Clara Thomas’s assertion, that “the way in which one could judge whether or not a book was truly Canadian was whether or not one could put the word *moose* in there, in a crucial place,” resulting in Laurence’s suggestions of *The Moose and The Valley*, *The Ecstasy of Rita Moose*, *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Moose*, *Who Has Seen the Moose* and many more. Quoted in Wainwright 94.

²⁸ Powers 213.

entire life is revealed: her mother's death in giving birth to Hagar and the stone angel erected "in memory of her, who relinquished her feeble ghost when I gained my stubborn one."²⁹ Hagar's father, Jason Currie, was one of the founders of the town and an owner of its first store. Brought up in a strict Scots-Presbyterian background, Hagar rebels against her father's authority by marrying Bram Shipley, never-to-do-well farmer of dubious reputation. Their marriage is stormy, and Hagar pins all her hopes on her younger son, John. In her mid-forties, Hagar leaves Bram and starts a new life as a housekeeper in Vancouver, hoping to give John a better chance in life. But John prefers to return to Manawaka to care for dying Bram and then follow his layabout existence. When Hagar tries to prevent John's relationship with Arlene, a daughter of her rival Lottie, John and Arlene die in a reckless accident. This tragedy exacerbates Hagar's emotional detachment and petrifies her into the stone angel, whose symbolism permeates the novel.

At this point, past and present merge and Hagar finds herself telling her story to a tramp, whom she meets in an old cannery, her refuge in the wilderness. Through the medium of his forgiveness, Hagar is able to forgive herself and begin the process of emotional de-petrification. In the few days she has left, she realizes that her life has been blighted by pride and fear that kept her from allowing herself to experience joy and love. Hagar makes peace with Marvin, learns to accept Otherness, and carries out an act of pure kindness before she is released to join her "lost men" (4).

2.4 *The Diviners*

The Diviners (1974) marks the end of the Manawaka cycle as well as Laurence's maturity as a writer. Considered her masterpiece, the extensive yet compact novel explores the themes of freedom, survival, dispossession, and self-expression to a much deeper level and more overtly than any of the other Manawaka works.

The Diviners take place in the present [i.e. the early 1970s] and tell a story of Morag Gunn, a forty-seven-year-old writer who decides to write a memoir in order to get her life into a perspective. Again, the novel works in two complementary timelines. In the

²⁹ Margaret Laurence, *The Stone Angel* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2004) 1.

present, Morag is writing a novel (which may or may not be *The Diviners*), learning about the ancient art of divining, as well as attempting to accept her growing daughter's independence.

Through a series of flashbacks, presented as "Snapshots" or "Memory bank movies", Morag retells her past: the loss of her parents and her adoption by Christie, Manawaka's garbage collector, who tells her semi-fictionalized tales of her Scottish ancestors. Growing up during the Depression, Moraga struggles for social acceptance and self-expression and longs to become a writer. She escapes Manawaka for college, where she meets and marries her English professor, Brooke, who provides her with the stability and a sense of belonging she craves, but keeps her dependent, does not allow her to have children, and suffocates her creatively. The publication of her first book coinciding with a chance encounter with her childhood co-outcast, Métis Jules "Skinner" Tonnerre, act as a catalyst and give Morag enough self-confidence to leave Brooke. Carrying a child conceived with Jules, Morag moves to Vancouver and gradually gains recognition as a writer. After a few years in England, Morag finally comes to terms with her past, real and imagined, by writing stories about it. In doing so, she is able to accept Christie as her true father and thus reconcile all the conflicting strands of her identity.

She settles near a small town not unlike Manawaka, in a cabin by a river, where she continues to make sense of the world through her writing, as well as maintaining a relationship with her daughter Pique, who as a half-Métis, half Scots-Canadian, represents a sense of continuity and cultural, historical, and ethnical reconciliation for not only Morag and Jules, but symbolically to Canada.

3. Constructing Identity

“Do not ask me who I am and do not ask me to remain the same: leave it to the bureaucrats and our police to see that our papers are in order.” (Michel Foucault)

“Who is it that can tell me who I am?” asks King Lear famously. The need to define one’s identity has been a matter of concern since the time humans first became aware of their own consciousness. While there are numerous theories and definitions of identity, ranging from philosophical, anthropological, and psychological, to cultural, religious, or sociological, for the purpose of my essay, I will use the term “identity” as a sense of selfhood, defined from two vantage points: first, the subjective “how do I see myself?” and second, the objective “how do others see me?”.

Defining one’s identity, argues Kath Woodward, means positioning oneself, and being positioned, in the social world.¹ While we may actively participate in forming our identities, these are, nevertheless, shaped by social structures that surround us, i.e. family, class, gender, race, nationality, religion, profession, culture, age etc. Identity thus necessarily involves an interrelationship between the personal and the social which can also be expressed as a tension between “structure and agency.”²

The tension between structure and agency, between the social and personal, objective and subjective, is the focus of this chapter of my diploma thesis. I shall examine how Laurence portrays the socio-cultural climate (i.e. the structure) and its effect on her characters (i.e. the agency): how the social environment shapes her heroes and heroines, how they gradually achieve awareness of this shaping, and eventually overcome these restraints and take an active role in shaping themselves. I will pay special attention to the way that colonialism contributes to the dynamics of this tension.

I will explore how Laurence uses three elements in identity formation: first, the combined influences of a small-town location, social class and profession; second, the relationship between collective and private history, truth and myth; and third, cultural and ethnic diversity inherent in defining the self against the Other; and how these are positioned within the post-colonial context. I consider the issue of gender and its

¹ Kath Woodward, ed., *Questioning Identity: Gender, Class, Ethnicity* (London: Routledge, 2004) 1.

² Woodward 1.

influence on identity construction so significant that I will investigate it in depth in the following chapter of this diploma thesis.

3.1 Identity as a Theme in Laurence's Work

Defining one's identity is an essential step towards getting to know oneself; indispensable if attempting to understand the world. It is, as Margaret Laurence assesses in her eponymous essay on writing and identity, "a place to stand on,"³ from which the rest of the world may be explored.

Moreover, defining one's identity in one's own terms is equal to discovering "the promised land of one's own inner freedom,"⁴ maintains Laurence. She cites the search for freedom and self-expression as essential to her work: "The quest for physical and spiritual freedom, the quest for relationships of equality and communication - these themes run through my fiction and are connected with the theme of survival, not mere physical survival, but a survival of the spirit."⁵

Furthermore, the search for one's identity and therefore for understanding the present is essentially and inevitably a quest for one's roots. In order to make sense of the world around us, Laurence continues, one must "attempt to understand one's background and one's past, sometimes even a more distant past which one has not personally experienced."⁶ The search of one's roots, voice, and place in the historical continuum, both private and communal, are the main themes in all of Laurence's Manawaka cycle texts, and especially prominent in *The Diviners*.

Both *The Stone Angel* and *The Diviners* present "a provoking and timely exploration through a central female character of the process of individuation,"⁷ suggests Angelika Maeser. This Jungian concept of autogenesis or self-creation, she argues further, is

³ Margaret Laurence, "A Place to Stand On," *Heart of a Stranger* (Toronto: McClelland-Bantam, 1988) 1.

⁴ Margaret Laurence, "Ten Years' Sentence," *A Place to Stand On: Essays By And About Margaret Laurence*, ed. George Woodcock (Edmonton: NeWest Press, 1983) 32.

⁵ Margaret Laurence, "Ivory Tower or Grassroots?: The Novelist as Socio-Political Being," *A Political Art: Essays in Honour of George Woodcock*, ed. William H. New (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1978) 24.

⁶ Laurence, *Heart of a Stranger* 1.

⁷ Angelika Maeser, "Finding the Mother: The Individuation of Laurence's Heroines," *Journal of Canadian Fiction*, vol. 27, special issue on *The Work of Margaret Laurence*, ed. John R. Sofleet (Montréal: JCF Press, 1980) 151.

essential to our understanding of these novels, as it provides us with an “insight into the complex psychic interaction between the personal and collective aspects of history.”⁸ Therefore, “the social, not solely personal, aspects of these works are significant because it is through the gradual discovery of the link between form and reality that the imaging self is freed to become the creator of its own forms and to stand in an active shaping relation to the traditional ‘givens’, or the symbolic forms socially legitimized.”⁹

To recapitulate, in order to find their own voice, Laurence’s characters first need to discern the structure, i.e. the factors that shaped their consciousness, before they can come to terms with their personal and collective past, and redefine their identity through their agency.

3.2 Social Order, Class, and Profession in a Small-Town

In the Manawaka cycle texts, the protagonists struggle to define their identity within a particular social structure of a small-town. In Canadian literature, notes Clara Thomas, a small-town assumes a corporate personality that has a distinctive influence on its people:

The isolation of small groups of people in a vast land was one of the factors in the growth of a town’s personality; in English Canada the other factor was the drive to build a progressive, successful and Protestant community. Ideals of godliness and business enterprise were inextricably meshed and individuals were expected, both by commitment and from need, to adapt and to give evidence on their partnership in the community ideals by unremitting work, or to fall short of the corporate ideal at great personal loss and social peril. The town was our tribe – not, primarily, a network of kinship and family, but a powerful structure of hierarchical social relationships.¹⁰

This is certainly the case of Manawaka, a showcase of colonialism and tribalism: the town’s founding fathers, Scots-Presbyterian pioneers, create a colony, a sequestered island of transplanted European civilisation deep in the Manitoba prairies. While they lean towards the colonial centre, Britain, they establish a hierarchy of religious, cultural,

⁸ Maeser 151.

⁹ Maeser 151.

¹⁰ Clara Thomas, *Manawaka World of Margaret Laurence* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1975) 175-6.

and ethnic dominance in the town, setting themselves as the acceptable standard of self-definition in relation to the Other, represented by the Slavs and half-breeds.

Angelica Maser Lemieux notes that the pioneers bring their Old World traditions with them, “and the sense of order they enshrined: firstly, a moral order that had bearing upon spirituality and conduct; secondly, an ecclesial order, the form of the confessing and worshipping community; and thirdly, a conception of social order that was predominantly conservative, hierarchical, and patriarchal.”¹¹

In conjunction with religion, social order in a small-town is formed by the combined elements of class and profession, by which the community assigns roles to its members. Thus individuals are often seen in the eyes of the town only in relation to their assigned roles. Furthermore, the combined factors of isolation, limited scale, and transparent social structure of a culturally-homogenous small town provide a very easy form of social control. Thomas continues:

The fact that everyone knew all about everyone else provided the framework of common knowledge, common interest, and gossip that held the town together. Talk, resented or enjoyed, malicious or concerned, both feared and welcomed, was the strong human communication-fabric of the town and was often stronger than the individual's communication lines through love or duty, trust, or even hate.¹²

However, having formed one's identity in a small-town is a double-edged-sword, as its influences, once internalised, are not easily eradicated from one's unconsciousness. Laurence's heroines and heroes, concludes Thomas, may “move out into the wider world, but they carry Manawaka with them, its constraints and inhibitions, but also its sense of roots, of ancestors, and of a past that is living still, both its achievements and its tragic errors.”¹³

Drawing on personal experience, Laurence was acutely aware of the small-town environment having a lasting effect on one's world view. As she comments, “somewhere, perhaps in the memories of some characters, Manawaka will probably always be there, simply because whatever I am was shaped and formed in that sort of a place, and my

¹¹ Angelika Maeser Lemieux, “The Scots Presbyterian Legacy,” *Challenging Territory: The Writing of Margaret Laurence*, ed. Christian Riegel (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1997) 166.

¹² Thomas 176.

¹³ Thomas 177.

way of seeing, however much it may have changed over the years, remains in some enduring way that of a small-town prairie person.”¹⁴

3.2.1 Social Order, Class, and Profession in a Small-Town in *The Stone Angel*

As identity is externally constructed in the roles ascribed to one by her or his community, in a small town, the factors of family membership, profession, and class are doubly important in defining one’s sense of selfhood.

Hagar’s childhood perception of family is not measured in terms of belonging to an intimate social unit, but as a source of pride in a larger social context, for the Curries occupy a superior rank on Manawaka’s social scale. The yardstick for social status is primarily materialistic: the Curries boast “the first, the largest, and certainly the costliest”¹⁵ stone angel in the cemetery and live in “the second brick house to be built in Manawaka” (5), and Hagar’s father Jason is a proud owner of a store. As Hagar recalls, he “took such pride in the store – you’d have thought it was the only one on earth. It was the first in Manawaka, so I guess he had due cause” (7).

The duration of one’s presence in Manawaka and their importance in local history are prized sources of identity to both Hagar and her father. By claiming their long-standing presence, the Curries mark their territory and assert their position in both the town’s official history and the collective consciousness of its inhabitants. The Curries’ identity, therefore, is defined in relation to others by distinguishing themselves by virtue of their enduring presence in the local soil.

Organised religion in the form of Presbyterianism is not only compulsory for social inclusion, but it also represents an opportunity to confirm prestige and class status through financial means. When a new church is built, there are “silver candlesticks at the front, each bearing a tiny plaque with Father’s name” (15), and the names of contributors are also read aloud: “Father sat with modestly bowed head, but turned to me and whispered very low: ‘I and Luke McVitie must’ve given the most, as he called our names first’” (15). Jason’s hauteur at giving the most conveys Laurence’s oblique critique

¹⁴ Laurence, *Heart of a Stranger* 7.

¹⁵ Margaret Laurence, *The Stone Angel* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2004) 2.

of organized religion as a spiritual affair misconstrued into an empty commercialised ritual, a source of pride instead of promulgated humility.

The conflict between religious proclamations versus reality is further exposed by Hagar's flawless child's logic:

Auntie Doll was always telling us that Father was a God-fearing man. I never for a moment believed it, of course. I couldn't imagine Father fearing anyone, God included, especially when he didn't even owe his existence to the Almighty. God might have created heaven and earth and the majority of people, but Father was a self-made man, as he himself had told us often enough (16).

However, Jason's pride in his commercial success, although externally measured in terms of material values, is nevertheless pride derived from his self-reliance and strong work ethic, values held in high esteem in the Protestant consciousness. Naturally, Hagar identifies with these concepts, and when first married to Bram, she wishes for his success, not for the sake of material possession, but as means of social inclusion and class acceptance in the Manawaka communal hierarchy: "In those days I still hoped he'd do well, not for his own sake, for I never cared about making a show with furniture and bric-à-brac, the way Lottie did, but only so that people in Manawaka, whether they liked him or not, would at least be forced to respect him" (90).

Apart from financial success, genealogy is important to social ranking as well. Jason Currie keeps reminding his children that "he had pulled himself up by his bootstraps" (6), and they understand that "he meant that he had begun without money. But he'd come of a good family – he had that much of a head start" (13). Although Jason's family's ranking on Scottish social scale is useless to him in Canada, it is a source of pride to him, nonetheless, as it ties him to a wider social structure – the Highland clans and the long-standing European traditions, thus imbuing him with a link to the colonial centre: a sense of personal history, of continuation of the line, as well as with a distinction against the Other, "the commoners", embodied by Bram.

Thus Jason articulates his objections to Bram as a son-in-law on the grounds of Bram's poor social ranking, comparable to that of a bastard: "He's common as dirt.' 'That's what Lottie Dreiser said.' 'She's no whit different,' my father snapped. 'She's common as dirt herself'" (51). While Hagar is aware of Bram's poor social standing, she is convinced that she can change him, make him conform to her values, and thus bridge

the social gap and facilitate a reconciliation of her two men: "Father would soften and yield, when he saw how Brampton Shipley prospered, gentled, learned cravats and grammar" (53). Unconsciously, Hagar plans to colonize Bram.

