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Margaret Laurence and Feminine Identity in the Canadian Context

BY

Sandra Julia Heidrick

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

DEPARTMENT OF SECONDARY EDUCATION

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

SPRING, 1992

ISBN 0-315-73009-9

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

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Name of Author:	SANDRA JULIA HEIDRICK
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Degree:	DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
Year This Degree Granted:	1992

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled **Margaret Laurence and Feminine Identity in the Canadian Context** submitted by **Sandra J. Heidrick** in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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S. Robinson

March 27, 1992
Date

Dedication

For the most influential women and men in my life who have always believed in the freedom and strength of the articulation of the female voice:

my mother Gudrun Helga Julia

my sister Linda

my daughter Elizabeth

(all spiritual descendants of Sigridur Gudny and Asta)

my father Johann Straumfjord Sigurdson

my brother Johann

my brother Lorenz

my son Theodore Johann

my son Kristjan

my husband Theodore.

This dissertation was necessary for my husband Ted, who graduated with a Ph.D. from the University of Manitoba in 1974, and my brother Lorenz, who graduated with a Ph.D. from the California Institute of Technology, Pasadena, California in 1986. They made a feminine equivalent in the family especially imperative.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine Margaret Laurence's exploration of the formation of female identity in contemporary Canadian society as depicted in the Manawaka cycle of novels. Specifically, this thesis examines the five female protagonists in an attempt to comprehend the factors of major significance in the formation of their identities.

A conceptual framework devised by Jay M. Jackson, the Jackson model, was employed to analyze the identity formation of the protagonists because of its usefulness for describing, over a period of time, various types of group membership in terms of attraction to and acceptance by a group. Familial-cultural, sexual, and professional identity formation were examined, where possible, during the childhood , adolescence, adulthood, and old age of each protagonist.

In Laurence's novels familial-cultural background is vitally significant to the heroines' identity quest and to the articulation of their mature female voices. Her treatment of this subject is extensive and insightful. Her characters carry within themselves and often struggle to overcome the influence of their familial and cultural background.

Sexual identity formation is equally complex in Laurence's work. The nurturing influence and power of the mother-daughter relationship are revealed through the protagonists' experiences. The maternal instinct is depicted as more primitive and fundamental than the mating instinct, which is an extension of it.

Professional identity also influences each protagonist's concept of who she

is. For example, Rachel is constantly obsessed by the fear that she is evolving into the spinster-teacher stereotype and Morag acquires psychological independence and maturity through her identity as a writer. Each heroine attempts to discover her own voice in terms of language, body and identity. The degree of emphasis placed on various aspects of identity formation, however, varies with the different life situation of each woman.

Laurence's final statement on the reality of being a Canadian woman is made through Morag, the protagonist of The Diviners, her last novel. Morag, an artist-author and mother to a daughter seeking her identity, describes her psychological divining for her true self, her quest for her own identity, in language that transcends the boundaries of gender.

Acknowledgement

I am deeply indebted to Dr. John Oster, who gave most generously of his time, scholarship and humor in the supervision of this dissertation. A special word of gratitude is also extended to Dr. Peter Miller for his food for thought, Dr. R.T. Harrison for his patient guidance, Dr. Meyer Horowitz for his inspiration, Dr. Nora Stovel for her advice and Dr. Sam Robinson for his suggestions. Ms. Lorna Pregoda deserves accolades for her typing and loyalty.

To my family and friends, thank you for unlimited love and encouragement.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Literature, especially that of the senior high school curriculum, is not only a reflection of attitudes of society but also an instrument by which these attitudes are conveyed to adolescents in the senior high school. However, it is frequently the case that the senior high school curriculum purveys to the students an inappropriate or distorted impression of the world. For example, it has been claimed (Galloway, 1977) that contemporary literature curricula are inadequate in helping adolescents understand what it is to be female in contemporary society. Galloway and a number of other researchers, such as Fischer and Cheyne (1977), have demonstrated the need to modify the secondary school curriculum to allow for a broader female perspective and a clearer focus on female identity. One common solution often recommended to at least partially rectify this curricular deficiency is the inclusion of works by such outstanding female Canadian authors as Margaret Laurence on the high school curriculum.

The purpose of this study is to examine Margaret Laurence's exploration of the formation of female identity in contemporary Canadian society as depicted in the Manawaka cycle of novels. Specifically, the study examines the five female protagonists in these works in an attempt to analyze and comprehend the factors which are of major significance in the formation of their identities. The extremely complex concept of identity is explored in this study in a context that is relevant to

adolescents and, at the same time, explicative of the experience of Margaret Laurence's heroines. The focus of the study is on the understandings and issues that a study of Margaret Laurence's work would unveil for high school students, not on methodological concerns in teaching her novels in the secondary school.

The study will be limited to the exploration of Canadian female identity in Laurence's five major works with a Canadian setting: The Stone Angel (1964), A Jest of God (1966), The Fire-Dwellers (1969), A Bird in the House (1970), and The Diviners (1974). Four of these works are novels. The fifth, A Bird in the House, a series of short stories involving the same protagonist, offers similar opportunities for character study that the novels provide. These five major works of Laurence, which comprise the Manawaka cycle and are set in the fictional small town of Manawaka, Manitoba, provide a rich and highly developed fictional cultural context in which to explore issues related to the development of individual identity.

It is not difficult to justify such a study on the grounds of its importance in education. The problems associated with coming to an understanding of gender roles are vital issues to teenagers struggling with their own identity. The unspoken, often implied, impressions of the curriculum conveyed to these adolescents are instrumental in this critical formation of identity. In a society in which women have received the right to vote and to sit in parliament only since 1920, the question of identity is particularly difficult for adolescent girls; the question of how adolescent males should regard females of their peer group is equally troubling.

Adolescence is typified by the twin contradictory desires or needs to be independent and yet at the same time to belong to groups. Independence and the need for psychological membership are crucial to the formation of identity. This search for identity is characteristic of the turbulent years of adolescence. Students feel isolated from each other by their apparently individual problems as they seek autonomy and independence. One function of the school setting is to provide opportunities for students to achieve autonomy and independence while learning to contribute to, and be part of, various groups. It is generally recognized that identity is socially given and that psychological isolation must be overcome by the attraction or desire to belong to a group and by the extent to which that group exhibits acceptance. All high school students must confront these issues and make choices as they mature, seeking their own identity as they decide on their own commitment to group values, goals, attitudes and behavior. The female student must eventually decide whether or not she overcomes her individual isolation in order to marry, have children and/or join a profession or career.

If, it is argued, students read literature in order to determine some meaning in their lives, and if gender roles and identity are influenced by exposure to literature, then the literature of the senior high school curriculum must be carefully considered. Does the curriculum provide an equal opportunity for both male and female students to explore issues related to gender roles and identity? What, in short, is the state of the curriculum in terms of female identity and perspective?

Priscilla Galloway, in her book, "What's Wrong With High School

English? ... it's sexist ... un-Canadian ... outdated" (1977), analyses mandatory high school English courses and concludes that they do not provide female students with "writing by women which provides a female perspective and a range of female models" (p. 127). Her study found that, in Ontario, of the twenty-two advanced-level and fourteen general-level high school courses analyzed, only six courses required the study of a novel written by a woman and featuring a female protagonist. Women writers occupy a major part of the field of fiction in Canada, but not in high school English courses. According to Galloway, females are not only "grossly underrepresented" (p. 129) but "badly represented in the existing curriculum, and no strong direction is presently being given for change" (p. 129). (In a survey of the English Canadian novel, Grayson (1983) also found that among the major characters of the novels surveyed, males greatly outnumber females and that, on the whole, the novels chosen accept unquestioningly the subordinate status of women in society.) Galloway recommends that "requirements for balance in the curriculum must include male-female balance, of authors and of protagonists, in order that the stated objectives for personal growth may be made realistically attainable for female students as well as for males" (p. 122).

Galloway's findings are supported by recent research in psychology and moral development theory (Harding, 1982) which suggests that our understanding of human activity is obscured by society's systematically identifying as universally desirable conceptions of the self which are distinctively masculine. Young people in our culture are not provided with sufficient understanding of what it is to be

female.

Galloway observes that one problem with literature in the curriculum is that "people, both male and female, have been conditioned to consider the universal as somehow masculine in form" (p. 3). Literary critics and university teachers have tended to be the arbiters of what is "good" literature, frequently basing their judgement on "the test of time" (p. 2). These literary judgements have been accomplished predominantly by men. However, although historically much of the literature of the highest quality has been written by men, "on high school courses the proportion of writing by women is much lower than that by women in, for instance, a general sample of Canadian fiction" (p. 3). Women authors, in fact, are underrepresented in the school curriculum.

Moreover, as Galloway points out:

> Women have learned, through much practice, to identify with male characters in a book or story. Where boys in elementary school will strongly resist reading books with female main characters, girls are much less hard to please. In writing for children, women as well as men often write stories with male chief characters, and with girls in subordinate roles, in the expectation of appealing to the whole audience. (p. 3)

In literature courses, "males have eight out of nine opportunities to explore and validate self through major characters of their own sex" (p. 112).

Because of the preponderance of male protagonists, adolescent males have had many male characters to assist them in this gender development. The curriculum should also provide female students with an equal opportunity for self-exploration and validation of gender roles and identity. Young men as well as

young women need a more balanced curriculum so that they become adults who do not have a distorted view of women. This can only be accomplished by the inclusion of writing by women about women.

Some attempt has been made to rectify current English curricula. There is an increased awareness of the necessity of change on the part of publishers, text book editors and curriculum committees. One example of this awareness of author gender can be observed in the choice of writers for senior high English text books. Of forty-one possible selections in Story and Structure (1981), a standard textbook used by grade twelve students in Alberta during the past decade, thirty-two short stories were written by males and nine were written by females. This ratio of twenty-two percent female to seventy-eight percent male contributors is an improvement over the older editions of Story and Structure (1959, 1966) which had only fifteen percent female contributors.

The textbooks recommended for the nineties, however, reveal a different balance of author gender. For example, in Literary Experiences, Volume One (1989), thirty-three percent of the eighty-six authors included are female. In another newly recommended textbook, The Arch of Experience (1987), thirty-five percent of the contributors are female. These figures reveal that some progress has occurred in curriculum since the time of Galloway's study when one commonly used textbook, Prose for Discussion (1968), had only approximately eight percent female writers.

A similar awareness of gender is discernable in the availability of women's

studies courses at university now compared to the time of Galloway's study. As recently as a decade ago, in most Canadian universities, English courses devoted solely to the work of women writers were extremely rare or non-existent. The situation, however, has changed quite dramatically. For example, the current University of Alberta English Department graduate course guide lists fifteen faculty members who claim women's studies as an area of scholarly interest. In 1991-92, the Department offered the following courses in literature written by women:

ENGL 390	Women's Literary Tradition
ENGL 403	Studies in Literary Themes: Images of the Feminine
ENGL 455	Studies in Nineteenth and/or Twentieth Century Prose: Jane Austen
ENGL 490	Special Studies in the Literature of Women: Women Poets of the Avante Garde
ENGL 590	Canadian Literature: Poetics and Politics in Contemporary Canadian Women's Writing
ENGL 690	Women Writers in English: The Novelists
ENGL 693	Studies in Literary Genres: Autobiographies by Twentieth-Century Women
ENGL 696	Studies in Individual Authors: Anne Finch (Lady Winchilsea), Mary Astell, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu

While the opportunity for English teachers to learn more about women's literature has certainly improved during the past few years, an important point to consider is that the vast majority of teachers currently teaching in secondary schools completed their university studies before such opportunities were readily available.

A study of Ontario high school literature by L. Fischer and J.A. Cheyne,

Sex Roles: Biological and Cultural Interactions as Found in Social Science Research and Ontario Educational Media (1977), corroborated Galloway's study of sex roles in the senior high school literature courses. Fischer and Cheyne list the percentage of female and male characters in different social positions in the literature texts in their sample. Forty-nine different occupations were listed for male characters, compared with ten for females. The most frequent two positions for male characters were soldier (seventeen percent) and schoolboy (nine percent); for female characters they were wife (twenty percent) and servant (eight percent) (p.141).

Fischer and Cheyne, whose work included elementary and secondary texts, found that "over and over again . . . as the grade level of the text goes up, the percentage of females goes down" (p. 90). When there was only one central character, or central characters of the same sex, they were male seventy-eight percent of the time. This was a figure which was a close comparison to Galloway's seventy-seven percent male protagonists in novels of the secondary school curriculum. The central characters were female four percent of the time, compared to Galloway's finding of eleven percent female protagonists. Galloway's conclusions concerning the image of women in the Ontario senior high curriculum are probably applicable to most Canadian curricula.

Analysis of curriculum items and review of actual programs of study in senior classrooms show that several messages about women have been carried to the young through mandatory literature courses. The English curriculum in

Ontario, Galloway concludes, lacks sensitivity towards students and should be more person-oriented. In the novels studied, females appear as unimportant and are often absent altogether. Women are almost always role-defined in relation to men, lack power and tend to be upholders of tradition. Their concerns are often trivial, and the domestic sphere is held to be a woman's appropriate place. When a man's relationship with a child is concerned, the child is likely to be a son; where a woman's relationship with a child is concerned, the child is likely to be a son. Women support men's aspirations, and, while sexual aggressiveness is acceptable in a man, it is not for a woman. Women are frequently presented as being passive, weaker, not as well educated and generally not as bright or able. Men are generally seen as successful survivors in these novels, while women are not. Men in these fictions often see and respond to women in terms of women's bodies; "there is little comparable response to men on the part of female characters" (p. 124).

Elaine Showalter (1977) has demonstrated that women's writing has only recently begun to explore and articulate a distinctively female identity through literature. Showalter argues that a distinctive female perspective in women's writing is different from a male perspective and has developed slowly over time. She writes:

> In looking at literary sub cultures, such as black, Jewish, Canadian, Anglo-Indian, or even American, we can see that they all go through three major phases. First, there is a prolonged phase of imitation of the prevailing modes of the dominant tradition, and internalization of its standards of art and its views on social roles. Second, there is a phase of protest against these standards and values, and advocacy of minority rights and values, including a demand for autonomy.

> Finally, there is a phase of self-discovery, a turning inward freed from some of the dependency of opposition, a search for identity. An appropriate terminology for women writers is to call these stages, Feminine, Feminist, and Female. (p. 13)

Margaret Laurence begins her memoirs, Dance on the Earth (1989), by lamenting how "regrettably long it took me to find my true voice as a woman writer" (p. 5). Laurence (1926-1987), in fact, has been chosen for this study not only because of her status as an outstanding contemporary Canadian novelist but also because of her female voice. She is clearly a representative of Showalter's final category of women writers, no longer imitating or working in reaction to men but in a "phase of self-discovery" and a "search for identity" (p. 13). Miriam Waddington (1987) appears to agree with this assessment of Laurence's work, as she has observed that Laurence's writing, "as far as comprehensiveness, passion, profundity, and pure representativeness goes, has no equal in the Canadian canon" (p. 27).

Margaret Laurence has been one of the most prominent figures in Canadian literature for the past quarter century and has been the subject of numerous books, articles and theses. In particular, her Manawaka heroines have been written about in many books. Margaret Atwood, in her book Survival (1972), originally conceived as a manual for secondary school teachers, discusses the familial identity of Canadian characters in novels in terms of a three-generation search for survival, an intriguing concept when applied to Laurence's protagonists and their families. As well as inheriting the assumptions of the society constructed by the settlers, the first generation, grandfathers are usually depicted as possessing the character traits

necessary for the "attempted imposition of a rigid order on the land" (p. 134). They use this quality in dealing with not only their land but also their descendants. Grandparents are thus obsessed by work, have unbending wills and principles, and are grimly religious patriarchs and matriarchs. Parents, the middle generation, have internalized the guilt foisted on them by the grandparents. They try to escape, but lack the will. They do not possess the same attachment to the land or the metallic strength of their parents. Children, the third generation, try to escape both parents and grandparents, desiring neither the Calvinism and commitment to the land of the grandparents, nor the placelessness and undefined guilt of the parents.

The products of this Canadian search for survival are people with the characteristics demonstrated by Hagar in The Stone Angel and Vanessa in A Bird in the House. Hagar, in The Stone Angel, is the product of this generational search for survival. Hagar's father, Jason, is a stern grandfather figure. She tries to rebel against him by marrying, but, having acquired too many of her father's principles, she stifles her husband with her disapproval of him; "instead of achieving liberation she has turned into a Grandparent herself" (p. 136). Of Hagar's two sons, one takes the path of parents and escapes to the city; the other tries to be a child, in search of liberation, but Hagar "tortures him with her disapproval and moral rigidity" (p. 136).

In A Bird in the House, Vanessa's familial identity demonstrates Atwood's theory of a generational search for survival, as Vanessa comes from an environment in which "the three-generation pattern is displayed in virtually its pure

form" (p. 139), with the patriarch and matriarch of her world her mother's father and her father's mother, who seldom meet. When Vanessa sees her grandfather express grief after the death of his wife, a spectacle which she finds more disturbing than the death itself, she realizes that her grandfather has always had a shell concealing a life repressed to the point of extinction, a perfect metaphor for "the whole tribe of Canadian Grandfathers" (p. 140). Only later does Vanessa discover the blind courage and human frailty under the grandfather's defiant exterior.

Vanessa's parents do not escape domination by the grandparents' personalities; they remain in the small town and die young. The child Vanessa manages eventually to escape to university, but does not feel nearly as free as she expected to feel. On a return visit to the town much later, while viewing her grandfather's pioneer, brick house, which had been his garrison and now was his monument, Vanessa realizes, "I had feared and fought the old man, yet he proclaimed himself in my veins" (p. 140).

Laurence Ricou, in Vertical Man/Horizontal World (1973), comments on the influence of the Canadian prairie landscape upon Laurence's Manawaka protagonists. These landscape references illuminate parts of the women's identity for the reader. Hagar feels this influence the most: in the bleakness of the prairies, Hagar values wildflowers, part of "a spate of unapologetic life" (p. 117). Hagar herself longs to rejoice. Another example is Rachel in A Jest of God, who gives herself to life, to "the prairie wind" (p. 119). At the conclusion of the book, she

decides that "the wind will bear me, and I will drift and settle" (p. 119). Ricou cites an element which mirrors Rachel's isolation and emotional barrenness—the season of Rachel's experience is a "yellowing summer" (p. 118), like the town's dying, yellowing social atmosphere.

In his psychological interpretation of literature in the West, in which anxiety about individual identity is strongly affected by a growing knowledge of what the prairie is, Ricou emphasizes the importance of the experience of place; he does not however, ignore the fact that individual temperament ultimately controls a writer's vision. Therefore, not only Manitoba, but also Laurence's individual temperament help explain the feminine identity of her protagonists.

John Moss, in Patterns of Isolation (1974), believes that Laurence's work is related to that of Ernest Buckler in that their protagonists no longer focus on "inner depth" or an exploration of psychological depths of personality as Virginia Woolf did, but rather explore "the interaction of inner and outer realities of individual experience" (p. 225). This new type of protagonist, the individual as interacting object rather than responding subject, has its origins in the mainstream of the mid-twentieth century behavioral sciences, under the direct influence of such people as B.F. Skinner. Similarly, the movements in sociology and anthropology in this century, in their shift from the exotic into the familiar surrounding environment, have coincided with shifting perspectives in fiction. Laurence is said to be "Canadian without trying" (p. 226), as she integrates the quest of the individual in Canadian contexts.

Clara Thomas, in The Manawaka World of Margaret Laurence (1975), addresses the issue of the conception of feminine identity in Laurence's novels. She writes that Laurence's five Manawaka characters were female not because Laurence had not been successful with male characters.

> They came to being out of the depth of her early experience in a small Manitoba town. They grew through her adult perceptions about how it was—and is—to be an individual woman in a specific Canadian time and place. And in the broadest and deepest ways, their strengths and their vulnerabilities make connections with all women, everywhere. (p. 192)

Thomas notes that Laurence's women, strong and strongly maternal, live among the tensions set up between their individual inner needs and the demands that society places on them from the outside. Laurence depicts these women with dignity, potential, rights and responsibilities, "which are insistently shown to be equal to men's" (p. 193).

While women readers of the Manawaka works feel a special gratitude to Laurence, Canadian women feel a special identification with the five heroines. Thomas quotes Laurence as often saying that in America Hagar was considered the archetypal North American old woman; in Canada she was everybody's grandmother. From the Manawaka background, through a timespan of almost a century, each of these women is battered by events, but also moves of her own free will towards self-recognition, self-acceptance, and her own awareness of a limited freedom. Self-pity, guilt and fear do not prevent love and tolerance from allowing these heroines to achieve individual liberation.

Thomas, in Margaret Laurence (1969), summarizes Laurence's contribution as a novelist by reiterating a comment that Laurence had made about her own writing technique. Laurence strikes such a responsive chord in readers because, as she once stated in a postscript to a letter which discussed her work:

> The only thing I really feel is that, at least with my Canadian-based novels and stories, what I care about trying to do is express something that in fact everybody knows, but doesn't say. (p. 12)

Perhaps this statement is a clue to Laurence's skill at portraying feminine identity in the Canadian context, something that everybody knows but does not bother or attempt to express, since it appears so commonplace.

Patrica Morley, in Margaret Laurence (1981), focuses on the value of Laurence's work and its relevance to contemporary literature and society by providing several examples of perceptions of identity by the heroines and the groups to which they might be attracted or accepted. Previously, Morley, in Canadian Newletter of Research on Women (1978), had commented on Laurence's importance in the field of Women's Studies, through an examination of the Manawaka female protagonists and of Laurence's own increasingly political vision. The Manawaka cycle of fiction, she finds, constitutes a remarkable gallery of vital individuals, a composite portrait of women's experience in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and the imaginative recreation of an entire society. Laurence has turned the Manitoba town of her youth into a metaphor for universal human experience.