As the patriarchal social system does not allow Hagar to acquire a profession, she is forced to define herself forever by her class and social ranking. Even at ninety, she despises the home for the elderly that Marvin had found her, referring to it as "the poorhouse" (81). She is appalled when forced to share a hospital room with others: "It's bedlam. [...] So you sleep here as you would in a barrack or a potter's field, cheek-by-jowl with heaven knows who all" (277-8). Unable to shake the internalised superior class position acquired in childhood, Hagar cannot accept that the Manawaka social order does not extend beyond its town borders into the wilder world.

3.2.2 Social Order, Class, and Profession in a Small-Town in *The Diviners*

Morag in *The Diviners*, on the other hand, is eventually able to shed the small town component of her identity, thanks to the combined factors of her education and varied experience of different cities and cultures, but primarily to her profession as a writer, which facilitates her profound insight to into the foundations of the self.

Nonetheless, Morag's childhood and adolescence are blighted by the reflected social role of her adoptive father, Christie, the town's scavenger. Christie is content in his job as well as with his position at the very bottom of Manawaka's social order and happily plays along the associated role of the town's fool. He explains to Morag that social hierarchy is an artificial construct obscuring the underlying shared humanity: "Some of them, because I take off their muck for them, they think I'm muck. Well, I *am* muck, but so are they. Not a father's son, not a man born of woman who is not muck in some part of his immortal soul, girl. That's what they don't know, the poor sods. When I carry away their refuse, I'm carrying off part of them, do you see?"¹⁶ This profound insight signals Christie's private role as Morag's spiritual guide, a capacity that sharply contradicts his lowly public role, thus enhancing its inherent artificiality.

Like Jason Currie, Christie attributes crucial significance to family roots, and prides himself on his Scottish Highlands ancestry, that makes him equal to the town's elite:

¹⁶ Margaret Laurence, *The Diviners* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1988) 47.

'Let the Connors and McVities and the Camerons and Simon Pearl and all them in their houses up there – let the look down on the like of Christie Logan. Let them. I say unto you, Morag, girl, I open my shirt to the cold winds of their voices, yea, and to the ice of their everlasting eyes. They don't touch me, Morag. For my kin and clan are as good as theirs any day of the week, any week of the month, any month of the year, any year of the century, and any century of all time' (56).

The irony of two people at the opposite ends of Manawaka's social spectrum, deriving their ancestry from the same noble Highland past, accentuates the fact that European history is irrelevant in the New World, for Manawaka writes its own history. While ancient ancestry might provide consolation on a private level, what matters in the public sphere is one's social standing *here and now*.

To that effect, the duration of family presence in the Manawaka world again provides a source of social ranking, as young Morag tries to prove to Skinner Tonnerre: "My family has been around for longer than anybody in this whole goddamn town, see?" 'Not longer than mine,' Skinner says, grinning. 'Oh yeh? Well, I'm related to Piper Gunn, *so there*.' 'Who the hell's he?'" (82). Despite their rightful claim to historical antecedence in Manawaka and Canada, the Tonnerres' social identity within the town hierarchy is devaluated by their race, delegating them to the margin of the imaginary social structure as well as physically outside the town's boundaries, as discussed in detail further below.

Morag is eventually able to overcome her identity of a small town outcast and forge one entirely on her own terms, based on her profession as a writer. Once she realises her vocation, "Morag's consciousness of her identity as a writer plays an increasing part in her life, giving her confidence and a sense of purpose,"¹⁷ argues Laurie Lindberg.

Morag first establishes a relationship with her professor Brooke when he recognizes her as a writer by complimenting her on her story. Nevertheless, on marrying him, Morag abandons her academic and creative career and fully embraces the identity of a devoted wife. However, as she becomes increasingly aware of the role's limited capacities, as well as Brooke's emotional aridness and domineering inclinations, her frustration mounts and is only relieved once she starts writing again, resuming her

¹⁷ Laurie Lindberg, "Wordsmith and Woman: Morag Gunn's Triumph Through Language," *New Perspectives on Margaret Laurence: Poetic Narrative, Multiculturalism, and Feminism*, ed. Greta M. K. McCormick Coger (New York: Greenwood Press, 1996) 191.

suppressed identity as a writer. As Lindberg comments, for Morag, "writing becomes the medium of a careful and sustained process of thought. It is essential to the communication of Morag's reflective development towards greater self-consciousness."¹⁸

The publication of her first novel marks the beginning of Morag's autonomy as a writer. Her professional success also signals a milestone in her personal development as it gives her the confidence to leave Brooke. Significantly, Morag publishes the novel under her own surname, not Brooke's, which is another mark of her budding independence struggling through her consciousness, as discussed further below.

Having proved herself professionally, thus reaffirming her identity as well as achieving self-expression, Morag remains focused and fulfilled and gradually gains critical recognition as well as financial independence. While she must also accommodate another facet of her identity, that of a mother, she is nevertheless content to juggle the two, as they have not been externally imposed, but made by her, of her own volition and on her own terms.

Furthermore, her professional identity transcends localised social ranking, and Morag is thus content to stand outside the social hierarchy of McConnell's Landing, a small town not unlike Manawaka, near which she settles. Nevertheless, the pattern of social exclusion based on difference is passed down and now it is Pique, Morag's daughter, who is ashamed of her parent's unconventionality and its associated lack of social standing: "You've never had somebody tell you your mother was crazy because she lived out here alone and wrote dirty books and had kooky people coming out from the city to visit" (446). Pique's complaint reflects the cyclical nature of life, where experience is untransferable, and where forging one's identity is a rite of passage necessary to truly come to one's own.

3.3 Private and Collective History, Truth and Myth

As discussed earlier, Laurence's attitude to writing was that of a deeply set impulsion to make sense of the surrounding world. Therefore, she drew on her

¹⁸ Lindberg 194.

imagination as well as her autobiographical experiences. As she reflects, her writing “has been my own attempt to come to terms with the past. I see this process as the gradual one of freeing oneself from the stultifying aspects of the past, while at the same time beginning to see its true value.”¹⁹

Equating writing with search for the self, Laurence parallels her quest for identity with that of African writers in the 1960s, who worked “drawing upon their cultural past and relating it to the present, seeking links with the ancestors and the old gods in order to discover who they themselves were.”²⁰ The implication of such remarks, argues David Lucking, “would seem to be that the ‘old gods’ and the ‘ancestors’ inhabit the same cultural dimension, one solidly anchored in the past, and one that it is the duty of the contemporary writer to explore to the fullest in order to restore the continuity between himself and his antecedents.”²¹

It is the establishment of this continuity, the reconciliation of the past and present selves, the acknowledgement of multiplicity of past voices and the coalescence of collective history with personal one that necessitate the emergence of fluid, multi-faceted identity, that resonate throughout the Manawaka cycle and thus make it so relevant to the Canadian consciousness in the post-colonial context.

3.3.1 Private and Collective History, Truth and Myth in *The Stone Angel*

To Hagar, her private history starts with her father, who prides himself on coming from “a good family” (13), and the fact that “the Curries are Highlanders” (14), whose war cry, “*Gainsay Who Dare!*” (14) becomes a leitmotif of Hagar’s life.

While Hagar idolizes the Curries’ European past, as discussed further below, her father is bound on founding a New World tradition in his own right, as established in the opening paragraph of the book: “Above the town, on the hill brow, the stone angel used to stand. [...] my mother’s angel that my father bought in pride to mark her bones and proclaim his dynasty, as he fancied, forever and a day” (1).

¹⁹ Laurence, *Heart of a Stranger* 5-6.

²⁰ Laurence, “Ten Years’ Sentence” 30.

²¹ David Lucking, *Ancestors and Gods: Margaret Laurence and the Dialectics of Identity* (New York: Peter Lang, 2002) 13.

Although Hagar seemingly rejects the Currie identity by marrying Bram, she never ceases to acknowledge her pride in being related to an ancient European tradition. She attempts to ascertain the continuation of the line in passing a mark of her Currie identity, the Currie plaid pin, to her protégé son John, whom she perceives to be her inheritor. This event is immediately contrasted with the revelation of Bram's personal history, or rather, the lack thereof, as Bram was born "In a barn. I thought you'd have told been that by now. Me and Jesus. Eh, Hagar?" (134) Bram's lack of pretension about his origins, as well as a comparison of his birth to that of Jesus, exposes the arrogance of Hagar's snobbish pride in her genteel ancestry, and underscores the irrelevance of private European history in the New World.

To facilitate her departure from Bram, Hagar must part with her personal history in the form of her material heirloom, "my mother's opal earrings, as well as the sterling silver candelabra and the Limoges dishes, a dinner set for twelve, with the platters and tureens, patterned so delicately in mauve violets and edged with gold" (146). At the same time, the loss of her mother's inheritance coincides with John's giving away the Currie plaid pin.

John eyed me cautiously. 'I lost the pin.'

'Lost it!'

He saw from my face that this was probably worse to me than what had really happened.

'Well, I didn't exactly lose it,' he hedged. Then, in a burst, daring me to rage. 'I traded it to another guy for a jack-knife.'

I could have cried. Yet, thinking of the Limoges, I couldn't help but wonder if the knife wouldn't be more use to him, after all. (154)

Thus, argues Hildegard Kuester, Hagar's "escape results in the material loss of both her maternal and paternal heritage. This double loss is set on a train, a setting which underscores the temporary suspension of her identity. At roughly the text's midpoint, it becomes apparent that Hagar feels the need to redefine her identity."²²

Significantly, the Currie plaid pin reappears two generations later in *The Diviners*, where it transpires as Skinner Tonnerre's sole memento of his father: "The only thing I got now that belonged to Lazarus, and it's not a thing which was even really his. Funny,

²² Hildegard Kuester, *The Crafting of Chaos: Narrative Structures in Margaret Laurence's The Stone Angel and The Diviners* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1994) 45.

eh?” (456) Skinner gives the pin to Morag in exchange for Lazarus’ knife, his true inheritance, and Morag accepts the pin, with its motto: “*My Hope Is Constant In Thee*. It sounds like a voice from the past. Whose voice, though? Does it matter? It does not matter. What matters is that the voice is there, and that she has heard these words which have been given to her” (458). In this “fair trade” (458), a poignant completion of a cycle, Laurence highlights the relativity of truth in time (at this moment, it is not important whom the pin belonged to before) and the relativity of physical inheritance (Lazarus only acquired the pin by chance), as opposed to oral inheritance in the form of personal stories that establish one’s identity through discourse.

Moreover, the shifting value of history in time is further illustrated in Hagar’s last visit to the Manawaka cemetery, when a young caretaker unwittingly points out her family’s gravestone: “[B]et you never seen a stone before with two family names, eh? Unusual. This here’s the Currie-Shipley stone. Two families was connected by marriage. Pioneering families, both of them, two of the earliest in the district, so Mayor Telford Simmons told me, and he’s quite an old-timer himself. I never knew them, of course. It was before my day” (333). With the passage of time, Hagar’s private history is forgotten and only a fragment of it, an official record of a name on a gravestone, is assimilated into the town’s communal history. Here it acquires a completely different meaning, a point of distinction in the town’s official narrative, obliterating Hagar’s private story and assigning it a different meaning, that of the already mythicized pioneering era.

Hagar, like others whose personal history has evaporated from the town’s memory either by death or departure, and whose names are only preserved on gravestones, is dispossessed from the collective consciousness, “now forgotten in Manawaka – as I, Hagar, am doubtless forgotten” (2). This loss of her role in the collective history underlines Hagar’s isolation in the present and forces her to turn inwards, in attempt to make sense of her private history, as it is the only one she has left.

3.3.2 Private and Collective History, Truth and Myth in *The Diviners*

"Hearing the silence of the world, the failure of the world to announce meaning, we tell stories." (Robert Kroetsch)²³

In *The Diviners*, the central theme of a possible unity between the present and the past, between the real and imaginary, is established in the opening paragraph:

"The river flowed both ways. The current moved from north to south, but the wind usually came from the south, rippling the bronze-green water in the opposite direction. This apparently impossible contradiction, made apparent and possible, still fascinated Morag, even after the years of river watching" (11).

Contrary to Hagar, Morag consciously seeks her forbears in an effort to establish and confirm her identity. Having lost both her parents at an early age, she is, argues Dick Harrison, "both personally and culturally orphaned, with neither the generational continuity of family nor a public myth of origins that would place her in meaningful relation to her world."²⁴

Early in the book, Morag muses over the few snapshots of her parents she possesses, noting that they are "two barely moving shadows in my head, shadows whose few remaining words and acts I have invented" (27). However, despite her hazy and uncertain knowledge of her parents, they are mutely present, nonetheless: "Yet they're inside me, flowing unknown in my blood and moving unrecognized in my skull" (27).

Christie recognizes Morag's need for personal history and invents mystic ancestral past for her in his *Tales of Piper Gunn*, whereby he retells the Highland Clearances, the Selkirk Settlement and Louis Riel Rebellion. Moreover, Christie gives Morag not just a history, but a herstory,²⁵ by creating a namesake, a matriarch/madonna figure, in Piper Gunn's wife: "Now Piper Gunn had a woman, and a strapping strong woman she was, with the courage of a falcon and the beauty of a deer and the warmth of a home and the faith of saints, and you may know her name. Her name, it was Morag" (60).

²³ Quoted in Paul Hjartarson, "Christie's Real Country," *Crossing the River: Essays In Honour of Margaret Laurence*, ed. Kristjana Gunnars (Winnipeg: Turnstone, 1988) 49.

²⁴ Dick Harrison, "Orphan and Amputee: The Search For Ancestors in *The Diviners* and Wallace Stegner's *Angle of Repose*," *Challenging Territory: The Writing of Margaret Laurence*, ed. Christian Riegel (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1997) 141.

²⁵ A term that Laurence uses throughout her memoir, *Dance on the Earth*.

While Morag loves the tales for their dramatic qualities and the sense of continuation they provide her with, she eventually challenges them with official reading of history:

So this Reel or Riel, however you want to call him, him and his men took over the Fort there, and set themselves up as the government. [...] So they sat on their butts and did nothing.

(The government Down East sent out the Army from Ontario and like that, and Riel fled, Christie. He came back, to Saskatchewan, in 1885.)

Well, some say that. Others say different. Of course I *know* the Army and that came out, like, but the truth of the matter is that them Sutherlanders had *taken back the Fort* before even a smell of an army got there.

(Oh Christie! They didn't. We took it in History.)

I'm telling you. What happened was this. [...] (144-5)

Christie's interpretation of official historical events endows Morag with an understanding of inherent subjectivity of history, dependent on the narrator's point of view. She thus begins to realize that history is made of different strands, of multiple voices, that are not mutually exclusive, but all equally valid. This realization is further accentuated by Skinner Tonnerre's *Tale of Rider Tonnerre and the Prophet*, a mythicized version of the Louis Riel Rebellion told from the Métis perspective.

Morag's and Skinner's longing for roots, articulated in tales of mythicized ancestors, expresses the same quest for identity, a historical continuation and a sense of belonging to a proud and ancient community. Moreover, Laurence thus juxtaposes the concept of private and official history: in their private tales, both Morag and Skinner construct their ancestors in exclusively positive terms and fighting for a good cause, whereas official history taught at school portrays them as foes. Nevertheless, it is the official version of history, written by winners, that dominates and shapes the public consciousness, as Morag finds out when attempting to remedy the Métis' exclusion from history in the local newspapers she works for: "In her report, Morag mentions that Piquette's grandfather fought with Riel in Saskatchewan in 1885, in the last uprising of the Métis. Lachlan deletes it, saying that many people hereabouts would still consider that Old Jules back then had fought on the wrong side" (176).

Furthermore, past history is contrasted with a present conflict, the battle of Dieppe in World War II, and its presentation in the media, that Morag suspects is fictionalized to soothe the staggering death toll:

The newspapers for days are full of stories of bravery, courage, camaraderie, initiative, heroism, gallantry, and determination in the face of heavy enemy fire. Are any of the stories true? Probably it does not matter. They may console some.

What is a true story? Is there any such thing?

The only truth at the moment seems to be in the long lists of the dead. The only certainty is that they are dead. Forever and ever and ever. (159)

With death an incontestable certainty, it is stories that affirm the continuity of life and mark one's attempt at making sense of the world. Morag's published novels, notes Paul Hjartarson, "all bear some relation to events in Morag's personal life. In them, Morag reconceives and rewrites her past and her self."²⁶ In writing *Jonah*, a fictionalized account of her and Christie's life, and in narrating *The Tale of Christie Logan* (300) to Pique, Morag not only acknowledges Christie as her father, but accepts that her life had been substantially shaped and her identity formed by the stories he had told her.

Thus Morag feels the need to pass her mythicized ancestral history onto Pique, however, with a cautioning as to the relativity of objective truth: "When [Christie] told me the tales about Piper Gunn, at first I used to believe every word. Then later I didn't believe a word of them, and thought he'd [...] invented them. But later still, I realized they'd been taken from things that happened, and who's to know what really happened? So I started believing in them again, in a different way" (390-1).

By believing in Christie's stories again, Morag accepts his private history for herself and thus re-establishes her identity, independent of official history. This is reflected in her decision not to visit Sutherland, where Christie's people came from:

'I don't know that I can explain. It has to do with Christie. The myths are reality. Something like that. And also, I don't need to go there because I know now what it was I had to learn here.'

'What is that?'

'It's a deep land here, all right,' Morag says. 'But it's not mine, except a long long way back. I always thought it was the land of my ancestors, but it is not.'

'What it is, then?'

²⁶ Hjartarson 54.

'Christie's real country. Where I was born.' (415)

With these words, argues Hjartarson, "Morag locates her past, locates her self, in the world of stories, 'Christie's real country. Where I was born.' 'The myths' are her 'reality': they structure her life; they are the means by which she designates herself and is designated as a subject."²⁷

Once Morag reconciles herself to the inevitable subjectivity of private history, she is able to embrace the multiple facets of her identity, as well as come to terms with the relativity and multiplicity of truth. However, in the meanwhile Pique faces the same dilemma, aggravated by her dual ethnicity. She voices her need for continuum, and for truth, and the cycle is repeated:

'But some of those stories you used to tell me when I was a kid – I never knew if they happened like that or not.'

'Some did and some didn't, I guess. It doesn't really matter a damn. Don't you see?'

'No,' Pique said, 'I don't see. I want to know what really happened.'

Morag laughed. Unkindly, perhaps.

'You do, eh? Well, so do I. But there's no one version. There just isn't' (373).

In this passage Laurence ascertains the innate quest for one's roots as a necessary rite of passage, a process that must be accomplished before reaching spiritual adulthood, i.e. finding one's own voice with which to define oneself.

As Lucking sums up, "the implication of the book is that the relation between the historical matrix in which the individual has been moulded, and the values to which he owes allegiance in the here and now, can be one not of enmity but of mutual enrichment, that ancestors and gods can complement one another instead of contending destructively for the same psychic territory."²⁸

3.4 Relating to the Other: Cultural and Ethnic Alterity

One of the most frequent criticisms of Western representations of the "Other" is that the "Other" is really a thinly veiled disguise for the self. Is it even possible "to write

²⁷ Hjartarson 56.

²⁸ Lucking 189.

about the Other from an external and/or privileged location without appropriating, marginalizing, or misrepresenting the Other,"²⁹ asks Gabrielle Collu.

Laurence was well aware of these pitfalls of representation. In her African work, she never attempts to speak for the Other, but merely to "understand the plight of a tribal people faced with imperialist opponents who do not possess superior values, but who have greater material resources and more efficient weapons of killing."³⁰ It was also in Africa that Laurence came to understand tribalism as a powerful force of identity definition as well as its divisive quality:

Tribalism is not such a bad thing, if seen as the bond which an individual feels with his roots, his ancestors, his background. [...] When tribalism becomes, to my mind, frighteningly dangerous is where the tribe – whatever it is, the Hausa, the Ibo, the Scots Presbyterians, the Daughters of the American Revolution, the in-group – is seen as "the people", the human beings, and the others, the un-tribe, are seen as sub-human. This is not Africa's problem alone, it is everyone's.³¹

In culturally and ethnically homogenous Manawaka, the Other is not only the easily differentiated ethnic Otherness, personified by the Métis, but also the Other based on cultural difference, embodied by the Slavs and the Catholics.

3.4.1 Relating to the Other: Cultural and Ethnic Alterity in *The Stone Angel*

For Hagar's pioneering generation, establishing civilisation in wilderness, the Other is represented by the untamed nature outside the well-kept confines of the town, threatening to overwhelm if not kept at bay. This tension is established in the opening chapter, where Hagar reflects on the wild flowers that mar the graveyard:

They were tough-rooted, these wild and gaudy flowers, and although they were held back at the cemetery's edge, torn out by loving relatives determined to keep the plots clear and clearly civilized, for a second or two a person walking there could catch the faint, musky, dust-tinged smell of things that grew unattended and had grown always, before the portly peonies and the angels with rigid wings, when the prairie bluffs were walked through only by Cree with enigmatic faces and greasy hair (2-3).

²⁹ Gabrielle Collu, "Writing About Others: The African Stories," *Challenging Territory: The Writing of Margaret Laurence*, ed. Christian Riegel (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1997) 19-20.

³⁰ Laurence, *Heart of a Stranger* 44.

³¹ Laurence, "Ten Years' Sentence" 31.

Hagar's distrust of the uncivilized country is in keeping with the assumed superiority of the coloniser. It extends to its native inhabitants, who are viewed with suspicion and relegated to the margin of the established community. The projected mistrust of the ethnic Other is further demonstrated in her appraisal of the Métis:

Once when I was out picking saskatoons near the trestle bridge, I saw him with the Tonnerre boys. They were French half-breeds, the sons of Jules, who'd once been Matt's friend, and I wouldn't have trusted any of them as far as I could spit. They lived all in a swarm in a shack somewhere – John always said their house was passably clean, but I gravely doubted it. They were tall boys with strange accents and hard laughter (137).

Hagar's perceived cultural and ethnic superiority maintains her for the duration of her marriage, during which she distinguishes herself by referring to herself as "Hagar Currie serving a bunch of breeds and ne'er-do-wells and Galicians" (123). In the light of this humiliation, John's loss of the Currie plaid pin for a lowly knife is therefore even more poignant to Hagar,³² as a significant physical proof of her culturally superior identity is thus destroyed. Nonetheless, her ambivalent reaction to the news foregrounds her shifting attitudes from assumed superiority to plain practicality: "I could have cried. Yet, thinking of the Limoges, I couldn't help but wonder if the knife wouldn't be more use to him, after all" (154).

It is only at the very end of her life that Hagar overcomes her fear of cultural and ethnic otherness. First, she becomes friendly with women of different backgrounds in the communal ward in the hospital, and poignantly, as Karin E. Beeler observes, "eventually joins the chorus of utterances when she screams out Bram's name in one scene. Thus her early rejection of the foreign (including Bram, her dark-skinned husband who resembled a 'bearded Indian'), is overturned through her awareness of feminine, ethnic and linguistic diversity."³³

Hagar's final acceptance of the ethnic Other is demonstrated in her act of help to her Asian co-patient, Sandra Wong. Although Hagar initially thinks of Sandra as a "grand-daughter of one of the small foot-bound women whom Mr. Oatley smuggled in,

³² Mercifully for Hagar, the identity of the pin's recipient, Lazarus Tonnerre, is not revealed in her lifetime, but two generations later in *The Diviners*.

³³ Karin E Beeler, "Ethnic Dominance and Difference: The Post-Colonial Condition in Margaret Laurence's *The Stone Angel*, *A Jest of God*, and *The Diviners*," *Cultural Identities in Canadian Literature*, ed. Benedicte Mauguierre (New York: Peter Lang, 1998) 25-37.

when Oriental wives were frowned upon" (312), her selfless act of mercy to the Asian girl in distress and their subsequent shared laughter mark Hagar's final overcoming of her fear of ethnic difference. This point is further emphasized by Hagar's abandonment of her formalised language as a form of her continual demarcation, too: "You okay, Mrs Shipley?' 'Quite – okay.' I have to smile at myself. I've never used that word before in my life. *Okay – guy* – such slangy words. I used to tell John. They mark a person" (327). By articulating this observation, Hagar ceases to define her identity by distinguishing herself from the (perceived inferior) Other and embraces the underlying universal humanity.

3.4.2 Relating to the Other: Cultural and Ethnic Alterity in *The Diviners*

Nowhere else in the Manawaka cycle are the issues of ethnicity, colonialism, cultural diversity, multiplicity and Otherness more pronounced than in *The Diviners*. In this "spiritual autobiography" Laurence for the first time attempts to include the perspective of the Other in the central character of Métis Jules "Skinner" Tonnerre.

Two generations after Hagar, the Métis still occupy a place in the margin of civilisation, unknown and vaguely suspicious: "The Tonnerres (there are an awful lot of them) are called *those breeds*, meaning halfbreeds. They are part Indian, part French, from way back. They are mysterious. People in Manawaka talk about them but don't talk *to* them" (79). Moreover, the Métis are also excluded from official history, as Morag notes in the incident of singing "The Maple Leaf Forever" in school:

Thistle is Scots, like her and Christie (others, of course, too, including some stuck-up kids, but *her*, definitely, and they better not forget it). Shamrock is Irish like the Connors and Reilys and them. Rose is English, like Prin, once of a good family. Suddenly she looks over to see if Skinner Tonnerre is singing. He has the best voice in the class, and he knows lots of cowboy songs, and dirty songs, and he sometimes sings them after school, walking down the street.

He is not singing now.

He comes from nowhere. He isn't anybody. She stops singing, not knowing why. Then she feels silly about stopping, so sings again. (80)

Even though Morag in this occurrence acts in typically colonial fashion, excluding the ethnic Other from the official culture, the incident also marks her budding awareness

of ethnic and cultural multiplicity and foreshadows her future relationship between herself and Jules, based on similarity and inclusion.

Morag and Jules's marginal status in the community provides a link between Christie's family and the Tonnerre clan. Ironically, the embodiment of Scottish lore is a garbage collector who can, nevertheless, communicate with Jules Tonnerre without criticizing the latter's lack of social standing. Christie is also aware of Jules' visible ethnicity, evident in the uniformity of the army: "Don't let the buggers on either side get you" (148). Jules in turn conveys his approval of Christie: "He's quite a guy, that Christie" (148). Apart from their shared low social ranking in Canada, Laurence also links the Scots and the Métis on a historical level as a tribe, descendants of "people dispossessed of their lands,"³⁴ who have no other means than to recover their culture outside of the official homogenous discourse but through its subversion by stories and songs.

Nonetheless, to Jules, Morag represents a part of the white society that dispossessed his people, even though he is aware of her hatred of the social attitudes in Manawaka. When Morag tells him of his sister Piquette's death by fire in the Tonnerre shack, Jules shouts: "By Jesus, I hate you... I hate all of you. Every goddamn one" (275). As Leslie Monkman notes, "Jules will not allow Morag to forget that she is white and, as such, can be identified only as the enemy in some part of his mind."³⁵

By the virtue of his position outside the dominant society, Jules is not shackled by its expectations: "I don't have to *do* anything all that much. I'm not like you," he says to Morag (165). On the surface, Jules's acceptance of his identity of the Other brings him freedom from mechanisms of social control, but not in the Laurentian sense of "the promised land of one's own inner freedom."³⁶ For "freedom is, in part, the ability to act out of one's own self-definition,"³⁷ and that has been denied to Jules when his white guardian dismissed his aspiration to become a lawyer as preposterous: "Then he tells me it's a fine thing to get an education, but a person like me might do well to set their

³⁴ Laurence, "Ivory Tower or Grassroots?: The Novelist as Socio-Political Being" 25.

³⁵ Leslie Monkman, "The Tonnerre Family: Mirrors of Suffering," *Journal of Canadian Fiction*, vol. 27, special issue on *The Work of Margaret Laurence*, ed. John R. Sofleet (Montréal: JCF Press, 1980) 148.

³⁶ Laurence, "Ten Years' Sentence" 32.

³⁷ Laurence, "Ivory Tower or Grassroots?: The Novelist as Socio-Political Being" 24.

sights a bit lower, and he will ask Macpherson at the BA Garage to take me on as an apprentice mechanic after Grade Eleven" (149).

While Laurence presents Morag and Jules's ancestors as both suffering oppression due to cultural or ethnical Otherness, she offers no easy fusion of races and cultures in their daughter, Pique. Nevertheless, as an inheritor of both the Currie plaid pin and Lazarus Tonnerre's knife, Pique's multifaceted identity is often interpreted as symbolic of changing attitudes to the Other. As the Currie plaid pin first appears in *The Stone Angel*, it transpires that the rigid notions of ethnic dominance articulated through Hagar's early attitudes are significantly undermined in the final scenes of *The Diviners*, where, as Beeler sums up, "hybridity and diversity offset antagonistic binary oppositions between superior-inferior, white-native categories of experience."³⁸ Although Pique's Otherness is still apparent, it now exists within a framework of post-colonial pluralism instead of hegemonic ethnic and cultural hierarchy.

As outlined earlier, the colonial paradigm of power hierarchy, a domination imposed by a group of people over a culturally, racially, or sexually different group that results in a dispossession of the latter's self-determination and their acceptance of the dominant group's social, cultural, and religious values; may be employed to examine the dynamics of power within patriarchal society as well. Thus, in the Manawaka cycle texts, the phenomenon of *double colonisation* occurs: within the colonised community, women represent another subculture, oppressed further by the hierarchy of power and subjugation imposed by the patriarchal social order. The construction and subversion of these mechanisms shall be discussed in detail in the following chapter.

³⁸ Beeler 25-37.

4. Constructing Gender

There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender... identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results. (Judith Butler)

The notion of a universality of human experience is a confidence trick and the notion of a universality of female experience is a clever confidence trick. (Angela Carter)

The difference between sex and gender is the difference between biology and culture. *Sex* refers to the anatomical and physiological characteristics that define men and women, whereas *gender* refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviours, characteristics, and attributes that a society considers typical or appropriate for each of the sexes.

Since the definition of the sex/gender split was formulated by the feminist movement in the 1970s, the concept of gender has been constantly re-evaluated and is now accepted as a broader and profoundly artificial classification which encompasses more than merely the male/female dualism.¹ Nevertheless, by its inherently artificial nature of a social category acquired through the process of acculturation, and therefore inherently culture-specific character, gender may become one of the mechanisms whereby socially acceptable male and female behaviour is regulated.

In literary criticism, gender is a very important category of assessing writing and reading experience and an essential framework of reference for evaluating a piece of art within the multi-faceted context of human experience. Gender is also the critical prism that I shall employ in this chapter of my diploma thesis to examine how this socially-constructed and religiously sanctioned set of concepts and behavioural expectations, imposed by a community on its members, is constructed and developed in the Manawaka cycle texts, and how it forms an essential part of the characters' identity.

¹ Sarah Gamble, ed., *The Routledge Companion to Feminism and Postfeminism* (London: Routledge, 2004) 239.