Laurence's five Manawaka heroines have also been the subject of several

critical articles concerning feminine identity and group attraction and acceptance. Joan Coldwell, in The Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature (1983), views Manawaka, the town, with its paralyzing, hypocritical respectability and harsh social division, as a constricting force to be overcome by the protagonists. Manawaka is an aspect of Laurence's own being that must be confronted from within; at another level the town is an emblem of life itself. According to Coldwell, Laurence's chief concern as novelist is the depiction of character, and at the centre of each novel is a woman perfectly suited for the study of the formation of identity in Canada.

Diane Brydon, in her article "Silence, Voice and the Mirror: Margaret Laurence and Women" (1988), believes that Laurence's novels give back to ordinary women their voices because of the full humanity they claim for her female characters and the challenge they present to the stereotypes that have limited women to preordained and constricting roles. Each novel focuses on a central female character in search of her identity; that identity is ultimately determined by her relations with others.

Brydon writes that feminist theorists have noted that the female hero, unlike the traditional male hero, does not separate herself from others to mature but rather defines herself in relation to others. Laurence, however, shifts the focus of the traditional female story from the heterosexual couple to the parent/child relation. In Laurence's fiction, the mother/child relation is dominant, even for a spinster like Rachel. The negative side of this sense of connection to others is a world of

powerless entrapment. While all of Laurence's women wish to escape their small town and their financial or moral dependence on husbands, fathers or grandfathers, the need to escape and the need to re-affiliate are equally strong; these novels thus create alternative female worlds that counter the dominance of the patriarchal family.

Brydon notes that each of Laurence's women has her own special relationship with the (social) mirror, that image-maker with no voice, which underlines visually the dichotomy between role and real definitions of the self. Because Laurence's novels always reveal the truth about a person's inner identity, each protagonist comes to terms with the disparity between what she sees in her own mirror—what her eyes reveal—and what Society has told her she should be seeing. Each woman finally shatters the societal mirror to project her own image onto the world around her and to speak, however tentatively, in her own voice. Thus, identity formation and relationships to and within groups in society are interconnected in Laurence.

Several writers have found Laurence's writing to be rich in psychological considerations. Nancy Bailey, in "Margaret Laurence, Carl Jung and the Manawaka Woman" (1977), examines Laurence's feminism and fiction in Jungian terms. Bailey finds Laurence's portrayal of male characters unsatisfying. However, given Laurence's fidelity to the female process of self-discovery, part of the formation of identity, this weakness is tolerated as understandable and forgivable by Bailey.

Helen Buss, in "Margaret Laurence and the Autobiographical Impulse" (1988), refers to the autobiographical impulse in Laurence's works, an attribute which is closely connected to identity. This impulse is manifested in the novels by Laurence's incorporating its characteristic elements in her heroines. This patterning, which could be referred to as an "identity theme," is determined by past events, yet, paradoxically, it is the only basis for future growth and, therefore, freedom.

Buss explores three of Laurence's works in order to show how Laurence presents and realizes her selfhood in a set of symbolic structures that remain typical of her throughout her work, but which she moderates and transforms in the interests of her "inner freedom." According to Buss, Laurence's work contains a characteristic tendency to see the self divided into two contending elements, one a strongly authoritarian ego-self that is identified consistently with male figures of authority. The other is a wounded or damaged creative-self which she identifies with other male figures who often appear the victims of the first element. Another muted but growing force, present from her very first work, is an emerging consciousness of her female self. Not until the appearance of the stories of A Bird in the House does a gradual shift occur: Laurence, still on the surface preoccupied with the two types of male personalities, is now aware of a strong feminine world, existing seemingly only to support and nurture its patriarchal masters.

Margaret Laurence's heroines have already been the subject of extensive doctoral research. Gwen Curry, in her dissertation "Journeys Toward Freedom: A

Study of Margaret Laurence's Fictional Women" (1980), examines Laurence's protagonists and her treatment of the theme of freedom, through the perspective and premises of feminist criticism.

Walter Fraser, in "The Dominion of Women: The Relationship of the Personal and the Political in Canadian Women's Literature" (1985), surveys the connection of feminism and nationalism in Canadian literature, a connection similar to that of identity formation and social or cultural groups. According to Fraser, historians have ignored this relationship, often discarding in their exploration of women's literature precisely that which is most valuable for a study of nationalism, the individual's personal experience. According to Fraser, historians and literary critics have called for an examination of this connection, expressed by women writers, between Canada's development as an independent state and the state of their female contemporaries. The Canadian nationalism of the 1960's and 1970's is explored by Margaret Laurence in The Stone Angel, The Fire-Dwellers and The Diviners in the context of the rise of the Women's Liberation Movement. Thus, the experiences of Hagar, Stacey and Morag are perceived by Fraser as representative of their historical period in terms of feminism and nationalism.

Elizabeth Thompson, in "The Pioneer Woman: A Canadian Character Type" (1987), asserts that the longevity of one form of feminine identity in fiction, the pioneer woman as character type, is demonstrated by Laurence's protagonists Hagar (1964), Rachel (1966) and Morag (1974). These protagonists are contemporary versions of Catherine Parr Traill's original model of the pioneer

woman, described in The Backwoods of Canada (1836) and The Canadian Settler's Guide (1855). These books described a pioneer woman's role on the Ontario frontier of the mid-nineteenth century, mingling fact with fancy to paint an idealized portrait of the Canadian pioneer woman. A new fictional character type, the pioneer woman, was thus created by Traill and depicted by Laurence years later in her female characters. Laurence's novels thus provide one aspect of early Canadian feminine identity in society. Morag talks to Traill in The Diviners.

Joanne Blum, in "Defying the Constraints of Gender: The Male/Female Double of Women's Fiction" (1986), investigates a male/female double in representative fiction by women novelists and subsequently examines Laurence's character Morag from the novel The Diviners. Blum's belief is that the male/female double in women's fiction is an image of dynamic interaction between male and female selves, in which the boundaries of the gender-defined self are defined and, to varying degrees, transcended.

Blum writes that recent theoretical work on female psychological development helps to explain why this image of male/female connection is more evident in women's fiction than in men's. Earlier sociological theory on the politics of oppression suggests the greater necessity for women, as members of an oppressed group, to develop capacities for identifying with the other. Blum concludes that The Diviners illustrates what women may learn from men. Essentially the developmental story of a female artist, The Diviners shows Morag growing in self-understanding and creative self-expression through identification

with a male muse, or "shaman." Blum hypothesizes that Laurence thus suggests that gender itself is finally a "way in" to confront a wide range of divisions which separate human beings and obscure the quest for identity.

Christine Niero, in "Making Stories: Studies in Contemporary Canadian Metafiction" (1987), also selects Morag from The Diviners to illustrate the claim in her dissertation that contemporary Canadian metafiction is a product of a larger culture which examines its own workings in an age of ever-increasing cultural narcissism. This substantiates the promise of examining identity formation and cultural groups. According to Niero, Canada is perhaps a culture attracted to metafiction precisely because it does not have a clear understanding of the basis on which it has told its stories. Niero contends that by exposing the foundations on which the Canadian novel has been based, metafictions such as The Diviners re-examine and challenge these foundations in the act of finding and making stories. Thus, Laurence, in The Diviners, dismantles received stories of becoming a woman and becoming an artist through the process of showing her protagonist finding and making more enabling stories in art and in life.

Many of the previously reviewed studies indicate that the protagonists in the Manawaka works of Margaret Laurence attempt to achieve freedom and independence and, conversely and yet simultaneously, strive to find a place to belong and some form of group identity. The situation of Laurence's protagonists is very similar to that of adolescents in high school. The present study will examine the Manawaka novels to determine how they might contribute to

adolescents' understanding of female identity in the Canadian context.

Identity is a very complex concept. Viktor Gecas, in The Social Science Encyclopedia (1985), argues that identity focuses

> on the meanings constituting the self as an object, gives structure and content to the self-concept, and anchors the self to social systems . . . .
>
> Identity . . . refers to who or what one is, to the various meanings attached to oneself by self and others. Within sociology, identity refers both to the structural features of group membership which individuals internalize and to which they become committed, for example, various social roles, memberships and categories, and to the various character traits that an individual displays. (p. 739)

For Margaret Laurence's heroines, identity is defined by the person's need to belong and, on the other hand, society's willingness to accept the person and assign a role to her. Between the psychological element, found within the heroine herself, and the social element, found in the world outside her, is an interaction which is noticeable in the formation of identity of all five protagonists of the Manawaka cycle in the literature reviewed.

Because it has already been suggested that identity formation is related to group membership, which seems to be the case in the novels of Margaret Laurence, the model chosen for the analysis of the formation of identity of Laurence's Manawaka protagonists is a conceptual framework devised by Jay M. Jackson (1959) for describing various types of group membership in terms of attraction to and acceptance by a group. This model seems appropriate for analyzing the protagonists in Laurence's novels because it clearly describes the decisions of group attraction and acceptance in terms that are meaningful to adolescents; indeed,

they themselves make decisions of the same nature every day in the secondary school while formulating their own identities. (While the Jackson model will help to provide insights into protagonists and their search for identity, the study will not be restricted to the model.)

The Jackson model (see Figure 1) provides a method of looking at group membership in terms of attraction and acceptance. Jackson describes his model in a Human Relations article entitled, "A Space for Conceptualizing Person - Group Relationships."

> Two minimal conditions seem to be required for a person to have psychological membership in a group: first, he must be sufficiently attracted to membership to want to belong to the group more than he wants not to belong to it; second, the group must assign a member's roles to the person, to some degree at least. Each of these conditions seems to be necessary for psychological membership, but neither to be sufficient in itself.
>
> The first condition can be described using the concept attraction, defined as the resultant force on a person to remain in or locomote into a group. (p. 3)

The second condition, acceptance, is defined by Jackson as "the degree to which there exist role prescriptions in a group regarding an individual's behavior" (p. 4). Jackson further defines acceptance signifying "recognition by a group of a person's belongingness" (p. 4) and "attribution to a person of ability to contribute to the group" (p. 4). Although these definitions vary slightly, the common conceptual core is the assignment of a member's role in some degree by the group.