4.1 Laurence, Gender and Post-Colonialism

The writing was superb because it delivered the honesty of Margaret Laurence. She came onto things from a woman's point of view that women, in my experience, had never dealt with successfully before. Things about sexuality. Things about being a woman in other ways that other people approach from a ranting point of view... Margaret, when she came to the subject of being a woman inside her writing... you didn't feel someone was shouting at you, but you sure as hell knew what she was saying. It was this forceful grabbing you, and having her way with your mind without leaving it damaged but merely improved and opened. (Timothy Findley)

Due to her African experience, Laurence came to view Canada as a post-colonial nation, and realized that in addition to this, women are colonized under patriarchy as well. She explains: "I had come back home to Canada via Africa, both physically and spiritually. In writing my first novel, *This Side Jordan*, set in Ghana, it had finally become clear to me why I had chosen the theme of an independence which was both political and inner. I was from a land that had been a colony, a land which in some ways was still colonial."² She continues: "Our situation at the time, like that of all peoples with colonial mentalities, was not unlike that of women in our society [...] to me the parallels seem undeniable."³

However, despite the fact that Laurence felt very strongly about feminism, or the Women's Lib, as it was known in Canada, she refused to compromise her artistic integrity by openly serving its purpose. As she wrote in a letter to Al Purdy: "I spent a long time, in connection with the outthrown novel, realising (a) how damn much I am in basic sympathy with that movement and how much of their creed I discovered for myself years ago, and (b) all useless re: novel writing, as NO WAY I CAN OR WILL WRITE PROPAGANDA EVEN IF IT MIGHT BE WORTHY PROPAGANDA."⁴

² Margaret Laurence, "Ivory Tower or Grassroots?: The Novelist as Socio-Political Being," *A Political Art: Essays in Honour of George Woodcock*, ed. William H. New (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1978) 22.

³ Laurence, "Ivory Tower or Grassroots?: The Novelist as Socio-Political Being" 23.

⁴ Margaret Laurence, a letter of 15 April 1971 to Al Purdy. Quoted in Lyall Powers, *Alien Heart: The Life & Work of Margaret Laurence* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2003) 364.

Laurence's refusal to get involved in politics despite her strongly held beliefs was borne out of her conviction that literature must, under no circumstances, become a vehicle of ideology. To her, literature needed to be, first and foremost, fundamentally human, as she emphasizes in her essay on the social responsibility of a writer:

I have not taken an active or direct part in the women's movement, just as I have not taken an active or direct part in any party politics, simply because my work resides in my fiction, which must always feel easy with paradox and accommodate contradictions, and which must, if anything, proclaim the human individual, unique and irreplaceable and the human spirit, amazingly strong and yet in need of strength and grace.⁵

Nevertheless, despite Laurence's open refusal to promote ideology, her Manawaka cycle texts are profoundly and increasingly feminist, but in a rather oblique, yet persistent, manner. This stems from Laurence's unflinching and deeply held belief in equality and women's rights to education, self-determination, and a vocation; a creed she lived by long before the Women's' Lib gathered momentum.

As discussed earlier, in Elaine Showalter's terms, women's writing, like any other subculture, undergoes "three phases of development: *imitation* of the prevailing modes of the dominant tradition, *protest* against these standards and values, and finally, *self-discovery*, a search for identity."⁶ Only the latter represents not merely mimicry or retaliation but offers women "a literature of their own."⁷

This is truly the case of Laurence's Manawaka fiction. While undeniably universally human, her writing is, nevertheless, unequivocally female-centered and with a distinctive female perspective. Laurence perceived sex and gender as one, but was acutely aware of the constricting nature of socially-accepted definition of gender in the patriarchal-dominated world she was living in. She particularly disliked the glossing-over of any reproduction-related aspects of human lives under the pretense of "propriety and decorum." As she observes in her autobiography: "Women often talk of birth, though it continues to be considered, for the most part, an unsuitable and indeed

⁵ Laurence, "Ivory Tower or Grassroots?: The Novelist as Socio-Political Being" 23.

⁶ Gamble 131.

⁷ Which is the title of Showalter's following work, *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Brontë to Lessing* (1978).

boring subject for conversation in mixed company. Women don't really *converse* on this subject, however. It isn't the stuff of idle chatter. It is the core of our lives."⁸

It is obvious from both her fiction and other writing that the values that Laurence held were deeply humanistic: to her, the sanctity of human life was sacrosanct. Nonetheless, it has been pointed out by feminist critique that the very term "humanism" is not gender-neutral, but based on male-centered vision of the world. As Keith Louise Fulton puts it: "The focus and concern of humanism has always been on the knowledge of man; in this knowledge man is the measure of humanity, and as Simone de Beauvoir has described, woman is 'Other'."⁹ In this androcentric framework, emphasising Laurence's female-centered point of view only serves to highlight its "Otherness". Realising this, Laurence is sometimes apologetic in acknowledging her focus on women:

I'm 90% in agreement with Women's' Lib. But I think we have to be careful here... for instance, I don't think enough attention has been paid to the problem men have and are going to have increasingly because of the changes taking place in women. Men have to be re-educated with the minimum of damage to them. These are our husbands, our sons, our lovers... we can't live without them, and we can't go to war against them. The change must liberate them as well.¹⁰

This statement is in opposition to her claimed political impartiality: by shifting the focus on men, Laurence lightens the realities of women oppression and makes the liberation of women sound like a privilege, empowering women at men's expense. Nevertheless, her novels, especially those in the Manawaka cycle, refute this assertion, as they present the characters struggling not for privilege, but for equality and self-determination, which is a universally human struggle.

In the Manawaka cycle texts, Laurence obliquely but persistently exposes and challenges the existing social forms and myths of the dominant patriarchal culture and explores gender roles of predominantly middle-class men and women in the Canadian prairies in the late nineteenth hundreds and the first half of the twentieth century. She questions the assumed superior role of the male breadwinner and the inherently

⁸ Margaret Laurence, *Dance on the Earth: A Memoir* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1989)135.

⁹ Keith Louise Fulton, "Feminism and Humanism," *Crossing the River: Essays In Honour of Margaret Laurence*, ed. Kristjana Gunnars (Winnipeg: Turnstone, 1988) 100.

¹⁰ Margaret Atwood, "Face to Face," *A Place to Stand On: Essays By And About Margaret Laurence*, ed. George Woodcock (Edmonton: NeWest Press, 1983) 23.

inferior position of the female, excluded from trade, education, and public life, and condemned to breeding and unpaid servitude in the home.

Moreover, Laurence demonstrates how these rigid, arbitrary categories damage the spiritual and emotional well-being of both sexes, denying men expression of emotions, saddling women with supposed passivity, daintiness, and primness, and punishing transgression between the two by ridicule and social exclusion. Laurence exposes gender roles as artificial mechanisms of social control whereby the status quo is maintained, and points out how these are to a large extent class-related: transgression thereof leads to social exclusion, i.e. a fall down the social ladder to the insignificant underclass. Nevertheless, Laurence sketches a tentative way out of the trap in the form of self-determination of the self, based on “inner freedom” and one’s own values rather than external socially-prescribed ones.

4.2 Gendered Writing: A Woman’s Voice

Writing, to Laurence, is a deeply held desire to communicate, and therefore inherently gendered by the author’s self: by her or his sex, gender, age, cultural background, and experience. She acknowledges this inevitable predicament:

[...] our characters are partly formed by both our own experience and the experience of women that we have known. Women writers for a long time have actually written about women as women really **are**, whereas, of course, you know, I think that many male writers have done extraordinarily good jobs of writing about women characters, but there are some things that a male writer cannot **know** about a woman, and this is true about a woman writing a male character. This is why I would never write with a male character as a protagonist.¹¹

However, it has not always been so. Laurence recalls that “[I]n my first novel [...] I described the birth of Miranda Kestoe’s child from the point of view of Johnnie Kestoe, the child’s father.”¹² Without realizing, she too had been colonised by patriarchy that

¹¹ Rosemary Sullivan, “An Interview with Margaret Laurence,” *A Place to Stand On: Essays By And About Margaret Laurence*, ed. George Woodcock (Edmonton: NeWest Press, 1983) 75.

¹² Laurence, *Dance on the Earth: A Memoir* 5.

made her doubt the validity of her experience: "How long, how regrettably long, it took for me to find my true voice as a woman writer."¹³

Nevertheless, by realising the limiting nature of the gender system and the significance of her experience, Laurence is in a position to create, in Showalter's terms, a truly women's "literature of their own", i.e. to create a female protagonist with a female perspective that allows the reader to see the realities of women's lives that have been hitherto invisible.

In each of Laurence's Manawaka works, the central human individual proclaimed is female, and the activity explored in all its paradox and contradiction is the growth of her consciousness leading to her self-realization. This, argues Fulton, makes Laurence's approach to writing feminist, despite her proclaimed disinclination to serve political purposes, for the following reasons: "first, that the human individual is female and second, that her problems come not only from her roles in the world, but also from the way her consciousness has been shaped by that world."¹⁴ In other words, her growth is achieved and charted by overcoming the tension between the structure and the agency, by which she accomplishes the reclamation and discovery of her own voice.

For her voice, as Laurence's heroine eventually discovers, is not her own, but rather the learned voice of male cultural authority. It is shaped by patriarchal colonisation, and will not come into its own until the protagonist makes sense of her experience within both the internal and external cultural structure she has been defined with. As Laurence notes, the theme of female empowerment is essential to her writing, and it arose from her "growing awareness of the dilemma and powerlessness of women, the tendency of women to accept male definition of ourselves, to be self-deprecating and uncertain, and to rage inwardly."¹⁵

Nevertheless, Laurence was conscious of the inherent danger in writing to redress injustice. Drawing on her African experience of an observer, in order to write without prejudice, bias, or stereotypes, she realised that she "had had to abandon every ism

¹³ Laurence, *Dance on the Earth: A Memoir* 5.

¹⁴ Fulton 103.

¹⁵ Laurence, "Ivory Tower or Grassroots?: The Novelist as Socio-Political Being" 24.

except individualism and even that seemed a little creaky until the last syllable finally vanished of itself, leaving me ismless, which was just as well.”¹⁶

This metaphorical deconstruction is at the core of Laurence’s Manawaka works: her female protagonists, intent on carving out an independent place for themselves in a world dominated by various forms of male discourse, can only do so by the discovery and reclamation of their own voice. In other words, in order to find her own voice, the novelist needs to reject the established forms of patriarchal language, go to the very core of her humanity, and reinvent herself from within, i.e. to speak in her *female* voice.

4.3 Gendered Reading: A Woman’s Hearing

Just as woman’s perspective on writing is different to that of man’s, so is her way of reading, argues Jonathan Culler in the section “Reading as a Woman” of his work *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism*. If an essential part of the meaning of a work of literature is the reading experience itself, what difference does it make if the reader is a woman?”¹⁷

Should this be the case, continues Culler, then the reading experience “poses concretely and politically the problem of the relation of the reading experience of the reader, if it is a woman, to other sorts of experiences, and also because issues often swept under the carpet by male stories of reading are brought into the open in the debates and divisions of feminist criticism.”¹⁸

This is indeed the case with the perception of the Manawaka cycle. As Laurence found, readers and literary critics alike are not gender-neutral: “Some of my work, particularly my novel, *The Fire-Dwellers*, received some real put-downs from a number of male reviewers. They didn’t even say it was a bad novel; it was just that if anybody like Stacey existed, they just would rather not know.”¹⁹ The reason, she found out, was

¹⁶ Margaret Laurence, “Ten Years’ Sentence,” *A Place to Stand On: Essays By And About Margaret Laurence*, ed. George Woodcock (Edmonton: NeWest Press, 1983) 23.

¹⁷ Jonathan Culler, *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1983) 42.

¹⁸ Culler 42.

¹⁹ Interview with Graeme Gibson, in *Eleven Canadian Novelists*, ed. Graeme Gibson (Toronto: Anansi, 1973) 200.

because “[T]hey found Stacey threatening. Hagar in *The Stone Angel* was an old woman, she was too far removed from them, and Rachel in *A Jest of God* was a spinster, you know, pathetic, they didn’t have to worry about her. But Stacey was a wife and a mother, and if their own wives and mothers had thoughts like hers they just didn’t want to know about them.”²⁰

Indeed, Laurence’s unflinching portrayal of Stacey, torn between her strive for perfection and conflicting spiritual and sexual desires while caught-up in an emotionally-unfulfilling marriage and a mind-numbing, repetitive housewifery, unveils the private as political and thus brings to life uncomfortable home truths, exposing the male definition of a wife as a prudish, one-dimensional fantasy.

With the exception of few outraged prudes,²¹ the reception of the Manawaka cycle by women has been wholeheartedly positive. The reasons are two-fold: first, the double gendering of the literary experience: a woman writing as a woman read by a woman reading as a woman, that allows for a seamless coalescence of points of view; second, women applauded the long-denied transformation of the private into the realm of the political. As Laurence notes:

I was dealing with a lot of the stuff Women’s Lib is talking about right now. But at the time I was doing it I didn’t realize how widespread some of these feelings were. I used to be surprised when I got letters from women saying, ‘Right on.’ My generation of women came to a lot of the same conclusions, but they did it in isolation: you weren’t supposed to say those things out loud, to question the assumption that the woman’s only role was that of housewife.²²

4.4 Language and Silence: The Gender Barrier

Women’s exclusion from language is a prominent theme in the Manawaka cycle texts and one that Laurence uses to illustrate the limiting nature of socially-defined gender roles. In this aspect, argues Diana Brydon, the Manawaka cycle texts “provide a

²⁰ Quoted by Margaret Atwood in “Face to Face” 24.

²¹ As Laurence recalls in *Heart of a Stranger*: “Then there was the lady who wrote to me about my first novel, *This Side Jordan*. This was my first anti-fan letter, and it drew a certain amount of psychic blood from me. ‘I have never read such a disgusting book as yours,’ she charmingly stated, ‘and I would as soon allow my young friends to handle a snake as your novel.’ Fine piece of Freudian imagery there, I thought.”

²² Quoted by Margaret Atwood in “Face to Face” 24.

composite portrait of Canadian women in the middle of [the twentieth] century.”²³ It is the women, she continues,

who reflect and refract that [Manawaka] world; that world which provides them with the material for their monologic dialogues with the self that are the novels. [...] Each woman tells her own story in her own voice and each is very different, yet their shared experience of the condition of being a woman colours all their stories with similar thematic concerns.²⁴

The Manawaka texts, argues Brydon further, “take place within the narrators’ heads. They speak little of what they think. [...] Their stories reveal their entrapment in these assigned roles and their efforts to find a way out of them through developing a new way of using words.”²⁵ However, the process of finding one’s own voice is gradual and lengthy: before each heroine learns to tell her story, she must reject her socially-prescribed role of a forever-silent listener, a mute reflector to the male voice of authority, and she needs to learn to do so not only in her inner monologues, but out loud, within the social discourse.

4.4.1 Language and Silence in *The Diviners*

The process of finding one’s own voice is most manifest in the character of Morag in *The Diviners*, who makes language her work. Being a writer, Morag is capable of articulating fleeting thoughts and passing notions with sharp accuracy and shrewdness, and is thus able to reach a higher level of self-awareness and a greater measure of wisdom and self-expression than other Laurence’s heroines.

Language means power and silence means powerlessness, and by voicing an opinion one asserts her or himself in discursive space. This assertion of power through discourse, however, is only expected of men, as Morag notes and later challenges. When married to Brooke, even though university educated, Morag is expected to keep quiet in company: “When they go out in the evenings, or when they have some of Brooke’s

²³ Diana Brydon, “Silence, Voice and the Mirror: Margaret Laurence and Women,” *Crossing the River: Essays In Honour of Margaret Laurence*, ed. Kristjana Gunnars (Winnipeg: Turnstone, 1988) 184.

²⁴ Brydon 185.

²⁵ Brydon 185-6.

colleagues in, Morag says very little, mainly listening.”²⁶ Even when Brooke’s students make ridiculous statements at an informal study meeting in their apartment, Morag “sits on a low stool by the window, occasionally chipping in but mostly listening” (242). Once she raises her voice to assert her opinion, “[T]here is silence. Embarrassment” (243).

Morag’s relationship to Brooke and their verbal exchanges serve as a microcosm in which the dichotomy of language and silence are examined, and is also the most obvious illustration of the colonizer-colonized paradigm in the novel. The inequality of their relationship is clouded by the roles they both have to play, as Morag feels for the entire duration of the marriage and finally articulates when abandoning it: “Brooke. I can’t explain. I get mixed up when I try, and then I feel I must be entirely in the wrong” (299). Brooke consistently undermines Morag’s attempts at self-expression when these fail to fit into the precisely defined wifely mould that he has allotted her.

Brooke uses the clout of his position of a Professor of English Literature to deliver judgement on Morag’s first novel, deigning that it “suffers from having a protagonist who is non-verbal, that is, she talks a lot, but she can’t communicate very well” (266). This, as Brydon points out, is an inherently biased argument, for “the professional male reader, Brooke, is blind to the woman’s point of view, to her *way of saying*.”²⁷ Brooke also wonders if the heroine “expresses anything which we haven’t known before?” (266). While Morag agrees with the criticism, she realises the importance of the protagonist voice in the fact that it is *her own*: “No. She doesn’t. But *she* says it. That is what is different” (266). Morag, however, has not found her own voice yet, and only retorts this in her mind.

For the time being, it is only in her work that Morag can find her own voice, as her attempts at dialogue with Brooke are marred by his patriarchal assumptions that her deviations from her ascribed gender role are biologically determined, rendering her incoherent and of no consequence: “‘You,’ Brooke says, ‘are hysterical. Are you due to menstruate?’” (277) This blatant disregard for her intellectual capacity and a dismissal of the validity of her opinion finally brings about Morag’s epiphany: “Morag stands absolutely silent. *I do not know the sound of my own voice. Not yet, anyhow*” (277).

²⁶ Margaret Laurence, *The Diviners* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1988) 233.

²⁷ Brydon 188.

Once Morag acknowledges this lack of her own voice, she can begin searching for her own “private and fictional words” (477) with which she can define herself and the world in her own terms. In this quest she is at an advantage compared to other Manawaka heroines by the virtue of being a writer. In fact, argues Laurie Lindberg, Morag “achieves through her success with language a sense of identity and fulfilment far beyond that of any of the earlier Manawaka heroines,”²⁸ as she “reaches a higher level of self-awareness and a greater measure of wisdom than any of the others.”²⁹

While language is power if one learns to use it, silence, on the other hand, may become a tool of the less articulate, as Morag finds out when meeting the wife of her English lover, Dan McRaith:

Bridie says nothing. Well, what could you say? These famous silences of hers, Morag now thinks, are caused because he hands her lines to which she cannot respond either angrily or wittily. Her response is silence, possibly because she has not ever figured out any other response. She was seventeen. He has moved on, into other areas. Bridie has not and knows it well. She runs his house for him; she tends their children and makes the meals. And she has discovered, over the years, maybe with surprise, that her silences are more effective in reproaching him than any words of hers could possibly be (414).

To the undereducated, downtrodden woman, silence is the only leverage she can use against her intellectually-superior husband. Instead of employing her inadequately eloquent voice and risking a communicational defeat, she utilizes the weapons assigned her by socially-prescribed gender roles and uses the absence of her voice to create an atmosphere of mute remorse. Silence, however, is a double-edge sword whose power is limited even when aimed at a perceptive listener: to the average husband, this silent mutiny would fall on deaf ears, so to speak, as it is perfectly in keeping with the expected passive role of a wife. A sensitive, gender-aware individual like McRaith, hears the noiseless reproach but, as it carries no explicit threat, is able to disregard it nonetheless.

²⁸ Laurie Lindberg, “Wordsmith and Woman: Morag Gunn’s Triumph Through Language,” *New Perspectives on Margaret Laurence: Poetic Narrative, Multiculturalism, and Feminism*, ed. Greta M. K. McCormick Coger (New York: Greenwood Press, 1996) 188.

²⁹ Lindberg 187.

4.4.2 Language and Silence in *The Stone Angel*

While Bridie's silences are calculated to effect, the silences in *The Stone Angel* stem from Hagar's inability to communicate with those around her. Having inherited her father's stubborn personality, Hagar also adopts his plainspokenness and the habit of speaking one's mind. While this is a welcomed trait in a man, in a woman, however, it leads to isolation, as Hagar gradually learns although never consciously articulates.

Hagar's life is marked by silences from early on. An overheard conversation between her father and Auntie Doll makes her second-class status as a woman clear: "Smart as a whip, she is, that one. If only she'd been –"³⁰ The gap here obviously signifies "male", and is even more expressive because it remains unsaid, an unattainable impossibility. On return from her finishing school, Hagar expresses a wish to teach in a country school. Her father won't hear of it:

If he had kept to his pattern then, laid down the law in no uncertain terms, I'd have been angry and that's all. But he did not. He reached out and took my hand and held it. His own hand tightened painfully, and for the merest instant the bones in my fingers hurt.

'Stay,' he said.

Perhaps it was only the momentary pain made me do it. I jerked my hand away as though I had accidentally set it on a hot stove. He didn't say a word. He turned and went outside [...] (47).

Both Hagar's and her father's inability to communicate with each other sincerely is due to their unquestioning acceptance of their respective gender roles. As a successful male entrepreneur, Jason Currie is not expected to have conflicting feelings, not to mention expressing them. Hagar, brought up in the same rigidly conservative Scots-Presbyterian environment without an alternative mode of expression that a mother would provide, copies her father's model of communication, or lack thereof. Hagar's tragedy is thus two-fold: she accepts the dichotomy of gender-prescribed roles, but identifies herself with the male model. Thus she feels alienated from herself: she abhors the supposedly female traits, such as weakness, daintiness and expressing emotions; but is forced to be one by her sex nonetheless. She is, in effect, colonised. Deprived of freedom of expression, she is locked in silence for most of her life.

³⁰ Margaret Laurence, *The Stone Angel* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2004) 13.

The pattern of non-communication she carries over to her marriage to Bram. While Morag and Brooke in *The Diviners* attempt to speak to one another, Hagar and Bram are locked in their respective silences. At the beginning, Hagar tries to engage Bram in conversations, but being intellectually and culturally unequal to her, he perceives her attempts to talk of higher things as efforts to belittle him. They wrangle constantly and only truly attempt to communicate through sex. That, however, leads to more silence: "It ended that night with Bram lying heavy and hard on top of me, and stroking my forehead with his hand while his manhood moved in me, and saying in the low voice he used only at such times, 'Hagar, please – I wanted to say 'There, there, it's all right,' but I did not say that. My mouth said, 'What is it?' But he did not answer" (91). The rigid restrictiveness of their prescribed gender roles – his emotionless aggressiveness, her mute compliant passivity – prevent them from establishing communication even through sex, their only common language, as discussed in detail further below.

When Hagar finally realizes that she has to leave Bram to save herself, and tells him so, he looks at her and says: "I got nothing to say, Hagar. It's you that's done the saying. Well, if you are going, go" (153). The tragedy here, Brydon observes, is the fact that Hagar "has never said what she felt or needed, only what she knew her father or her community would have expected her to say."³¹ In effect, it is the silences and the inferiority attendant to her acquired gender role that imprisons her within herself.

Hagar recalls her inability to communicate with her sons as a series of missed opportunities. She is unable to praise Marvin for having done his chores, or express her concern for him when he leaves for war: "I wanted all at once to hold him tightly, plead with him, against all reason and reality, not to go. But I did not want to embarrass both of us, nor have him think I'd taken leave of my senses" (139). Again, Hagar's social conditioning has rendered her unable to express her emotions for fear of ridicule, forcing her to censor her expressions by the prism of propriety and decorum.

³¹ Brydon 191.

4.5 Censoring the Inner Voice: Gendered Language

Speaking is an act of performing one's social role, and therefore inevitably gendered, both in the subject matter of the utterance as well as the form. A significant part of the gender constructions that Laurence explores is the type of the language her characters use. For to consciously modify one's language to fit one's prescribed gender role is to impose a form of censure of oneself, literally limiting one's own voice, but nevertheless unavoidable if attempting to adhere to social convention. The process is closely related to language appropriation, a typical tool of colonialism, by which the dominant community dispossesses the subjugated community of their means of expression, thus stripping them of their self-determination.

As we saw when discussing the construction of identity in relation to the cultural and ethnic Other, formalised language is a mark of belonging to a linguistically dominant community. When Hagar utters the "slangy words" of 'Quite - okay'" (327), she is abandoning the internal censure inherent in maintaining linguistic superiority. Moreover, she is also rebelling against the accepted gender order, in which the female speech is expected to be more refined than that of males.

4.5.1 Censoring the Inner Voice in *The Diviners*

Even as a small child, Morag learns the usage of language as a criterion of respectability. She loves Christie's colourful, heart-fell oaths, but notices that they set him apart from respectable citizens. At the age of six, Morag "loves to swear, but doesn't do it at school because you get the strap or else have to stand out in the hall by yourself where the coats are hung" (44). She realizes the power vulgarity lends to her classmate Skinner Tonnerre, but understands that the situation differs for a girl: swearing is considered unladylike and leads to social exclusion. She attempts to fit this gender role and to win the town's acceptance by manners and clean speech, but her inner monologue ascertains her latent uneasiness: "If you swear at fourteen it only makes you look cheap, and she is not cheap, goddamn it. Gol-darn it" (122).

At university, Morag rejects her provincial way of speaking together with her "disreputable" origins. Nevertheless, she finds that her speech patterns are so entwined

in her consciousness that they sometimes escape her inner censure. Although Brooke is amused by her “idiomatic expressions” for their “directness which one often does not encounter in academic circumstances” (209), Morag resolves to “conceal everything about herself which he might not like. None of Christie’s swearing” (213). To make herself agreeable, she tries to conform by emulating “well-modulated grammatical voices, devoid of epithets, bland as tapioca pudding” (276) of his world. However, this voluntary colonisation, a rejection of her own voice and acceptance of an imposed one, proves harder with her increased awareness of herself and growing disillusionment with the narrowly-defined gender role that Brooke tries to fit her in:

Since Prin’s death, and the last sight of Christie, Morag has experienced increasingly the mad and potentially releasing desire to speak sometimes as Christie used to speak, the loony oratory, salt-beefed with oaths, the stringy lean oaths with some protein in them, the Protean oaths upon which she was reared. But of course does no such thing (276).

When Morag eventually abandons her inner censure and speaks out her mind in her own voice, Brooke dismisses her opinion as premenstrual as it does not fit into his rigid perception of gendered speech and therefore is irrelevant to him. Nevertheless, Morag’s outburst, unconsciously delivered in the remembered language of her stepfather, makes her acknowledge her growing dissatisfaction with Brooke and his constant attempts at stifling her voice, both within their marriage and in her work. It is the first step on her road to self discovery, which inevitably involves the rejection of Brooke and the colonial world of unbending gender roles that he represents, designed to control and repress.

4.5.2 Censoring the Inner Voice in *The Stone Angel*

Hagar’s attitude to speech and inner censure in *The Stone Angel* is much more complicated and reflects the tension between the male gender role that she identifies with and the female one that she is forced to perform, as discussed earlier.

This leads to a state of confusion, where Hagar, on the one hand, “refuses the self-censorship that is the traditional role assigned to women, she speaks without thinking,

just like a man,”³² observes Brydon. On the other hand, Hagar constantly evaluates what other people think of her, and in her lucid moments and in her flashbacks ceaselessly censors her speech. However, more often than not, her honesty, irascibility, and plain-spokenness get the better of her and she ends up alienating people by speaking “out of role”. The contradiction between censoring oneself and a refusal to care for the opinion of others are ever-present in her inner monologues and seamlessly intertwine: “I must be careful not to speak aloud, though, for if I do Marvin will look at Doris and Doris will look meaningfully back at Marvin, and one of them will say, ‘Mother’s having one of her days.’ Let them talk. What do I care now what people say? I cared too long” (4).

The rhetorical question at the end of this contradictory observation at the beginning of the novel introduces an important theme of the book – Hagar’s preoccupation with other people’s opinions of her. Here, Hagar realises that she has lived her life in fear of what others will say about her and censored both her speech and action to fit in the gender-defined role she was forced into. Nevertheless, a habit of a lifetime is not easy to shake off, nor does an insight into one’s own life extend to the lives of others, as proved by Hagar’s harsh and unwittingly ironic judgement on Murray Lees’ public-opinion-conscious mother: “Fancy spending your life worrying what people were thinking. She must have had a rather weak character” (247).

Censoring her inner voice is a much deeper concept to Hagar than just keeping her utterances in check. What she finds most threatening are her emotions, ever so strong, volatile, and unpredictable, and therefore in need of firm reins so as not to betray her in speech. While she eventually realises that her denial of her emotions has led to her life-long self-imposed isolation, she is still unable to change her ways: “Oh, I am unchangeable, unregenerate. I go on speaking in the same way, always, and the same touchiness rises within me at the slightest thing” (319).

Hagar’s inability to change the pattern of her speech is a part of Laurence’s authorial intention. Hagar’s voice, as Laurence acknowledged on numerous occasions, is the voice of Laurence’s grandparents’ generation, and as such, an authentic voice of the Pioneers, in both its form and direct frankness: “When I wrote *The Stone Angel*, it was

³² Brydon 191.

really rather marvellous, because phrases, bits of idiom, would come back to me that I had forgotten, that I didn't know I even remembered, from my grandparents' speech."³³ However, Laurence was also acutely aware of the rigidity of the Pioneer's world: "I think I never recognized until I wrote [*The Stone Angel*] just how mixed my own feeling were towards that whole generation of pioneers – how difficult they were to live with, how authoritarian how unbending, how afraid to show love, many of them, and how willing to show anger. And yet, they had inhabited wilderness and made it fruitful."³⁴

Consequently, to Hagar's generation far more than to Morag's, the type of language one uses is a mark of social acceptance to Manawaka's polite circles, or exclusion from thereof. Born to a well-to-do family and educated in an expensive finishing school, Hagar's language is cultivated and articulate, which she perceives as a mark of class, yet resists as stifling. Her attraction to Bram is chiefly founded on his open disregard for social norms, including linguistic ones, as manifest in his raw uncultured speech. On the one hand, Hagar admires Bram for his free speech, on the other, she despises his lack of sophistication:

'This here! That there! Don't you know anything?'

'So that's what's eating you, he?' he said. 'Well listen here, Hagar, let's get one thing straight. I talk the way I talk, and I ain't likely to change now. If it's not good enough, that's too damn bad.'

'You don't even try,' I said.

'I don't care to,' he said. 'I don't give a Christly curse how I talk, so get that through your head. It don't matter to me what your friends or your old man think' (76).