In order to illustrate his model, Jackson uses Lewin's definition of a phase space as "a system of coordinates, each corresponding to different amounts of

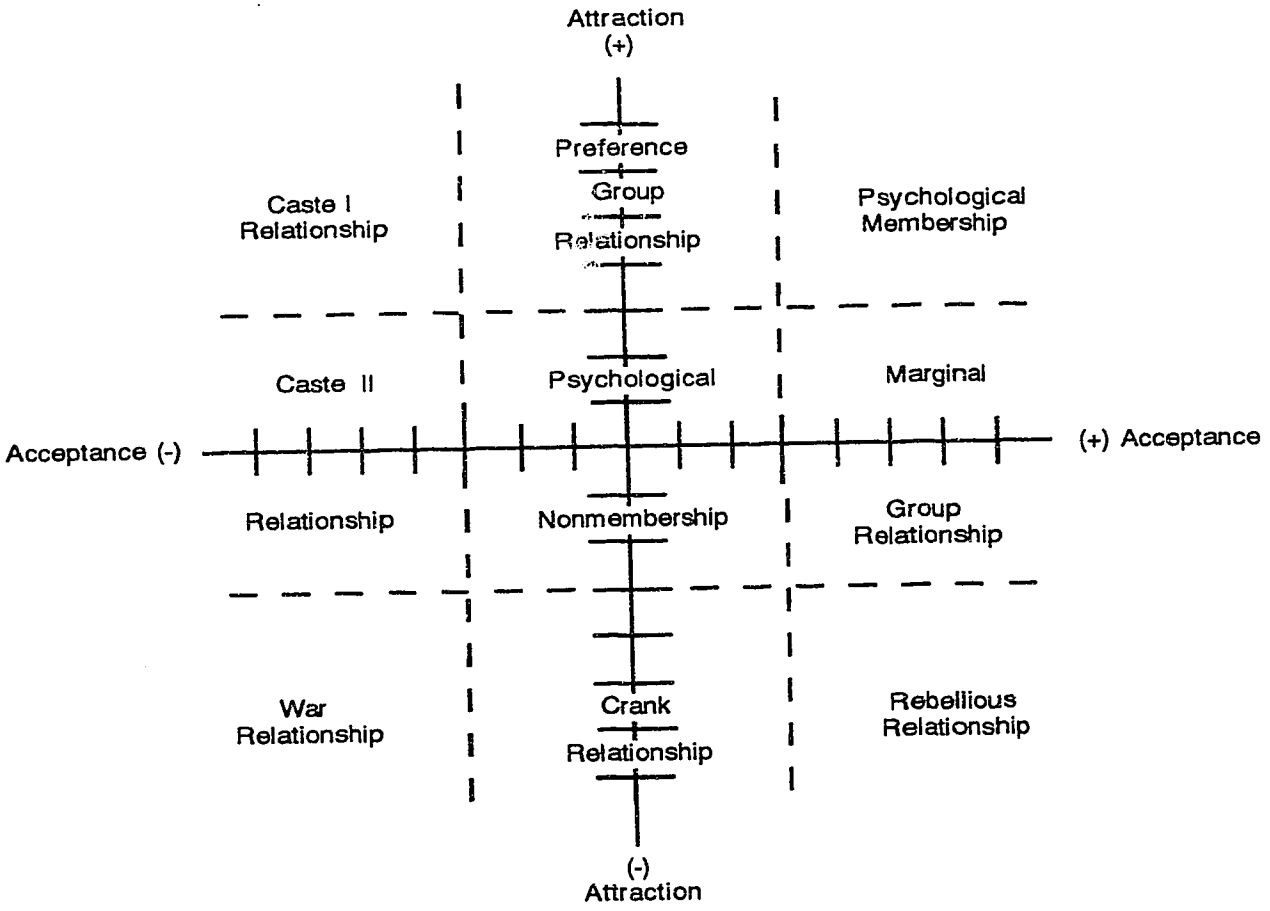

Figure 1. The R-space (relationship space) divided into nine 'segments' each typifying a particular person-group relationship

intensities of one property" (p. 4). Jackson acknowledges that, while this method of using a phase space "does not presume to represent all the forces in the social field," it is "a useful analytical device for representing, by way of graphs or equations, the quantitative relation between these few properties, variables or aspects of the field, or of an event in it" (p. 4). Jackson uses the phase space to "demonstrate conceptual linkages between phenomena," and to note "the effect of changing the value of certain variables, without having to consider the other mediating or conditioning factors in the total field" (p. 4).

Jackson believes that using a phase-space to represent the concepts of attraction and acceptance is "useful in describing certain characteristics of a large number of complex social phenomena" (p. 4). This is certainly true of the concept of identity, particularly as it relates to the short experience of adolescents.

Thus, in Figure 1, any pair of values on the two coordinates will describe a person's position in relationship to a group. To illustrate the model a student's relationship to school will be used. As the values of attraction and acceptance become less positive, the relationship changes in character: "psychological membership gradually merges into psychological nonmembership, as the values on the coordinates approach zero" (p. 6).

For a person's attraction to be positive, the group must be viewed by him or her as "capable of directly or indirectly satisfying some of his (or her) needs" (p. 7). For a person to gain positive acceptance in a group, "the group must be more than a mere aggregate of individuals, since there must be role prescriptions for

members" (p. 7). The definition of psychological membership suggests a "conception of psychological group as an organized system in which members anticipate some end satisfaction in return for behaving in accordance with role prescriptions" (p. 7). It is clear then, that formal membership in a group, for example being a student in grade twelve, does not necessarily imply psychological membership.

This analytic tool leads to four main types or archetypes of person-group relationships, and, in effect, to four different main identities forged from the interplay of individual and group needs. The student who achieves full psychological membership, that is, who exhibits high values of attraction and acceptance, is completely "at home" in the school environment. He or she has high positive attraction to the group, either his/her class or his/her high school, and it, in turn, has provided him/her with satisfying roles to perform demonstrating that he/she has high positive acceptance.

A rebellious relationship, described by positive values of acceptance and negative values of attraction, exists when "a person is assigned a member's role by a group, but the resultant force acting upon him (or her) tends to move him (or her) away from the group" (p. 11). The student who has a rebellious relationship with the school could be highly accepted by the school authorities, but has negative attraction to the institution. He or she remains in the group only because barriers exist which prevent him or her from leaving. An example of this might be the student who, although attending class, is unwilling to obey an order such as

completing assignments. A rebellious student might well be an underachiever or the potential dropout. Teachers will invariably have difficulty with him/her in a classroom setting because of the negative feelings of attraction for school.

A war relationship, characterized by negative values of attraction and acceptance, exists in a person-group relationship "when a person has been stamped as unfit for membership in a group, and a barrier erected against his or her entry, and at the same time he or she finds the group repulsive" (p. 12). An example of this is the student who is every teacher's nightmare. He or she has no attraction to the institution known as the school, does not want to attend, and the teachers or administration do not accept him or her as part of the classroom group.

The final major type of person-group category, the caste relationship, is characterized by positive values of attraction and negative values of acceptance, and is used to describe a person-group relationship "where a person is motivated to become a member of a group, but is excluded because he or she is unfit for membership or . . . does not conform to the specifications established by the group for determining who can become members" (p. 9). An example of this is the female student who wants to, but cannot, belong to the exclusively male debating team, or the minority group member who cannot find a game in the chess club. The exclusion from meaningful roles may involve sexism, racism or perceived difference in intelligence levels. Although the relationship can change with shifts in the values of the two coordinates, "the knowledge that a person is barred from membership in a group, even if he or she does not especially want to belong to it,

can activate psychological forces that markedly affect his or her behavior and feelings" (p. 10).

The attraction or acceptance a person experiences in respect to a particular group will change as a function of a person's experience and of the group members' experiences. As Jackson points out, although the model deals with only "two dimensions of admittedly complex phenomena" (p. 14), it may well have some value for exploring a wide range of person-group relationships as they change over time.

As an example of how the r-space model may be of some use as a frame of reference for exploring problems implicit in such changing relationships, Jackson uses the illustration of a new-born infant's relationship to his/her family. As a new-born, he/she has no attraction to membership, and it is inconceivable that he/she could take a member's role. His/her relationship to the family thus lies somewhere in caste II. As the infant grows to childhood, "the path his/her relationship takes can be traced through the space via caste I to a preference group relationship" (p. 13). There may be a time when little if any psychological relationship exists between the young person and his/her family; this would be psychological nonmembership. Whether the infant grows up to be a person who has ultimately developed psychological membership in the family or "moves into a state of rebellion against parental standards and authority" could be "investigated in terms of his attraction to membership and his acceptance in a member's role" (p. 13). Jackson has thus given us an example of how the person-group relationships of

Laurence's protagonists could change over a lifetime or through the time period of the novel, and how these changes can be visualized, graphed or compared.

Because Jackson's model is capable of exploring person-group relationships as they change over time, it is particularly applicable for analyzing the fictional world of Margaret Laurence, whose heroines have different person-group relationships that change during different time spans. Although the model will be used to the extent it proves useful for the purposes of the study, it will not be followed slavishly. Using the Jackson model results in several scholarly traditions being brought together in this thesis. To address an educational problem, significant works of literature will be examined with the assistance of a conceptual tool borrowed from social-psychology.

The dissertation is organized into eight chapters. Chapter one is the introduction to the study, including the purpose of the study, the critical context and the research methodology. Chapter two describes the life and work of Margaret Laurence with an emphasis on the development of her views on female identity.

Chapters three to seven respectively examine the identity formation of Laurence's protagonists with a chapter devoted to each heroine in the chronological order in which the books were written: Hagar, Rachel, Stacey, Vanessa and Morag.

Each chapter begins by discussing the familial and cultural identity of the protagonist, in childhood, adolescence, adulthood and old age, since parental relationships and family form the first realizations of who one is. Erik Erikson, in International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences (1968), concurs with this idea of

the importance of the family and culture to the development of identity.

> The gradual development of a mature psychosocial identity, then, presupposes a community of people whose traditional values become significant to the growing person even as his growth assumes relevance for them. . . .
>
> Psychosocial identity thus depends on a complementary of an inner (ego) synthesis in the individual and of role integration in his group. (p. 61)

Erikson writes that identity formation is critical from birth onward, as "the child learns what counts in his (or her) culture's space, time and life plan by the community's differential responses to his maturing behavior. He learns to identify with ideal prototypes and to develop away from evil ones" (p. 62). Arthur Brittan (1985) defines one aspect of society as culture because society is made possible "by the shared understandings of its members" (p. 795). Human beings exist "in a linguistic and symbolic universe which they themselves have constructed" (p. 795). Referring to the work of Weber (1930) and Parsons (1968), Brittan states that this stress on culture is "underpinned by ideas and values" (p. 795). Cultural or social identity is therefore, as R.J. Brown (1981) defines it, "a person's self-definition in relation to others" (p. 771), and as G.H. Mead (1977) added, "from the standpoint of the social group as a whole" (p. 771). Laurence's emphasis on ancestry and familial culture in the Manawaka novels provides a wealth of material for an analysis of the familial and cultural identity of the protagonists.

After the familial and cultural identity of each heroine, sexual identity is discussed. Although the mechanisms of identity formation are the same for male and female, Erikson (1968) notes that

> identity is always anchored both in physiological givens and in social roles, the sex endowed with an "inter-bodily space" capable of bearing offspring lives in a different total configuration of identity elements than does the fathering sex (Erikson 1965). . . . But the realization of woman's optimal psychosocial identity . . . is beset with ancient problems. The "depth", both concretely physical and emotional, of woman's involvement in the cycles of sexual attraction, conception, gestation, lactation, and child care has been exploited by the builders of ideologies and societies to relegate women to all manner of life long "confinements" and confining roles. (p. 64)

Through the fictional techniques of Margaret Laurence, the reader has privileged insight into the protagonists' private thoughts and lives which is useful in the analysis of the formation of their sexual identity.

After sexual identity is discussed, the heroine's professional identity is considered. Professional identity is established when an individual chooses to attain a career. Laurence's protagonists provide a variety of life-styles and professional identities, such as housewife, teacher or artist, and thus will provide an interesting spectrum to analyze with the Jackson model.

Chapters three to seven analyze how the different kinds of identities of Laurence's protagonists have been shaped in terms of group attraction and acceptance in order to develop some insight into the formation of Canadian feminine identity. These identities have been chosen because I feel that they are of great importance in the maturing process of young females, and that they receive little attention in the secondary school today. The complexities of attraction to and acceptance by these groups, involved in establishing individual identity, will be considered for each of Margaret Laurence's major female protagonists during the

four life stages of childhood, adolescence, adulthood and old age. The concluding chapter, chapter eight, summarizes this study of Margaret Laurence's ideas about female identity formation.

Chapter 2

The Life and Work of Margaret Laurence

Jean Margaret Wemyss was born July 18, 1926 at Neepawa, Manitoba; she died January 5, 1987 at Lakefield, Ontario. In her memoirs, Dance on the Earth (1989), she writes:

> I was not a person for the first three years of my life. It was only in 1929, because of the enormous and valiant efforts of such women as Nellie McClung and Emily Murphy, that Canadian women were finally legally recognized as "persons." Of course, at three, I wasn't aware that I had suddenly been promoted into personhood. (p. 8)

This observation encapsulates much of her life philosophy, as her memoirs were written for the "many women I would like to honor— to tell them, even though many of them are no longer alive, how much I owe them, how much we owe them, how much my own daughter and son are their inheritors" (p. 8). With her five novels of the Manawaka cycle, Laurence did honor women. Morley (1981) remarks that Laurence succeeded in creating a composite portrait of women's experience in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Neepawa, Manitoba, the tree-shaded prairie town which inspired Laurence's fictional "Manawaka," is about one hundred and twenty-five miles northwest of Winnipeg. Thomas (1969) notes that its district was originally settled in the 1870's by a group of Scottish pioneers trekking further westward from Ontario settlements to find more land, more prosperity, and more hope for their

families' future in the challenging, promising west. Incorporated in 1883, Neepawa, a Cree name meaning "land of plenty," was the centre and servicer of an agricultural district which stretched from the rolling land of the Riding Mountain in the north to the flatter, Assiniboine land in the south.

Laurence's roots in Neepawa go back to the beginning of the town and its pioneers. Her paternal grandfather, John Wemyss, said to be descended from the ancient Picts or aborigines of Scotland, was the lawyer who incorporated the town. Her Irish Protestant maternal grandfather, John Simpson, had to leave school in Milton, Ontario at age twelve after the sudden death of his father. After travelling by Red River steamer to Winnipeg, as a young apprentice cabinet maker, he walked the fifty miles to Portage La Prairie, plying his trade along the way in order to finance his journey (Laurence, 1989). He later became an undertaker. In Heart of a Stranger (1976), Laurence calls him a "very hard man in many ways, but he had had a very hard life" (p. 16), thus explaining his puritanical, inflexible character.

Margaret hated and feared John Simpson, describing him as a stern, authoritarian pioneer father and a male chauvinist of the first order who hampered the development of his four daughters, Margaret, Verna, Ruby and Velma. John, while depicted in Dance on the Earth as "irascible," "demanding" and "undemonstrative of affection" (p. 28), was fortunate enough to meet and marry Jane Bailey, a daughter of United Empire Loyalists who had moved to Portage La Prairie, Manitoba, from Ontario. John and Jane moved to Neepawa and raised their family there.

Laurence idealized her gentle, quiet grandmother Jane, "a woman overshadowed by her domineering husband, a woman greatly loved by her children and grandchildren" (Laurence, Dance on the Earth, p. 10). Jane had eight children by age forty-two, seven of whom survived. Laurence valued this grandmother, who, in 1935, gave her her first and only Bible, which Laurence carried around the world for more than fifty years. More significantly, Laurence credits this long-suffering grandmother's strength for creating a stable family environment which would allow Laurence to grow up among determined, "intelligent and talented women." However, while contemplating the life situations of her mother and her aunts, Laurence could "see how that era and that society affected their own considerable talents and afflicted them in individual ways" (p. 7). She speculates that "in their struggle to proclaim their lives, to be their own persons, they must have gone through pain that I can only guess at" (p. 8).

Laurence's family structure makes her an especially valuable person to study in terms of Canadian female identity. The strength and accomplishment of her pianist mother, and her three aunts (nurses and a teacher), despite a patriarchal, autocratic father, are remarkable. In her memoirs, Laurence writes, "I don't recall that there was anything any of these women ever suggested I couldn't achieve because I was a female" (p. 8). By the time Laurence was in university, her roommate had an interesting and definite opinion of her:

> She seemed freer and more independent of mind than the rest of us. Peggy had already found her personality; we were still surrounded by all the walls that are built around teenagers and that they build

around themselves; Peggy seemed free. (Thomas, Margaret Laurence, p. 7)

This definite idea of identity, or of who she was, was perhaps strengthened by the early death of Laurence's parents and by being raised in a loving, supportive atmosphere. After Verna Simpson Wemyss, Laurence's birth mother, died suddenly in 1930 of an acute kidney infection, her older sister Margaret, who was teaching school in Calgary, came to Neepawa to care for her niece. She married Robert Wemyss, Laurence's father, the following year, much to the consternation of some of the neighbors, who were not used to a former sister-in-law marrying her former brother-in-law. Four years later, in the midst of the Depression, Laurence's father died. Soon after, when Laurence was twelve and her brother Robert was five, Laurence's stepmother moved into her grandfather Simpson's house.

In "A Place to Stand On," an essay in Heart of a Stranger (1976), Laurence writes:

> When one thinks of the influence of a place on one's writing, two aspects come to mind. First, the physical presence of the place itself— its geography, its appearance. Second, the people. For me, the second aspect of environment is the most important, although in everything I have written which is set in Canada . . . somewhere some of my memories of the physical appearance of the prairies come in. (p. 15)

Although Neepawa is not really as flat and treeless as a true prairie town, Laurence herself refers to Neepawa as a prairie town because its cultural ambiance is clearly western. Laurence "felt the loneliness and the isolation of the land itself"

and yet "felt the protectiveness of that atmosphere, too" (p. 15).

However, Laurence considers that the people were more important than the place. Until she had portrayed Hagar in The Stone Angel, the ninety-year-old woman who incorporated many of the qualities of Laurence's grandparents' generation, Laurence had not realized

> just how mixed my own feelings 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 a wilderness and made it fruitful. They were, in the end, great survivors, and for that I love and value them. (Laurence, p. 16)

Morley indicates that the Scottish side of Laurence's ancestry has loomed larger in her imagination than the Irish, doubtless because of the Scottish culture of Neepawa. Although Laurence's ancestors came from Fifeshire in the Lowlands, the Highlanders intrigued her. After a visit to Scotland in the 1960s, Laurence realized that, although Scotland had always inhabited her imagination as a "bold, dramatic country of high adventure and noble deeds," her true ancestors and cultural heritage were Canadian: ". . . gradually I began to perceive that I was no more Scots than I was Siamese" (Morley, 1981, p. 19).

Laurence attended United College, now the University of Winnipeg, for three years, studying English on a scholarship. Morley records that Laurence flourished at this Arts and Theology college. With a student body in the 1940s of seven hundred and fifty, United College, with its Methodist and Presbyterian founding institutions, had a tradition of liberal thought particularly sympathetic to

Laurence's "positive, affirming temperament" (p. 20) and strong humanitarian impulses.

At United College, the girl who had always wanted to grow up to be a writer submitted poetry to the university paper under the pseudonym of Steven Lancaster. Why she did this is suggested by what she writes about women in Dance on the Earth (1989).

> It is still enormously difficult for a woman to have both a marriage and a family, and a profession. I often become angry when I think of this injustice, of having to choose between the talent that was born in you, your lover/husband, and your children. What a terrible choice society has always forced upon women . . . . I confess I wonder how gifted women who were silenced managed not to go mad. (p. 38)

Before graduating with Honors in English in 1947, Laurence began a lasting friendship with writer Adele Wiseman, and became part of "the Winnipeg Old Left," a group dedicated to social reform. She continued to write, publishing in Vox, the college's undergraduate publication, of which she was assistant editor in her final year.

Morley observes that Laurence worked after graduating as a reporter and columnist for the Winnipeg Citizen, writing book reviews, a daily radio column, and covering labor news. In September, 1947, she married Jack Laurence who was a native of Alberta, a veteran, and a civil engineering student, who graduated from the University of Manitoba in 1949. They spent the latter months of 1949 in England and left for Africa early in 1950.

Laurence dedicates chapter four of Dance on the Earth to her mother-in-law,

Elsie Fry Laurence, a twice-published but frustrated novelist. Laurence makes the comment that, when she was so uncertain about her triple role as wife, mother and writer, and later insisted that she had to do her own work at the price of her marriage (p. 128), Elsie was "probably the only person in either family who truly understood what I was experiencing and who gave me her total support and love" (p. 129). Elsie knew how much Laurence had to follow the vocation that had been given to her, "with doubt and with guilt, but with certainty" (p. 129).

In 1950, the Laurences left for Africa, specifically the British Protectorate of Somaliland, now Somalia, where Jack Laurence would design and build a series of earth dams across the desert of the Haud. Morley (1981) describes Laurence's next two years as living in "isolated desert camps, sometimes in a tent or Land Rover" and coming "to know and admire the nomadic tribesmen whose lives depended on courage, endurance, and religious faith" (p. 20). From this experience came Laurence's first published work, a translation of Somali poetry and folk tales, A Tree for Poverty: Somali Poetry and Prose (1954). Katheryn Jones, in Margaret Laurence: An Annotated Bibliography (1975), observes that the Somalis at that time had no written language, and these translations into English were the first to be done (p. 4). Jones also notes that Laurence's diary for the Somali years, 1950-52, was to evolve into her important essay/travel work, The Prophet's Camel Bell (1963), a portrait of the harsh life of the Somali nomads. Clara Thomas summarizes the effect that Africa had on Laurence: Africa transformed Laurence from an idealistic young western liberal to a mature woman who saw at first hand

the problems of emergent nations.

The Laurences left Somaliland in 1952 and spent the next five years in the Gold Coast, just on the brink of its independence as Ghana. Their children, Jocelyn and David, were born in 1952 and 1955 respectively, the first in England and the second in Ghana.