Yet what Hagar finds appealing in Bram, she condemns in his dead wife: "[s]he was inarticulate as a stabled beast, and when she mustered voice it had been gruff as a man's, pebbled with impermissibles, I seen and ain't, even worse coming from the woman than from the man, the Lord knows why" (49). This damning comment is the direct result of Hagar's colonisation by male-defined gender roles and the double standard they provide to judge the same act in different sexes. While Bram's uncultured speech is perceived as somehow appealing in its lack of refinement, women's presumed role of the child-rearer

³³ Sullivan 68.

³⁴ Laurence, *Heart of a Stranger* 4-5.

and therefore a beacon of propriety and manners doubly condemns her socio-linguistic transgressions.

Given the narrative structure of the book, where Hagar is both a narrator and a protagonist who switches seamlessly between present-day experience and retrospect hindsight, her inner censure is cleverly implicit in both her voices. Hagar's narrative is, as Brenda Beckman-Long notes, "an attempt to unify memories of the past and experiences of the present in one account, and it culminates in the attainment of insight into herself."³⁵ To achieve this, Hagar must cast aside the censure that has been imposed on her in the form of her narrowly-defined gender role and listen to her inner voice, uncircumscribed and raw, but genuinely hers. When she finds her voice, it may not as articulated and polished as Morag's, but it is valid nonetheless. Perhaps even more so, as Hagar's position is far more difficult than Morag's, not only because of times she lives in, but also because of her lack of Morag's insightfulness, self-awareness, education, and a way with words.

4.6 Names as Gender Labels

"What's in a name?"³⁶ asks Shakespeare's Juliet rhetorically, as she realises that there is much indeed. Names are crucial in determining one's identity. Arbitrarily assigned at birth, they define us to a large extent and we do not have the power to change them, at least until adulthood. In the Manawaka cycle texts, nevertheless, names are doubly important as they serve a symbolic purpose and often foreshadow the character's fate.³⁷

³⁵ Brenda Beckman-Long, "The Stone Angel As a Feminine Confessional Novel," *Challenging Territory: The Writing of Margaret Laurence*, ed. Christian Riegel (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1997) 47.

³⁶ William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, II ii 47. 28 Mar 2009
< <http://www.bartleby.com/70/3822.html>>.

³⁷ Thus there is Rachel in *The Jest of God*, Christie in *The Diviners*, the Tonnerres (French for "thunder"), or the (almost eponymous, as Laurence originally intended) Hagar in *The Stone Angel*. She commented on her choice of name for the nonagenarian heroine: "When I was trying to think of the name for the protagonist, the name Hagar did definitely come to me because of the Biblical history, and there are certain parallels between the story of my Hagar and that of the Bible. She is cast out into the wilderness – in the case of my Hagar, the wilderness is within – and certain things that she says about death are similar to certain parts of the Biblical story, as when Hagar's son John is in an accident and she thinks something very similar to what the Biblical Hagar says, which is 'Let me not see the child's death'. But, although I looked up and read again the Biblical story many times when I was writing the book, I did not want the parallel to be too exact. Because that was really destined to cause a few ripples in the reader's responses." Quoted in Michel

Laurence experienced the alienation from the self caused by an assigned name only too well in her own life. Baptized Jean Margaret Wemyss, she “almost at once became ‘Peggy’ to her family and friends, and remained so for thirty-odd years.”³⁸ On marrying, she automatically adopted her husband’s surname, as was customary at the time, and kept it even after their divorce as all her fiction was written under it. Her first name, however, was an issue, and she decided to change it to Margaret on publication of *This Side Jordan*. As Lyall Powers notes in his biography *Alien Heart: The Life & Work of Margaret Laurence*: “However modest, serious critical response to her first novel confirmed the personal adjustment that lay behind her decision to become ‘Margaret’.”³⁹ The decision, notes Powers, was also one of the factors that caused Laurence to leave her husband, and also led to her writing *The Stone Angel*, as she “exuded the self-confidence she had been moving toward since her determination to be ‘Margaret’ rather than ‘Peggy’. [...] To a considerable extent, Margaret had come into her own.”⁴⁰

Laurence was acutely aware of the possessive nature of name appropriation under patriarchy, and recognized it as a mechanism of colonial oppression: “In our culture, our genealogical descent is always in the male line. [...] A woman who keeps her own family name when she marries still bears no surname of her father and his father. Women have no surnames of their own. Their names are literally *sirnames*. Women only have one name that is ours, our first or given name.”⁴¹

4.6.1 Names as Gender Labels in *The Diviners*

Laurence’s experience with reclamation of one’s name is clearly reflected in *The Diviners*. When Morag publishes her first novel under her maiden name, her husband perceives this as an act of caution, of trying to avoid embarrassment should the book prove a failure: “Didn’t you want to take the chance, Morag? Of putting your married

Fabre, “From *The Stone Angel* to *The Diviners*: An Interview With Margaret Laurence,” *A Place to Stand On: Essays By And About Margaret Laurence*, ed. George Woodcock (Edmonton: NeWest Press, 1983) 198.

³⁸ Powers 6.

³⁹ Powers 196.

⁴⁰ Powers 206.

⁴¹ Laurence, *Dance on the Earth: A Memoir* 9.

name on it?' 'Brooke – it wasn't that. It was something different. It goes a long way back'" (283).

To Morag, the reclamation of her own name is not an act of caution, but an unconscious demonstration of her longing for freedom and separation from Brooke, who sees her in truly colonial terms: as a mere appendage, an extension of himself, rather than a person in her own right. However, Brooke too is, like Morag, a victim of the patriarchal order that has conditioned his attitudes and expectations of both sexes. Brooke is hurt by Morag's affair with Jules Tonnerre, not because this means that Morag no longer loves him, but because he perceives that his property has been tarnished: "How do you think I feel, Morag, knowing you've been with another man?' She is shocked and awed by his pain. At the same time, she sees for the first time that he has believed he owns her" (299).

Brooke's sense of ownership is reinforced by the standard protocol of patriarchal name appropriation. When writing to his by then estranged wife, Brooke does not address her by her name, instead, "[h]is letter is addressed: Mrs. Brooke T. Skelton" (317). Not content with taking away the woman's surname, her first name too must yield to patrilineal male ego.

In the course of their marriage, Brooke's persistence in addressing her in diminutive labels rather than by her actual name is a source of constant resentment to Morag. Brooke's insistence on calling her "child," "idiot child," and "little one" are a manifestation of his need not for a partner, but an inferior reflector to his gender-elevated position of masculinity. However, Morag's growing self-awareness finally rejects this implied gender-sanctioned position of inferiority and dependence, as she "[c]an't bear not be taken seriously,' Morag says, the words sounding melodramatic to her ears, although true. 'Can't bear to be treated as a child'" (279).

Morag's publishing her book under her own name is an act of freedom and self-realization, a conscious refusal of gender labels that have been imposed on her. It marks her transition from child-like dependency to full adulthood. It is an act of reclaiming not only her name, but primarily, her voice, by which she is going to define herself from now on.

4.6.2 Names as Gender Labels in *The Stone Angel*

Hagar finds early on that names are labels that can inflict delight as well as pain. She notes that her father “called me ‘miss’ when he was displeased, and ‘daughter’ when he felt kindly disposed towards me. Never Hagar” (13). Her father’s avoidance of speaking her true name is representative of his colonial perception of her as his property rather than a person in her own right; a fact that Hagar realises when challenging her father for the first and only time, over her intended marriage: “‘Hagar –’ he said. ‘You’ll not go, Hagar.’ The only time he ever called me by my name. To this day I couldn’t say if it was a question or a command” (52). Addressing Hagar by her given name, Jason Currie unwittingly reveals that by the act of voiced resistance, Hagar has ceased to be an inferior entity, but become an equal partner to him, her obstinacy a match to his own.

Bram, on the other hand, only ever calls Hagar by her name, a fact that he notes and prides himself on:

‘You know something, Hagar? There’s men in Manawaka call their wives ‘Mother’ all the time. That’s one thing I never done.’

It was true. He never did, not once. I was Hagar to him, and if he were alive, I’d be Hagar to him yet. And now I think he was the unconsciously only person close to me who ever thought of me by my name, not daughter, not sister, not mother, nor even his wife, but Hagar, always (85-6).

On this one and only level, Bram rejects socially-prescribed hierarchy of gender roles and accepts Hagar as an individual and an equal.

Hagar is aware of the distinguishing potential of names and is proud of her unusual, striking first name, even though its origin is presented as ironic: “I’d been named, hopefully, for a well-to-do spinster great-aunt in Scotland, who, to my father’s chagrin, had left her money to the Humane Society” (13). Hagar’s name is a source of pride and distinction to her, and she looks down on ordinary names, “just the sort of name the Shipleys would have. They were all Mabels and Gladyses, Vernons and Marvins, squat brown names, common as bottled beer” (33).

Nevertheless, first names, no matter how common, are secondary only to family names. These, naturally, are patrilineal, and lack thereof is a source of shame, as demonstrated in the case of Lottie: “[Charlotte and Hagar] used to [...] wonder what it

would be like to be Lottie Drieser and not know where your father had got to, or even who he'd been. We never called Lottie 'No-Name,' though – only the boys did that. But we tittered at it, knowing it was mean, feeling a half-ashamed excitement, [...]" (9). Lottie's lack of patrilineal name sets her outside the patriarchal social structure, and to a large extent excludes her from it. The fact that Hagar, who all her life rebels against labels, fails to realise the arbitrariness of these, further highlights the gentle irony Laurence employs to reveal the inherent unfairness of patriarchy and its attendant gendered codes of conduct.

4.7 Desire and Propriety: Gendered Perception of Love

In the course of the Manawaka cycle, Laurence exposes romantic love as a gendered myth offered to women in order to maintain the status quo, and explores how this culturally-idolised notion together with tabooization and denial of sexuality damages both sexes.

The different time setting of the two novels discussed reveals slight changes in social attitudes. Nevertheless, Laurence portrays these as rather superficial and of no profound effect on the underlying repressive mechanism of mythicized love and denied sexuality that must be maintained to preserve patriarchal social order. In the process of doing so, both women's bodies and minds are colonised: bodies by denial of sexual and reproductive self-determination and minds in manipulating the consciousness to accept this as the desired state of affairs.

4.7.1 Gendered Perception of Love in *The Stone Angel*

Hagar's relationship to Bram is doomed by the romantic conception of love she has been brought up to believe in, completely separate from the unmentionable filth of procreation. "Love", Hagar recalls, "I fancied, must consist of words and deeds delicate as lavender sachets, not like the things he [Bram] did sprawled on the high white bedstead that rattled like a train" (86). Shackled by the romanticised expectations, she fails to

recognize her feelings for her husband; moreover, she is embarrassed by her enjoyment of their sexual relationship:

It was not so very long after we wed, when first I knew my blood and vitals rise to meet his. He never knew. I never let him know. I never spoke aloud, and I made certain the trembling was all inner. He had an innocence about him, I guess, or he'd have known. How could he not have known? Didn't I betray myself in rising sap, like a heedless and compelled maple after a winter? But no. He never expected any such a thing, and so he never perceived it. I prided myself upon keeping my pride intact, like some maidenhead (87).

Separating romantic and physical love, Hagar equals the denial of her sexuality with pride, feeling thus morally elevated and superior in reinforcing her colonised position of a prim and proper wife, elevated over lowly bodily pleasures.

However, Hagar eventually comes to realize that what she felt for Bram was love, even though manifest in physical acts of sex: "*His banner over me was love. [...] He had a banner over me for many years. [...] His banner over me was only his skin, and now I no longer know why it should have shamed me*" (86-7). Ironically, while Bram loves Hagar, as demonstrated in his refusal to call her by anything but her own name, his expression of love is limited by his prescribed gender role as well: he believes that sex is his husbandly due, carried out on the woman's passive mute body, and thus ironically shows his feeling for Hagar by absolving her from her wifely duties: "When we went to bed that night, he started to turn to me, and I felt so gently inclined that I think I might have opened to him openly. But he changed his mind. He patted me lightly on the shoulder. 'Your go to sleep now,' he said. He thought, of course, it was the greatest favour he could do me" (94).

Notwithstanding her proclaimed romantic notions, on an unconscious level Hagar is a thoroughly sexual being. It is Bram's sexual, not romantic, attention that attracts her to him when they first meet:

As we went spinning like tumbleweed in a Viennese waltz, disguised and hidden by the whirling crowd, quite suddenly he pulled me to him and pressed his outheld groin against my thigh. Not by accident. There was no mistaking it. No one had ever dared in this way before. Outraged, I pushed at his shoulders, and he grinned. I, mortified beyond words, couldn't look at him except dartingly. But when he asked me for another dance, I danced with him (49-50).

While her social conditioning dictates Hagar's superficially outraged reaction, underneath the shell of gendered primness hides unmitigated sexuality equal of Bram's. Even when already in her fifties and having left Bram for life of quiet propriety, she finds that she greatly misses him sexually:

I never thought of Bram in the days any more, but I'd waken, sometimes, out of a half sleep and turn to him and find he wasn't beside me, and then I'd be filled with such a bitter emptiness it seemed the whole of night must be within me and not around or outside at all. There were times when I'd have returned to him, just for that. But in the morning I'd be myself once more, put on my black uniform with its white lace collar, go down and serve Mr. Oatley's breakfast with calm deliberation, hand him his morning paper with hands so steady that he couldn't have known I'd been away at all (172-3).

Sexuality aside, Hagar's internalised model of rigidity in emotional matters is a barrier that prevents her from reaching out to her husband, her father, her sons, or anybody close to her: she equates expression of love with madness, and therefore stifles her voice into silence. Thus her family does not really know her, and neither she them, and at the end of her life, she is "choked with it now, the incommunicable years, everything that happened and was spoken or not spoken" (322).

4.7.2 Desire and Propriety: Gendered Love in *The Diviners*

Morag's situation in matters of sex is easier than Hagar's, owing to her being two generations younger and brought up by a free-thinking outcast. Thus Morag, on the one hand, is aware of the restriction imposed on her if she wants to be a part of polite society; on the other, she knows that it is possible, if not desirable, to overcome these norms and establish one's own.

Unlike Hagar, Morag embraces her sexuality and at fifteen is able to consciously "bring herself" (143). Her first sexual encounter with Jules Tonnerre at eighteen leaves her virginal, but satisfied, having "cried out somewhere in someplace beyond language" (153). When dating in college, she encounters the double standards by which sexuality is perceived in men and women: "She suffers the lack of real sex as much as he does – at least, if he suffers more, he must really suffer *plenty*. Both, no doubt, have the same solitary solution. If he, however, knew this about her he would scorn her forever. Unfair, but factual" (204).

Brooke, of course, expects Morag to be a virgin, and presents his reason as caring: "I suppose I like to feel that it's something you've only experienced with me. It's – well, if I didn't care about you, I wouldn't feel that way, would I? I think most men would feel that way about their woman" (217). Masquerading as tender feelings, Brooke's concern is in fact an act of appropriation, as deflowering Morag is an act of colonization: a symbolic marking his territory, claiming her body as his property.

Once married, Brooke assumes firm control of their sexual life, ritualizing it into a gendered play of power:

'Have you been a good girl, love?' Brooke asks.

It has become his game, his jest, before going into her, and indeed before permitting his arousal of hers. If she protests the sentence, he will withdraw all of himself except his unspoken anger. She has to play, or be prepared to face that coldness. Either way she is afraid. Yet he cannot help it, and she knows this. There can be no talk of it, for it is, after all, only a joke (264-5).

While Morag expresses her love for Brooke frequently, he never responds equally. Nevertheless, when she voices her fear of being left by him, he responds affirmatively: "How could I ever leave you? You're mine. My woman. I'll be with you and protect you always" (241). However reassuring, this is a statement of ownership, not love, for Brooke, as it turns out, is incapable of love, having been damaged by the system of socially imposed norms of behaviour as well. Punished harshly by his father for expressing feelings for his Indian nurse, his emotional growth was stunted and he is rendered into a caricature of colonialism: only capable of unequal, domineering relationships that render him invulnerable.