Morley remarks that these years were also significant because of the death of Laurence's maternal grandfather, John Simpson, in 1953, at the age of ninety-seven, and of her beloved stepmother, Margaret Simpson Wemyss, in 1957, of cancer. Laurence had mentioned in an interview that "the theme of death in her writing reflects not simply the frequency of deaths in the family but a coming to terms with the knowledge of one's own eventual death" (p. 21).

Clara Thomas observes that another important influence on Laurence was O. Mannoni's Prospero and Caliban: A Study of the Psychology of Colonization:

> Its theme is her theme of exile; its studies of colonizer and colonial, of ruler and dependent, both suggest and confirm the emotional situations and their psychological basis that she worked out in the lives of many of her characters. (p. 19)

Of Mannoni's book, Laurence states in her memoirs: "That book was a revelation. Mannoni said things about colonialism and the people who had been colonized that struck me deeply" (p. 155).

Laurence had read Mannoni early in 1960, just before This Side Jordan was published simultaneously in Canada and England and shortly after in the United States. This novel reflects her experiences in Ghana and won the Phi Beta Sigma

award for a first novel by a Canadian.

Laurence speaks of her years in Africa as "a seven years' love affair with a continent" (Morley, 1981, p. 21). Morley writes that "out of Africa . . . came Laurence's maturity and a deep understanding of her own roots" (p. 21). Barbara Pell, in Margaret Laurence's Treatment of a Heroine, believes that Laurence, in her African writings, first finds the genesis of her concept and treatment of "real" womanhood, or the reality of womanhood. Joan Coldwell, in "Margaret Laurence," an article in The Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature, writes that "Laurence's African writings introduce the themes of survival, freedom, and individual dignity that dominate her major novels" (p. 435).

Some of Laurence's short stories had been published in Canadian and American periodicals since 1956. Some of these stories and some new ones were collected in the volume of Ghanian stories, The Tomorrow Tamer (1963). Another African-content work was not published until 1969, Long Drums and Cannons: Nigerian Dramatists and Novelists, 1952-66, the result of many years' study of African literature.

Although the Laurences had returned to Vancouver in 1957, Clara Thomas writes that Laurence had by no means exhausted the effects of Africa's impact on her.

> The theme of exile and the question "where is home?"; feelings about tribalism and community, about our exploiting of one another, about the ambivalence of tragic failures and joyous victories: all these have become strands in the fabric of all her fiction. And basic to all her work since has been her astonished wonder at the

indomitable vitality and endurance of the spirit of man. (p. 58)

From 1957 to 1962, Laurence "served the final part of her apprenticeship to writing as a profession," as she gradually came "to accept herself as a writer and to know that she must do her work" (Thomas, p. 59). As she was now back in Vancouver, Laurence was a full-time wife and mother and a part-time writer: she looked after her small children, marked essays for the university of British Columbia, had a gall bladder operation, worked on her African material and began to repatriate her imagination. Thomas (1976) remarks that the decisions involved in Laurence's acceptance of herself as a writer were not made without struggle and pain: the Laurences separated in 1962 and eventually divorced in 1969. Jack Laurence accepted an irrigation job in East Pakistan. In Dance on the Earth, Laurence writes: "I made the traumatic and anguished decision that I couldn't go with him, that I had to take the children and go to London, England, where I imagined, wrongly as it turned out, there would be a literary community that would receive me with open arms and I would at last have the company of other writers, members of my tribe" (p. 158). Laurence was ready to write about Manawaka now, but she still needed distance to see it clearly.

In England, Laurence resided in a Hampstead flat and then a rambling old house on Beacon Hill, Penn, Buckinghamshire. Morley notes that during the following years she rewrote The Stone Angel and completed the body of fiction that composes her Manawaka cycles, with the exception of The Diviners. These years in England were interrupted by a trip to Egypt in 1966, as she had been

commissioned to write some travel articles on that country, and to Canada, in the later 1960s and early 1970s, for several terms as Writer-in-Residence at various Canadian universities.

In December, 1963, Laurence moved to Elm Cottage in Buckinghamshire, renting at first until money from Rachel, Rachel, the film version of A Jest of God, enabled her to buy Elmcot in 1966. A stream of Canadian writers and musicians visited Laurence there.

Local British culture does not appear to have made a great impact on Laurence's life or work. Although seven years in Africa led to five books, British life is reflected only in Jason's Quest (1970), the novel for children which Laurence wrote near the end of her decade in England.

Morley writes that Laurence seems to have always worked retrospectively, drawing from remembered experience. Laurence's African years were written down in books only in Canada during the five years that followed her stay in Africa. The Manawakan portraits of Laurence's grandparents, parents and herself were created in England in the sixties; material from her years in Vancouver went into Stacey's life, in The Fire-Dwellers, half a decade later. Only with The Diviners does Laurence confront Canadian life that is contemporary with the time of writing.

She moved back to Canada in the 1970s, to a nineteenth-century brick house in Lakefield, Ontario, northeast of Toronto, and a summer cottage on the nearby Otonabee River. From her home in Lakefield, Laurence spent her final

years influencing and advising the coming generation of Canadian writers and promoting the cause of world peace. She died January 5, 1987.

Joan Coldwell feels that Laurence's chief concern as a novelist is the depiction of character, a belief that Laurence herself has stated in interviews, and at the centre of each of her greatest achievements, the novels dominated by the town of Manawaka, is a powerfully realized woman (p. 435). Clara Thomas, in "A Conversation About Literature," in the Journal of Canadian Fiction 1, No. 1 (Winter 1972), concurs that

> As studies of "Women in our Times" these novels are stunningly authentic; their lasting power comes, in large measures, from Margaret Laurence's choice and direction of the unique and unforgettable voices of Hagar, Rachel, and Stacey. (p. 64)

In The Manawaka World of Margaret Laurence, Thomas reiterates this idea that Laurence, in her Manawaka protagonists, has described the reality of womanhood:

> These characters did not happen because Margaret Laurence set herself a special goal of writing novels about women. . . . They came to being out of the depth of her early experience in a small Manitoba town. They grew through her adult perceptions about how it was—and is— to be an individual woman in a specific time and place. . . . And they live, as we do, among the tensions set up between their individual, inner needs and the demands that society imposes on them from the outside. (p. 193)

Laurence's attitude to Woman's Liberation is revealed by an interview with Margaret Atwood (1974), "Face to Face," collected in a book edited by William H. New, Margaret Laurence: The Writer and Her Critics.

> I'm 90% in agreement with Women's Lib. But I think we have to be careful here. . . . Men have to be reeducated 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. (p. 36)

Morley develops conceptions of Laurence's attitude to women when she quotes an interview with Laurence in which she sums up the development of her fictional themes. After referring to her feelings of social awareness, anti-imperialism and anti-colonialism, Laurence says that these developing feelings influenced her writing significantly.

> 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, with human dignity and the ability to give and receive love. Also related very importantly to my 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. (p. 32)

Laurence fully explored her ideas about Canadian women in the Manawaka cycle with her female heroines.

Al Purdy, in his poetry collection "The Woman on the Shore" (1989), acknowledges Laurence's expertise and talent in the poem "For Margaret." As a personal friend of Laurence, Purdy recalled how Laurence admired St. Paul despite his chauvinism. Purdy mourns Laurence's death and concludes his poem by considering where his good friend, an advocate of female equality, could be now, "somewhere else on earth—or not on earth given her religious convictions."

> I'd like to be there when she meets St.
> Paul
> and watch his expression change
> from smugness to slight apprehension

> While she considers him as a minor
> character
> in a future celestial non-fiction novel
> And this silly irrelevance of mine
> is a refusal to think of her dead

Even the great St. Paul, despite his heavenly power and eminence, merits only the role of a potential minor character in a future non-fiction novel written by Laurence, that ultimate defender of female equality.

Chapter 3

Hagar

The Social Science Encyclopedia (1985) defines identity as referring "to who or what one is, to the various meanings attached to oneself by self and others" (p. 739). The process of attaining identity, or self-concept formation, is developed "through the learning and internalizing of various social roles (for example, age and sex roles, family roles, occupation roles)" (p. 740). This chapter will discuss identity in terms of the protagonist's family roles—for example, her attraction to and acceptance by the group known as the family, as well as in terms of her sexual and professional roles. By applying the Jackson model to the four stages of the protagonist's life—childhood, adolescence, adulthood and old age—the problems affecting her identity development are examined.

Hagar Currie Shipley's rebellious relationship with her familial and cultural group begins very early in her life, a fact that becomes evident as the ninety-year-old protagonist of The Stone Angel reminisces about her childhood.

Although, as a child, Hagar is attracted to her father's prestige, material wealth, and status in the community, the first paragraph of the novel introduces the problem of Hagar's inability to identify with her mother. This inability poses significant problems in Hagar's development and identity formation, since parents are an important part of a child's first realization of who or what that child is. Hagar's perception of the feminine is suggested as she contemplates the stone

angel, the statue in the Manawaka cemetery, "in memory of her who relinquished her feeble ghost as I gained my stubborn one, my mother's angel that my father bought in pride to mark her bones and proclaim his dynasty" (p. 3). She is not attracted to a feminine role in her family, fearing that it signifies weakness and frailty. She thus refuses to wear her dead mother's plaid shawl, even to comfort her dying, delirious brother Dan. Hagar's rejection and fear of identification with her mother, and consequently with vulnerability and death, are thus established early in the novel and reiterated later when she is convinced that she will die in childbirth.

Hagar is attracted to the apparent strength and independence of her father, Jason Currie. As a child, she believes he is impervious to everything, a self-made man who feared no one, "God included, especially when he didn't even owe his existence to the Almighty" (p. 17). She is attracted to the status of her family group in Manawaka, and considers herself quite different from Auntie Doll, the housekeeper. Although her brothers may unconsciously resent her for being born when their mother died, as suggested before brother Dan's death, Hagar, in general, is accepted by her family, even prized by her father for her intelligence and personality which resembles his own. Hagar is definitely not a passive, obedient child, as shown in the incident when Jason straps her hands for disobeying him, expressing her joy at new rodent life in the merchant's raisin bin.

Although Hagar's childhood identity or personality exhibits the qualities of what the sociologist Jackson defines as a rebellious relationship with her family

group, especially with regard to the Calvinist, Presbyterian, patriarchal values of her father, Hagar has been indoctrinated with pride in her Scottish heritage. Laurence's theme of ancestor worship, and the futile longing of a displaced generation of immigrants for a life and identity which no longer exist on the other side of the Atlantic ocean, are exemplified by the pride of culture exhibited by the young Hagar as she honors the family crest-pin and recites the clan motto her father has taught her—"Gainsay who dare." Hagar's identity as a child clearly shows familial and cultural acceptance, as she describes herself at age six as "a pint-sized peacock, resplendent, haughty, hoity-toity, Jason Currie's black-haired daughter" (p. 6).