Jules, on the other hand, treats Morag as nothing but his equal. As a social outcast, Jules is able to live by his own laws, and therefore is unshackled by the gender system to a large extent, as discussed earlier. Never married by "some crazy kind of law" (293), he does not appropriate Morag or intends to control her fertility: "Would you mind very much if I didn't do anything not to [get pregnant]?" Jules looks at her, then laughs. 'Jesus. You're a crazy woman. Do you have to ask permission?'" (301).

While Morag is able to claim her freedom and leave her stifling marriage, she realises that for some women, marriage is the only option. This is illustrated in the case of her childhood friend Eva, the ultimate victim of patriarchy. Her self-confidence is so

damaged by continual paternal abuse and infertility brought about by a self-induced abortion, that her mind is thoroughly colonised and she “thinks she should be grateful to young McKendrick for marrying her. He knows, you see. She told him. She would. The Winklers was never well-known for their brains” (266). The inherent unfairness of the system that allows women precious few options outside marriage, while grossly restricting their behaviour and sexuality, is not lost on Christie, who voices this observation.

Once a single mother, Morag finds she can openly talk about sex only to other female outcasts outside the gendered social system like herself, her danseuse landlady, for example: “Do you like fucking, Morag?” “Yeh. Sometimes I wish I didn’t” (338). Morag is aware of the performance expected of her gender in order to attract a sexually-viable man, but “she dislikes and feels alienated from herself with a lot of makeup on” (341). The double standards, however, still apply, and Morag realises the inherent sexism of the language when finding herself to be “a lady on the make. It doesn’t sound too pleasant. On the other hand, why doesn’t it?” (341).

Furthermore, in writing as in any other profession, success is only desirable and attractive in men:

Morag never gets to meet the visiting celebrity. He is surrounded by a breathless group, all women, who possibly think it would be nifty to be able to say you’d slept with a well-known poet. Morag has observed this phenomenon at Hank’s parties before. The woods are perceptibly not full of an equal number of breathless men who have designs upon women writers (342).

As an unattached, independent female, Morag does not fit usual gender roles and is thus perceived as suspicious and intimidating. By the book’s close she realises that she will most likely spend the rest of her life partnerless. Her reluctance to live by the limits of externally-imposed gender system brings her the Laurentian “inner freedom,” but at the cost of loneliness. Nevertheless, this is a price that she is willing to pay in order not to compromise her own liberated voice and live by it.

In this pessimistic conclusion Laurence paints a bleak picture of Canadian society of the 1960s and 1970s, proving that while attitudes have certainly shifted since Hagar’s times, the existing cultural and social order is still highly patriarchal and inherently repressive. However, by exposing the sanctioned gender bias, Laurence makes a crucial

step to the recognition of the problem and its introduction to the public consciousness and discourse, which is necessary before remedial steps may be taken. To this effect, her work may be classified as post-colonial, as it deals the process of self-liberation of the colonised subjects, and their struggle for autonomy outside the colonial system.

While refusing the feminist label, Laurence's writing may nevertheless be classified as feminist, as it exposes and dissects issues at the core of feminism, i.e. women's right to self-determination, the detrimental effect of patriarchy on both sexes, the denial of women's sexuality, and the hypocrisy of double standards. This is, however, by no means the only reading of her. As Lynn Z. Bloom notes, "feminist readings of Laurence must compete for attention with other equally or more compelling potential readings, especially those related to Canadian postcolonial history, culture, social class, ethnicity, and literary tradition."⁴²

⁴² Lynn Z. Bloom, et al., "Reading together and apart: feminism and/versus ethnicity in Margaret Laurence and Margaret Atwood: a conversation", *American Review of Canadian Studies*, Spring 1999, 15 Apr 2009 <http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_hb009/is_1_29/ai_n28724700/?tag=content;col1>.

5. Conclusion

It is no exaggeration to suggest that Margaret Laurence is the most significant creative writer in Canadian literature. This statement is not meant to spark any debate about the merits and deficiencies of her work compared to that of others. [...] But when the profound effect of Margaret Laurence's fiction and Margaret Laurence herself combine, the result is an unparalleled influence on Canadian writers and readers (J. A. Wainwright)

I had come to regard her novels as perhaps the most important Canadian fiction of any time and certainly of our time. (George Woodcock)

Margaret Laurence, asserts Christian Riegel, “touched Canadians like no other writer during her celebrated life and career. A nerve was struck in the Canadian psyche with the humanity Laurence displayed in her fictional portrayals of Canada.”¹ At a crucial time in the nation’s development, she filled a void in its self-knowledge by providing Canadians with a much needed conceptual space, or what Margaret Atwood calls a “map to an unknown territory:”

I’m talking about Canada as a state of mind, as the space you inhabit not just with your body but with your head. It’s that kind of a space in which we find ourselves lost. What a lost person needs is a map of the territory, with his own position marked on it so he can see where he is in relation to everything else. Literature is not only a mirror; it is also a map, a geography of the mind. Our literature is one such map, if we can learn to read it as *our* literature, as the product of who and where we have been.²

In terms of identity formation and cultural positioning, Laurence’s influence of Canadian literature cannot be overestimated. As Matt Cohen writes, “It is difficult today to recreate the extent to which, in the 1970s Margaret Laurence was the massive and dominating presence on the Canadian literary scene... Of all those writers who had been born in Canada or lived here, she was considered the best, the most Canadian, the most universal, the most gifted and the most accomplished.”³

¹ Christian Riegel, “Introduction: Recognizing the Multiplicity of the Oeuvre,” *Challenging Territory: The Writing of Margaret Laurence*, ed. Christian Riegel (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1997) xi.

² Margaret Atwood, *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature* (Toronto: Anansi, 1972) 18-19.

³ Quoted in Nora Foster Stovel, *Divining Margaret Laurence: A Study of Her Complete Writings* (Montréal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2008) 4.

The focus of this diploma thesis is the construction of identity and gender in Laurence's Manawaka cycle texts. Laurence's own identity, shaped in a Scots-Presbyterian-dominated Canadian small-town, is mediated through her fiction, forming an external structure that moulds her characters, and against which they must define themselves by their agency. As Laurence asserts, "writing, for me, has to be set firmly in some soil, some place, some outer and inner territory, which might be described in anthropological terms as 'cultural background.'"⁴

As we have seen, identities are formed both by internal definitions as well as externally, by social structures that surround us. The tension between the "structure and the agency", the internal and external definitions of the self, is a matter of freedom. As Laurence puts it, "freedom is, in part, the ability to act out of one's own self-definition, with some confidence and with compassion, uncompelled by fear or by the authority of others."⁵

In the novels discussed, *The Stone Angel* and *The Diviners*, the process of characters' identity formation is influenced by the same factors: a small-town location with rigid, religion-sanctioned social hierarchy based on class and profession, the importance of their position in collective and private history, and their relationship to the cultural and ethnic Other.

Comparing the two novels, a pattern of progress is clearly discernible: where Hagar in *The Stone Angel* is bound stiff by accepting external definitions of herself and feels obliged to act out her socially prescribed roles to the detriment of her inner freedom, Morag in *The Diviners* questions and challenges the status quo and carves out an identity entirely in her own right, based on her internal values rather than external codes of conduct. Her success is, undoubtedly, to a large degree due to zeitgeist: she is two generations younger than Hagar.

The elapsed time span facilitates the partial relaxing of colonial attitudes evident in the two texts. Hagar's pioneering generation, the founding fathers of Manawaka, impose their values on the town in a truly colonial manner; in Morag's times, the old rules still prevail, most notably in class segregation and in the subjugation of the cultural and

⁴ Margaret Laurence, "A Place to Stand On," *Heart of a Stranger* (Toronto: McClelland-Bantam, 1988) 7.

⁵ Margaret Laurence, "Ivory Tower or Grassroots?: The Novelist as Socio-Political Being," *A Political Art: Essays in Honour of George Woodcock*, ed. William H. New (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1978) 24.

ethnic Other. On the other hand, change is slowly creeping though, in the form of university education, career, and reproductive autonomy available to women, should they want these bad enough.

The “cultural background” of Manawaka combined with the fact that both protagonists are female also preconditions their identity to a large extent. As the town’s social structure is strictly Scots-Presbyterian, it may be qualified as colonization through patriarchy: a default hierarchy of power is established in which women are delegated to the position of dependency, victimhood, and denigration. Both heroines struggle against the strictly defined gender roles and expectations that deny the realization of their full individuality. To find their own voice, argues Nora Foster Stovel, “each heroine must discover her individual identity beneath the role-playing and gender construction – the selfhood that precedes and informs all those roles.”⁶

In Hagar and Morag’s struggle, Laurence demonstrates how socially sanctioned norms of expression condemn the protagonists to silence. Their right to language is restricted and curtailed by their internalised need to censure their speech, thus suppressing their freedom as well as their voice. Gender as a mechanism of social control permeates all social strata and aspects of life, including appropriation through names as labels. Most of all, Laurence exposes gender as a tool employed to control reproduction and sexual conduct, the norms of which are hypocritically different for each of the sexes: through mythicizing romantic love and segregating it from sexual expression, women’s bodies as well as minds are colonised by male-defined perception of the self.

Hagar and Morag’s problem with male-defined gender roles is by no means unique. It is, by far, a symptom of a much wider problem, as E. Whitmont observes,

One might speculate on the possibility that there may be no archetypal pattern available in western Christian culture – that is to say no archetypal pattern that has been accepted by this culture – that would enable certain types of women to find their true individuality in terms of their femininity. The basic rejection and denigration of feminine values as compared to masculine values is the heritage of our historically patriarchal

⁶ Foster Stovel 23.

culture. That has resulted in a situation in which the feminine individuation problem has become a pioneering task that is perhaps meant to usher in a new period of culture.⁷

Laurence paves the way for this new period by giving her Manawaka heroines a voice of their own. As Barbara Pell asserts: "The publication of *The Stone Angel* in 1964 liberated the Canadian heroine from being primarily a prisoner of the male imagination and paved the way for the feminist creations of women."⁸ Moreover, by allowing her protagonist to assume the narrative voice and tell their life-story, Laurence's novels, it may be argued, serve "an ideological purpose: the authorization of the female voice."⁹

The empowering of women through narrative is the underlying theme of the entire Manawaka cycle: by telling their story, Laurence's heroines achieve awareness of their inner colonisation, i.e. of the structure that shaped them. They challenge it by refusing to be defined by voices of others, and instead search for their own, with which to convey their developing self-realization. Furthermore, that voice literally is their own, both in its content as well as distinctive Canadian quality, as W. H. New notes: "Perhaps more than any other writer of her time, she seemed to have mastered the rhythms and cadences of the Canadian speaking voice. She used them without apology. She celebrated her regional roots."¹⁰

The process of identity formation realized through the growing awareness of the self, the coming of terms with the past, the recognition of one's limitations, and finally an acceptance of the self, that Laurence's Manawaka heroines undergo in order to find their own voice, is a process of overcoming colonisation. "If [a group of people] cannot define their own lives and their decisions depend on "superior" [group], they are surely colonized," argues Nenevé. In this effect, Laurence's heroines' struggle for autonomy may be paralleled to that of Canadian literature.

Through her work, Laurence not only gave voice to the repressed, the women and the Métis, but she did so unapologetically, gracefully, and in her own idiom. Thus she fulfilled an essential role in the process of establishing a truly post-colonial Canadian

⁷ Quoted in Helen M. Buss, "The Autobiographical Impulse," *Crossing the River: Essays In Honour of Margaret Laurence*, ed. Kristjana Gunnars (Winnipeg: Turnstone, 1988) 163-4.

⁸ Quoted in Foster Stovel 17-18.

⁹ Brenda Beckman-Long, quoted in Foster Stovel 31.

¹⁰ W. H. New, ed., *Margaret Laurence: Critical Views on Canadian Writers* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryderson, 1977) 1.

literature and self-expression. As David Staines argues, her fiction had political impact: "In postcolonial countries creative writers are often prominent theoreticians in the breakdown of boundaries between the discourses of the literary and the theoretical."¹¹ In this way, Laurence provided Canadians with a tool to overcome inner colonisation: she created a mirror for them to see themselves in, a point of departure for all that came after her. Paul Comeau observes that she "helped to give us our place to stand on and continues to exert a compelling and guiding influence on Canadian literature."¹²

In this diploma thesis, I outlined and discussed the means through which Laurence constructs identity and gender in the selected novels. I attempted to separate the two issues in order to gain a clearer perspective. However, having completed my work, it has become apparent that no separation is possible. The issues of identity and gender are intrinsically intertwined and one cannot be discussed without the other.

Nevertheless, I trust that this diploma thesis has achieved its objective, as suggested by the title metaphor, i.e. to argue a parallel between the characters' self-realisation and the emergence of full-fledged, autonomous Canadian literature in the post-colonial framework. I claimed that the process was analogous and doubly relevant to the gender issue. Through close readings of the primary texts, as well as Laurence's non-fictional works, I presented and evaluated a number of arguments. I conclude that the process may indeed be perceived as analogous, as it employs the same dynamics of dominance and subjugation, undermining confidence, and dispossessing indigenous value systems and replacing them with its hierarchy of power. This model of dominance is indeed doubly relevant to the gender aspect of identity formation. Furthermore, the process of overcoming colonisation is identical in the struggle for freedom and self-determination experienced by all colonised communities, be it ethnic or cultural minorities, nations or an entire sex.

I realize that the intricate issues of identity and gender may be approached from various perspectives. However, for the purpose of this study, I chose a number of aspects that I consider critical and that appeared in corresponding importance in both novels. Nevertheless, the limiting extent of this diploma thesis forced me to constrict my attention strictly to the selected aspects of my study and omit other. The post-colonialist

¹¹ David Staines, ed., *Margaret Laurence: Critical Reflections* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2001) 5.

¹² Quoted in Foster Stovel 4.

perspective that I examine is complex and may be studied from a number of equally relevant angles: family relationships, the nature versus civilization dichotomy, performativity of rituals, spiritual pilgrimage or Biblical perspective. Also, each of the aspects that I explore may warrant a separate study of substantial length, nevertheless, I attempted to encompass as many factors as possible to facilitate a diversity of perspective within my limited scope.

In addition, I would like to propose a study of the selected texts from a post-modern perspective as a challenging and rewarding method of exploration. I feel that this standpoint would be relevant to both *The Stone Angel* and *The Diviners*, as both novels employ original narrative techniques with elements of metafiction.

To conclude, I would like to reiterate Laurence's perspective on writing as a process of self-determination, an essential way of making sense of the world, of finding one's own voice with which to map this world with, and to assert one within it. Most of all, writing to Laurence was a means of refusing to accept externally imposed silence. As Robert Kroetsch sums up, she wrote "to resist the silence, in resisting it through story."¹³

¹³ J. A. Wainwright, ed., *A Very Large Soul: Selected Letters From Margaret Laurence to Canadian Writers* (Dunvegan: Cormorant Books, 1995) 106.

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7. Czech Résumé

Mnohoznačný název diplomové práce, „Svůj vlastní hlas: Konstrukce identity a genderu v textech Manawaka cyklu Margaret Laurence,“ naznačuje dvojí cíl: v první řadě se práce zabývá zkoumáním psychologického vývoje postav, zejména procesem překonávání vnějších definic identity a doprovodných genderových rolí a formulováním vlastního nezávislého sebeurčení. V druhé rovině práce projednává analogii mezi procesem sebeurčení postav a vznikem nezávislé kanadské literatury v rámci post-koloniálního paradigmatu. Práce stanoví tezi, že zkoumaný proces sebeurčení je obdobný a v oblasti problematiky genderu platí dvojnásob.

V úvodní kapitole je nastíněna problematika a stanoveny cíle.

Vzhledem k tomu, že Laurence ve své tvorbě vychází do značné míry z autobiografické zkušenosti, začíná druhá kapitola stručným životopisem spisovatelky, krátkým představením významu děl Manawaka cyklu a stručným shrnutím děje textů, které budou rozebírány podrobně, tj. románů *The Stone Angel* (*Kamenný anděl*) a *The Diviners* (*Hledači pramenů*).¹ Dále tato kapitola přibližuje kulturní poměry v Kanadě v šedesátých letech dvacátého století a nastiňuje rozsah přínosu Laurenceové.

Třetí kapitola se zabývá konstrukcí identity ve vybraných textech. Zkoumá napětí mezi „strukturou a působením,“ a mezi objektivními a subjektivními prvky formování identity v post-koloniálním kontextu. Stanoví si za cíl prozkoumat, jak Laurence zobrazuje společensko-kulturní prostředí a jeho vliv na postavy, jak toto prostředí formuje hrdinky a hrdiny, jak si tyto postupně uvědomují tento proces formování a jak nakonec překonají vnucená omezení svého sebeurčení a zaujmou aktivní roli ve svém vlastním sebeurčení. Zkoumání se soustředí na tři faktory formování identity: za prvé na propojený vliv prostředí maloměsta, společenské třídy a povolání, za druhé na vztah mezi kolektivní a soukromou minulostí, pravdou a mýtem, a za třetí na kulturní a etnickou rozmanitost neodmyslitelnou ve vymezování „já“ vůči „jinakosti.“

Pro formování identity je rovněž významný faktor genderu, který je z důvodu svého zásadního vlivu podrobně zkoumán ve čtvrté kapitole. Nejdříve je definován pojem „gender“ a stručně shrnut jeho význam na literární tvorbu a na vnímání literárních děl. Poté přichází na řadu postoje Laurenceové k problematice a přijetí jejích

¹ Román vyšel r. 1993 česky pod názvem *Hledači pramenů*. Překlad Alena Jindrová-Špilarová, nakl. Dita.

děl z tohoto hlediska. Následuje detailní analýza konstrukce genderu v obou románech, která zjišťuje prostředky, jakých Laurence využívá, a výsledky, kterých dosahuje. Zkoumání konstrukce genderu se soustředí na čtyři oblasti: na dichotomii řeči a ticha, na vnitřní cenzuru, na důležitost jmen a nazývání jmény, a konečně na dopad patriarchálního řádu na romantickou lásku a sex. Cílem této kapitoly je rozebrat, jak Laurenceové užití genderu přispívá k procesu vývoje postav, jejich sebeuvědomění a nezávislého sebeurčení v post-koloniálním paradigmatu.

Pátá kapitola obsahuje závěr, v němž je shrnuta podrobná analýza předchozích kapitol, která potvrzuje výchozí tvrzení, a sice že proces sebeurčení postav ve zkoumaných dílech je srovnatelný s procesem vzniku svébytné kanadské literatury v rámci post-koloniálního paradigmatu, a že v otázce genderu platí dvojnásob. V průběhu zkoumání vyšlo najevo, že proces kolonizace a jejího překonávání vskutku probíhá obdobně v případě kolonizace etnické či kulturní skupiny, národa či celého pohlaví.

Manawaka cyklus se skládá ze čtyř románů, *The Stone Angel* (1964), *A Jest of God* (*Boží vtip*) (1966), *The Fire-Dwellers* (*Obyvatelé ohně*) (1969) a *The Diviners* (1974); a ze sbírky spojených povídek *A Bird In the House* (*Pták v domě*) (1970). V dílech se vyskytuje řada volně propojených postav, které mají spojitost s fiktivním městečkem Manawaka v manitobských prériích. Všechna díla v cyklu mapují proces sebeuvědomování, vyrovnávání se s minulostí a cestou k sebeurčení jednotlivých hrdinek.

Přestože se Manawaka řada skládá z pěti děl, pro účely této diplomové práce budou podrobně rozebírána pouze dvě z nich, a to romány *The Stone Angel* a *The Diviners*. Výběr těchto děl byl způsoben jednak prostorovým omezením stanoveného rozsahu diplomové práce, ale především proto, že struktura obou románů je srovnatelná a dominantní témata Manawaka cyklu, jako je otázka svobody, přežití, předků a problému sebeurčení, jsou v obou dílech srovnatelně zastoupena. Vzhledem k tomu, že romány představují úvod a závěr Manawaka řady, ilustrují rovněž i vývoj Laurenceové jako spisovatelky.

The Stone Angel vypráví příběh Hagar, narozené r. 1870 coby příslušnice generace kanadských pionýrů. Ve svých devadesáti letech se Hagar ohlíží za uplynulým životem a zjišťuje, že ho promrhala snahou žít podle mínění jiných.

The Diviners se odehrává v současnosti (tj. začátkem sedmdesátých let dvacátého století) a popisuje jedno léto v životě stárnoucí spisovatelky Morag, která se prostřednictvím psaní a vyprávění příběhů snaží vyrovnat s minulostí, skutečnou i smyšlenou, a najít si cestu ke své dospívající dceři, jejíž otcem je původní obyvatel Kanady Métis.

Margaret Laurence se narodila r. 1926 a vyrostla v městečku Neepawa v provincii Manitoba. Po studiích se odstěhovala s manželem do Afriky, kde žili v letech 1950 až 1957. Africké období bylo zcela zásadní pro Laurenceové umělecký a politický vývoj. Nejen, že nabyla zkušeností s lidmi ze zásadně odlišných kultur a jasně představy o mechanismech kolonizace, ale navíc získala nezbytný odstup (fyzický i psychologický) od Kanady, který jí umožnil nezaujatě psát o své domovině.

Po pětiletém pobytu ve Vancouveru, během něhož Laurence napsala tři knihy s africkou tematikou, r. 1962 Laurence opustila manžela a odstěhovala se i s dětmi do Anglie, kde napsala většinu děl Manawaka cyklu. Po návratu do Kanady r. 1974 se Laurence díky úspěchům svých knih stala významnou a vlivnou veřejnou osobností. Spoluzaložila Unii kanadských spisovatelů a stala se její první prezidentkou. Aktivně se účastnila veřejného života a neúnavně psala a přednášela o celospolečenských problémech jako jaderné zbrojení, znečišťování životního prostředí, gramotnost, cenzura, sexuální výchova atd.

Kromě tří knih pro děti již Laurence nevydala žádnou krásnou literaturu, ale sbírku esejů *Heart of a Stranger (Srdce Neznámého)*. Pilně korespondovala s řadou kanadských spisovatelů a kritiků. Zemřela v Lakefieldu v provincii Ontario r. 1987. Její memoáry, *Dance on the Earth (Tanec na Zemi)*, vyšly posmrtně.

Margaret Laurence se řadí mezi nejúspěšnější a nejproslulejší kanadské spisovatelky. Kristjana Gunnars ji označuje za „matku kanadské literatury, která dala hlas manitobským préríím, ukázala nám lidskost i těch nejodstrčenějších a nejzapomenutějších mezi námi, a díky níž jsme si uvědomili hodnotu kanadské literatury a kultury, důležitost umění pro naši kulturu, potřebu čestnosti v těžké době, a pravdu obsaženou v literatuře a poezii.“²

² Kristjana Gunnars, ed., *Crossing the River: Essays In Honour of Margaret Laurence* (Winnipeg: Turnstone, 1988) viii.

Laurence měla klíčový význam pro vznik autonomní kanadské literatury, jednak prostřednictvím svých děl, ale také podporou a povzbuzením celé generace začínajících spisovatelů. Zasloužila se obrovskou měrou o to, že si Kanadčané začali vážit své vlastní literatury, a svými díly vydobyla kanadské tvorbě pevné místo na mapě světové literatury.

V šedesátých letech dvacátého století, kdy Laurence vydala většinu textů Manawaka cyklu, se kanadská literatura teprve začínala prosazovat jako autonomní tvorba i jako právoplatný předmět na kanadských univerzitách, kde se do té doby vyučovala pouze literatura britská či americká. Laurence vysvětluje nezáměr o vlastní tvorbu na kanadské půdě přetrvávající atmosférou kulturního kolonialismu. V eseji „Ivory Tower or Grassroots?: The Novelist as Socio-Political Being” („Slonovinová věž nebo změna zespodu? Spisovatel coby společensko-politická bytost“) přirovnává poměry v Kanadě k zemím třetího světa, v porovnání s nimiž je „situace v Kanadě možná méně očividná. Zdánlivě jsme sice získali nezávislost r. 1867, nicméně náš pohled na svět zůstal v zajetí kolonialismu. Co se týče literatury, naším modelem je stále Británie a v poslední době Spojené státy americké.“³

V šedesátých letech dvacátého století se ale kanadské kulturní klima prudce změnilo. Přijetí vlajky s javorovým listem v r. 1965 symbolicky potvrdilo odpojení od Británie. V provincii Quebec probíhala tzv. „tichá revoluce,“ která znamenala konec nadvlády frankofonního duchovenstva a anglofonních podnikatelů. Kanadské hospodářství vzkvétalo. Statut žen, původních obyvatel Kanady a menšin byl podroben přezkoumání. Homosexualita přestala být trestná. Rok 1967 přinesl veleúspěšnou výstavu Expo v Montréalu a především sté výročí Kanadské konfederace. Při této příležitosti byla navýšena finanční podpora umění a literatury, což vedlo k založení mnoha literárních žurnálů, cen pro začínající autory a k založení malých nakladatelství po celé Kanadě.

Kombinace těchto faktorů vzedmula vlnu nacionalistických emocí a pýchu nad kanadskými úspěchy. Díla Laurence hrála klíčovou roli v procesu tvoření tohoto nového kanadského sebevědomí, neboť Kanadčanům poskytla metaforické zrcadlo obrazu sebe

³ Margaret Laurence, „Ivory Tower or Grassroots?: The Novelist as Socio-Political Being,” *A Political Art: Essays in Honour of George Woodcock*, ed. William H. New (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1978) 18.

sama. Margaret Atwood v přelomové knize *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature* (*Přežití: Tematický průvodce kanadskou literaturou*) definuje funkci umění coby zrcadla národního sebeuvědomění jako nástroj nezbytný k utvoření vlastní identity: „Jestliže národ takovéto zrcadlo postrádá, nemá jak zjistit, co jak vypadá a co je zač, a musí cestovat naslepo.“⁴

Pro Laurence, vědomí vlastní identity na osobní úrovni je výchozím bodem všeho dalšího. Ve stejnojmenné eseji definuje toto vědomí jako „pevný bod,“ z něž lze objevovat zbytek světa.⁵ Možnost svobodného sebeurčení považuje Laurence za synonymum svobody: „svoboda je, alespoň zčásti, možnost ztvárnit definici sama sebe, sebevědomě a se soucitem, bez omezování a strachu z autority ostatních.“⁶

Tato svoboda se ovšem vytrácí v koloniální situaci. Pro účely této diplomové práce, kolonialismus je definován jako dominance vnucená skupinou lidí jiné skupině, odlišné buď kulturně, rasově či dle pohlaví, která vede odnětí možnosti sebeurčení podrobené skupiny. Na úrovni psychické kolonialismus navozuje v podřízené skupině situaci přijetí hodnot vládnoucí skupiny i její definici podřízené skupiny.

Díky své africké zkušenosti Laurence vnímala Kanadu jako post-koloniální národ a uvědomovala si, že ženy jsou navíc znova kolonizovány v rámci patriarchy. Říká o tomto jevu tzv. *dvojitě kolonizace*: „Naše tehdejší situace, jako situace všech lidí s koloniální mentalitou, nebyla nepodobná situaci žen v naší společnosti [...] Toto přirovnání mi připadá neoddiskutovatelné.“⁷

Při dekonstrukci procesu formování identity ve vybraných textech se Laurenceové teorie dvojí kolonizace kanadských žen v její tvorbě potvrzuje. Patriarchát Presbyteriánského společenského řádu nastoluje mocenskou hierarchii, v níž je ženám přidělena pozice závislosti a role oběti. Ženy přijímají mužskou definici sebe sama v podobě genderové role, tedy soustavy stereotypů a společenských očekávání, jejichž naplnění vede ke společenskému přijetí. V obou románech hrdinky bojují proti striktním generovým rolím, které jim odpírají jejich vlastní hlas a právo na sebeurčení, ať už vědomě v případě Morag či podvědomě v případě Hagar.

⁴ Margaret Atwood, *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature* (Toronto: Anansi, 1972) 15-16.

⁵ Margaret Laurence, „A Place to Stand On,“ *Heart of a Stranger* (Toronto: McClelland-Bantam, 1988) 1.

⁶ Laurence, „Ivory Tower or Grassroots?: The Novelist as Socio-Political Being,“ 24.

⁷ Laurence, „Ivory Tower or Grassroots?: The Novelist as Socio-Political Being“ 23.

Při srovnání obou textů vychází najevo jasné schéma pokroku: zatímco Hagar v *The Stone Angel* je pevně sešněrována vnějšími společenskými pravidly, která dodržuje i za cenu obětování vnitřní svobody a sebeurčení, Morag v *The Diviners* zpochybňuje daný stav věcí a formuje si vlastní identitu podle svých pravidel, nezávislou na společenských očekáváních. Úspěch jejího počínání v boji za sebeurčení nepochybně souvisí s dobou, ve které žije: je o dvě generace mladší než Hagar. Přestože obě ženy vycházejí z koloniálního prostředí, poměry se v generaci Morag přece jen uvolňují, což je patrné zejména v relativní dostupnosti vzdělání, kariéry a práva na reprodukční svobodu, které si ženy mohou vybojovat, jestliže o ně skutečně stojí.

Problém patriarchální kolonizace žen je v západní kultuře všudypřítomný a podle E. Whitmont „neexistuje archetyp, který by umožňoval ženám kontrolu nad vlastním sebeurčením. V soudobé patriarchální kultuře se problém ženské individualizace stává pionýrským úkolem, který by mohl být krokem k novému kulturnímu období.“⁸

Nicméně díla Laurenceové již tímto směrem vykročila. Její ztvárnění ženských postav osvobodilo ženy z vězení mužské představitivosti a začalo tak novou éru v historii kanadské kultury.

Proces utváření identity prochází fázemi uvědomění si sebe sama, smíření se s minulostí, rozpoznáním vlastních omezení a konečně přijetím sebe sama. Laurenceové hrdinky jej musí podstoupit, aby našly svůj vlastní hlas a tak překonaly kolonizaci. V tomto směru lze jejich snahu o sebeurčení přirovnat k procesu utváření kanadské literatury.

Lorencová ve své tvorbě propůjčila hlas utlačovaným, ženám a původním obyvatelům Kanady. Tímto splnila roli nezbytnou pro vytvoření svébytné kanadské literatury, prosté koloniálních omezení. Její dílo mělo politický vliv, a poskytlo Kanadánům nástroj k překonání vnitřní kolonizace: zrcadlo, v němž vidí sami sebe, a tudíž i výchozí bod pro všechny, kdo budou následovat.

⁸ Quoted in Helen M. Buss, "The Autobiographical Impulse," *Crossing the River: Essays In Honour of Margaret Laurence*, ed. Kristjana Gunnars (Winnipeg: Turnstone, 1988) 163-4.