Although at the beginning of the novel the stone angel is presented merely as a monument to Hagar's mother, the statue gains complexity as a symbol when it is depicted as being "doubly blind, not only stone but unendowed with even a pretense of sight" (p. 3). As the story progresses, it becomes apparent that the statue becomes representative of Hagar herself, of her own blindness in her relationships and interactions with her family or those she loves. Perhaps this blindness explains the lack of attraction Hagar has to her family group as, at various instances in the reminiscences of her childhood, she admits she never understood the real man that was her father, or his relationship to Lottie's mother. She could not truly comprehend her brother Matt, or his dreams and ambitions for the nickels and dimes hoarded in a jar, or her brother Dan, and his physical frailty. Hagar, the child, is attracted to the economic status and material possessions of her family, but not to the people or their frailties.

Thus, Hagar's familial person-group relationship in childhood first appears to be, on the Jackson model, generally that of a rebellious relationship, with positive values of acceptance, as she was accepted by her biological family, and negative values of attraction, as in her youth she values material things rather than family members. She remains in her family group, even as an adolescent, only because "barriers exist which prevent her from leaving" which is part of the Jackson definition of a rebellious relationship. As a rebel, Hagar is expected by family members to conform to the group's prescriptions for behavior but does not, resulting in examples of corporal punishment from her father about which Hagar refuses to cry or display any emotion.

Hagar's familial person-group relationship in adolescence remains much the same, on the Jackson model, as it was in childhood. Her adolescence is referred to briefly in chapter two, when her father sends her east to college, "the dark-maned colt off to the training ring, the young ladies' academy in Toronto" (p. 42). She returns two years later, "Pharaoh's daughter reluctantly returning to his roof" (p. 43), still admitting a lack of attraction or genuine love or appreciation of her family group. She did not love her brother Matt enough to ruin her own chance to leave the family, even though she felt she "knew he should have been the one to go east" (p. 42), and she cried, later, in the train, thinking of him. This is just one example of a situation in which Hagar displays dividedness about important issues in her life. This characteristic makes her a difficult subject to analyze on the basis of Jackson's model. This quality, however, is also one which makes her so

human.

Hagar is still positively accepted by her family group, particularly Jason Currie, after her return from Toronto. She is appalled at his possessiveness as he evaluates the expense of her dress, "as though I were a thing and his" (p. 43); he assures her she was worth every penny he had spent on her for the two years and calls her "a credit" to him. Hagar's rebelliousness is displayed as she protests Jason's plans for her as his hostess. Instead, she wants to teach at the South Wachakwa school, a calling he feels is beneath her and allows her too much exposure to undesirable men with "terrible thoughts." However, she pauses at the foot of Jason's staircase, symbolically gazing at a steel engraving of domesticated cattle bearing the inscription, "The lowing herd winds slowly o'er the lea." She suppresses any feelings of rebelliousness, or the need to form an independent identity, for three years as she repays her father's financial investment in her education by being his accountant, dinner hostess and chatelaine.

Hagar's familial and cultural identity formation in adulthood, in terms of her person-group relationship on the Jackson model, remains much the same as that of her childhood and adolescence. The only difference that could be suggested was that perhaps she moved up to a marginal group relationship in late adolescence as she played chatelaine for her father, but this is unlikely, as she wanted only to "reimburse him for what he's spent" (p. 45). After snubbing all the mild-mannered young men her father brought home as marital prospects, Hagar rebels against her father's domination and marries an earthy, uncouth farmer, Bram

Shipley, whom her father dislikes. Hagar then completely rejects psychological membership in Jason's family. She no longer anticipates any end satisfaction in return for behaving in accordance with the role prescription of being Jason's chatelaine.

Hagar unwittingly repeats a similar pattern with her marriage to Bram as she had with the relationship to her father. At the beginning of the marriage, the family group that they formed was viewed by Hagar as being capable of satisfying some of her needs. Through marriage to Bram, Hagar thought she was not only escaping and rebelling against Jason but also finding a humorous, unrepressed person who dared to defy conventions of manner and speech. Bram, with his exaggerated masculinity, appeared to represent relational and financial freedom from her father; Hagar also had every intention of changing this "bearded Indian" into the gentleman inspired by poetry she had studied in Toronto.

Hagar, named after the Biblical Egyptian bond woman of Genesis, seeks her own identity and independence as she leaves her father's house, "the only time he ever called me by my name" (p. 49). She leaves Jason for Bram, "the only person close to me who ever thought of me by my name" (p. 80). She realized she was attracted to Bram because he danced with her as "no one had ever dared in this way before" (p. 47). Perhaps this was a direct result of her lack of attraction to her father and an unconscious wish to change her familial identity. Her defiance and rebelliousness are accentuated when she thinks of Lottie's comment that Bram was common as dirt: "If she'd not said them, would I have done as I did?" (p. 48).

When she finds the alcoholic Bram buying lemon extract from her father's store and finally realizes she cannot change him, and that perhaps Lottie was correct in her assessment of Bram, she rebels against her physical attraction to him and leaves Bram. Thomas (1975) writes that, since Hagar has acknowledged that "His banner over me was love," in "more and more of her recollections of him there is a humble regret and bewilderment that so much could have been thrown away to the ruin of them both" (p. 71).

Hagar is no longer accepted by Jason Currie's family group after her marriage to Bram. Jason and her brother Matt do not attend her wedding. Matt changes his mind about sending Hagar their mother's plaid shawl as a gift and never sends it to her. Although Bram accepts her completely right after their marriage, Hagar cannot completely accept him, as she thinks of herself as being from a different social class with a superior familial and cultural identity to that of the Shipleys. When he presents her with a cut-glass decanter with a silver top, she really does not appreciate it. When she expects their first child, she thinks,

> What could I say? . . . that the child he wanted would be his, and none of mine? That I'd sucked my secret pleasure from his skin, but wouldn't care to walk in broad daylight on the streets of Manawaka with any child of his? (p. 100)

When she contemplates the fact that Jason never came to visit her son Marvin, she conjectures that perhaps Jason didn't feel as though Marvin were really his grandson, and adds: "I almost felt that way myself, to tell the truth, only with me it was even more. I almost felt as though Marvin weren't my son" (p. 62).

However, Hagar is diligent about indoctrinating her sons with tales of Scottish family history and of her father's success through hard work.

Hagar herself accepts her second son John, preferring him to Marvin as she believes he is more like a Currie. Indirectly, Hagar is partly responsible for the rebellious John's death, as she refuses to accept Arlene, Lottie's daughter, into her familial group, remembering always the status in the community of Arlene's mother and grandmother in comparison to that of Jason Currie. Ironically, Hagar is never really accepted by John. He cares very little for the symbol of the Currie family's identity, the family crest-pin, and, as a child, he trades it to Lazarus Tonnerre for a knife. When Bram is dying, Hagar is surprised to find him seeking comfort from Bram's daughters. John, after being suggested as the culprit who pushed the statue down, struggles to stand the defaced stone angel upright, clearly indicating with his words to his mother his disregard for Hagar's family. As Hagar watched, hoping her favored son resembled the Biblical Jacob, being blessed by the angel, she realized he was not what she thought he was.

Hagar finally understands the problems caused by Jason's not accepting Bram into the family: she buries Bram in the Currie plot, carving Shipley on the other side of the headstone. Hagar is compared to the sightless statue as she has only begun to understand Bram, and herself, when it was too late, on his deathbed, and felt "anger . . . not at anyone, at God, perhaps, for giving us eyes but almost never sight" (p. 173). When Hagar asks John if he thought she had done the right thing about having Shipley carved on the other side of the Currie headstone, he

wearily replies that "they're only different sides of the same coin, anyway" (p. 184). John comprehends the problems lack of familial acceptance has created. John himself always remains the biblical Ishmael, the outcast, and it is only when Hagar knows, in old age, that it is Marvin, her other son, who is the true Jacob, and for whom she is cast as the angel, that she can free herself and realize her true identity.

Hagar's old age is the only stage of her life at which she gains enough insight into herself to make any notable changes in terms of person-group relationships. Thomas (1975) notes that Hagar, living with her sixty-year-old son Marvin and his wife Doris, in a house in Vancouver which Hagar had worked for and bought, could claim her only achievement in life was the "gathering together of a few things, never in her relationships with people" (p. 61).

Hagar never accepts her daughter-in-law Doris, thinking she resembles a sow in labor. Consequently, at the end of her life, Hagar is treated as a crank by Doris and occasionally by Marvin. Hagar clearly was a rebel in Marvin's household. Although expected by group members to conform to the group's prescription for behavior, she becomes what Jackson defines as a crank, one who is "not taken seriously" and "considered a nuisance."

After her experience at the cannery, Hagar reassesses her long life and views her experiences, and how she perceives her own identity at different times in her life.

Hagar's absolution of guilt for John's death, the one event in her life she

can never accept, occurs significantly near water, which in Jungian terms represents the subconscious that Hagar has never explored. She realizes the importance of familial love, of the attraction to and acceptance by her remaining family group. Hagar finally appreciates that it is Marvin, not John, who is the true Jacob:

> Now it seems to me he is truly Jacob, gripping with all his strength, and bargaining. *I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.* And I see I am thus strangely cast, and perhaps have been so from the beginning, and can only release myself by releasing him. (p. 304)

Hagar has found the compassion and love within herself to bless Marvin with a loving lie when he begs her forgiveness for being short-tempered with her: "You've not been cranky, Marvin. You've been good to me, always. A better son than John" (p. 304). Thus, only at the end of her life, with her lie inspired by love, does she attain grace and psychological membership in her family group with positive values of both attraction and acceptance.

At the end of her life Hagar is attracted to Marvin's family group, and therefore her own remaining family. She also has total acceptance from this group, as she hears Marvin speak so lovingly of her to the nurse. At the moment of death Hagar, thankful, feels "like it is more than I could now reasonably have expected out of life," when Marvin says to the nurse, "she's a holy terror." He had spoken "with such anger and such tenderness." Hagar's life, and the novel, end like the completion of a religious service with her admission of the necessity of grasping the baptismal water or the sacramental cup as she demands water from the nurse. Hagar ends her life with complete psychological membership with her family.

Hagar Currie Shipley has a sexual identity which is heavily influenced by her familial and cultural identity. Since the motherless Hagar was the only daughter of Manawaka's first merchant, Jason Currie, descendant of Scottish Highlanders, Sept of the Clanranald MacDonalds, she had a very precise idea of what was expected of her in terms of sexual identity, but only from her father's point of view. However, Hagar did not always necessarily concur with the opinions of others.

On the Jackson model, Hagar's sexual identity as a child could be depicted as that of psychological nonmembership. Although everyone around her accepts her as a little girl, even though her father would have preferred that she were a male as she was so clever in school, Hagar has great difficulty in being attracted to a feminine role, as she grows up without her mother. As discussed in the exploration of Hagar's familial and cultural identity as a child, the novel begins by describing the sightless statue commemorating her mother "who relinquished her feeble ghost" as Hagar gained her stubborn one. The mother of Jason Currie's children was honored with this monument not for producing two sons and a daughter, but for proclaiming Jason's dynasty and being the wife of a man rich enough to afford marble imported from Italy. Hagar does not realize, as a child, how much she missed the influence of a mother in a household dominated by such an autocratic, materialistic father. The absence of a strong female role model, who might have been able to influence the young Hagar's sexual identity, is never questioned by the same child who wonders what it would be like to be Lottie

Drieser and never know your father. Hagar's clearly defined sense of who she is in the community, daughter of a highly regarded pillar of the church, appears to overshadow any thought of lacking a mother. When Jason Currie tells Hagar that she has backbone, and takes after her father, Hagar, who never complies easily with anything, has to agree that "I did take after him, though—God knows he wasn't wrong in that" (p. 10).

Helen Buss, in Mother and Daughter Relationships in the Manawaka Works of Margaret Laurence (1985), uses an archetypal approach to the mother-daughter relationship in Laurence's works which clarifies the effect, on Hagar's identity, of not having a mother. Buss examines Laurence's exploration of the phenomenon of women, particularly Hagar in this case, reacting to and reaching for a concept of the feminine which is at odds with that which their society and their biological heritage provide. Hagar has no female role model in her childhood to represent what Carl Jung describes in his essay "Psychological Aspects of the Mother Archetype." This psychic complex has qualities associated with qualities such as

> maternal solicitude and sympathy; the magic authority of the female; the wisdom and spiritual exaltation that transcend reason; any helpful instinct or impulse; all that is benign, all that cherishes and sustains, that fosters growth and fertility. The place of magic transformation and rebirth, together with the underworld and its inhabitants, are presided over by the mother. On the negative side the mother archetype may connote anything secret, hidden, dark; the abyss, the world of the dead, anything that devours, seduces, and poisons, that is terrifying and inescapable like fate. (p. 9)

To the motherless child Hagar, sexual identity is a complex phenomenon of

which she is never aware. Her attitudes to women are negative and her condemnations of womanhood as a state of weakness and exploitation are apparent from the beginning of the novel. After she remembers her mother as a blind stone angel in the Manawaka cemetery, she describes another woman, Regina Weese, "a flimsy, gutless creature, bland as egg custard" (p. 4), who cared with "martyred devotion for an ungrateful, fox-voiced mother" (p. 4).

To further complicate the problem of Hagar's perception of the feminine, the women around the child Hagar exist only as ciphers of men. Aunt Doll is a servant, the wives of her father's male friends are mere shadows in Hagar's life, and a woman with no male connection, No-name Lottie's mother, has no place in the community. Even Hagar's maiden aunt, after whom she is named, leaves her money to the Humane Society instead of to her motherless namesake.

As a child, Hagar thus adopts the sexual identity of a pseudo-male, adopting what Buss describes as a "persona that is very much a reflection of her father's patriarchal and materialistic values" (p. 13). She notes that Hagar is even compared to a male bird, a "pint-sized peacock," as the male of the species is the one who displays his feathers. Hagar chooses her father's world totally, taking her whippings without tears and repeating the aggressive family motto so ferociously that "the boys snickered" (p. 15).

Hagar's sexual identity as a child is problematic because, as she adopts her father's values, she twists them in a peculiarly female manner. Jason is proud of his name on the donated church candlesticks, but Hagar is proud of her "new white

lace gloves which show off so well when she claps" (p. 16). Both father and daughter accept an external material world as the only reality. While this works for Jason in his male role of shop-keeper, church stalwart and good citizen, Buss concludes that "in the world of the personal, the realm of relationship and emotion to which Hagar is destined by reason of her sex, the values of her father can mean only a profound psychic incompleteness, a split between spirit and flesh" (p. 13).

This description of Hagar's sexual-identity conflict as a child portends disaster for a mature sexual relationship. In his discussion of the negative Mother-Complex in "Psychological Aspects of the Mother Archetype," Jung explains that this incompleteness, this split, occurs as a result of the woman always "fighting the mother" in a psychological sense:

> This type is an unpleasant, exacting, and anything but satisfactory partner for her husband, since she rebels in every fiber of her being against everything that springs from natural soil . . . . She will remain hostile to all that is dark, unclear, and ambiguous, and will cultivate and emphasize everything certain and clear and reasonable. (p. 349)

Buss concludes that a better description of Hagar, for the greater part of her life, would be hard to find.

Evelyn J. Hinz, in her article "The Religious Roots of the Feminine Identity Issue," elaborates on this conflict in sexual identity that Hagar experiences, beginning in childhood. Hinz believes that "though played out on sociological, psychological, and historio/cultural levels, all of the protagonist's problems are shown to stem from the religious climate in which she has been raised" (p. 82).

Hinz offers several suggestions concerning Hagar's problems determining her sexual identity which have their roots in her unique childhood situation. Hinz' ideas have been formulated in reaction to a 1973 publication by Mary Daly, Beyond God the Father, which voices a key contention of many Liberationists: a major factor in preventing women from achieving a genuine sense of identity has been the "dominant male" philosophy embedded in Judaeo-Christian theology. Thus, women are urged by Daly to expose the sexual politics inherent in the Bible and to construct a new "theology" based upon matriarchal cults and upon the real experiences articulated by contemporary liberated women. Hinz states that, although Hagar's life story would seem to serve as a key textbook on both accounts, as much as The Stone Angel explores the connection between religious issues and female identity, the book also has the effect of calling into question many of the premises and conclusions of feminists. Through Hagar's life story, published almost a decade before Daly's critique, Laurence, "in seemingly feminist fashion, dramatizes the extent to which religious ideology permeates even secular aspects of human existence" (p. 82), according to Hinz.

> Although Hagar could be described as the damaged product of an eduction that emphasizes mental/male talents, for example, that such a "logos" orientation is relatable to the "Logos" of the Judaeo-Christian tradition is made clear through the name—specifically the initials—of her prime mentor, her father: Jason Currie. Similarly, though Hagar's relationship with her father could be studied as a modern version of the Electra Complex, her sense that her husband has committed a sacrilege when he urinates on the front steps of her father's store suggests the religious implications of the episode and so prevents any simple Freudian interpretation of her response. (p. 83)

Hinz concludes that the story's flashbacks, beginning with those of Hagar's childhood, are designed to provide the causes of Hagar's eventual loneliness, her fear of death, and her self or gender alienation. Her problems determining a clear idea of her own sexual identity, which begin in childhood and affect her for the rest of her life, become even more pronounced in adolescence.

On the Jungian model, Hagar's adolescence continues in psychological nonmembership as she is still unable to be fully attracted to a female role, although she is neither positively accepted nor rejected as a female. The most outstanding example of the adolescent Hagar's inability to assume a female role, or her failure to exhibit feminine strengths, is the occasion when she cannot wear her mother's plaid shawl to comfort her dying brother Dan. "Shaken by torments" her brother Matt never even suspected, Hagar cannot "play at being" her meek mother, "the woman Dan was said to resemble so much and from whom he'd inherited a frailty I could not help but detest, however much a part of me wanted to sympathize" (p. 25). Such a poor opinion of her mother helps to explain Hagar's lack of maternal feeling with which to comfort her dying brother. In Mother and Daughter Relationships in the Manawaka Works of Margaret Laurence, Buss states that because Hagar associates the feminine with weakness, because she grows up at the center of a patriarchy that worships materialism, Hagar spends a lifetime unable to rescue the maternal values which those around her need her to express (p. 14). Hagar later feels worse about not being able to put the dying, half-formed chicks

out of their misery, as Lottie does, than not being able to help Dan die. This seems to be an unusual sentiment for any caring, loving sister.

Hagar's father recognizes the lack of a female role model in his adolescent daughter's life. He sends her to a finishing school in Toronto because "there's no woman here to teach you how to dress and behave like a lady" (p. 42). Although Jason Currie saw no use in college for his son Matt as he himself had never gone, Jason must feel that Hagar's sexual identity lacks something that he cannot provide. He does not fully understand his daughter, however, because when she returns to be his hostess for three years, he brought home young men for Hagar to meet, but she "snubbed the lot of them" (p. 45). Because of Hagar's independent nature, it is notable that, in three years, Jason cannot find a male with a sexual identity or personality appealing to his only daughter.

On the Jackson Model, Hagar's sexual identity as an adult moves to psychological membership with her marriage to Bram Shipley. Hagar is positively attracted to her role as a newly married young woman, and she is positively accepted in this role by her husband. As discussed in the part of the chapter on familial and cultural identity, Hagar can never fully appreciate or understand her husband, as she can never forget her supposedly superior familial, cultural identity and upbringing, even though this upbringing lacked vital feminine warmth and love.

The night before her wedding to Bram, Hagar remembers herself as shimmering and flitting around "like a newborn gnat, free, yet certain also that

Father would soften and yield, when he saw how Brampton Shipley prospered, gentled, learned cravats and grammar" (p. 50). Hagar's family clan motto, taught to her by her father at an early age, "Gainsay Who Dare," was inadvertently employed by the very masculine Bram to win over his young bride with his earthy, rollicking sexual identity. Hagar, feeling free of the constricting effects of her familial identity and barely appreciating Bram's generous wedding gift, only thinks of changing her husband to someone more socially acceptable to her family and culture. The irony of her marriage is that she destroys the very qualities in Bram which initially attracted her, a change recalled by his daughter to John as she remembered Bram had been a laughing, vigorous father in her youth. Hagar loses attraction to her relationship with Bram because his manners and speech are not socially acceptable. She reminisces that he was such a good-looking, big-built man who carried himself so well that she "could have been proud, going to town or church with him, if only he'd never opened his mouth" (p. 70). After Bram informs her that it is too late for him to change his speech and that he does not care what her friends or father think of him, the loss of a mother or the guidance of maternal, feminine intuition again appear lacking in Hagar's life as she reflects "what a green girl I must have been" (p. 74) to believe his words implicitly.

Sexual attraction to her husband provided much of the basis for the positive attraction necessary for psychological membership on the Jackson Model, a fact that the mature Hagar acknowledges, wondering "why it should have shamed" (p. 81) her in her youth. This was perhaps another indication of the lack of female

influence with whom she could discuss confidential matters. The newly-wed Hagar never shared her sexual pleasure with Bram and was certain that he never realized how much she enjoyed and waited for him at night. Hagar feels betrayed by passion as she laughs at one of her school-girl notes written on poetry. She found "n.b. *passion*" and "plight of women" scribbled there by a "nincompoop" (p. 126) who had borne her Christian name. Hagar threw out a picture of a knight and a lady swooning with adoration, "playing at passion" (p. 83). Bram criticizes Hagar for preferring pictures of horses to living horses, suggesting her innate fear or inability to comprehend male sexuality. After Bram's favorite stallion Soldier, his ultimate symbol of virility, is lost and frozen all winter, the foreshadowing suggests the marriage is doomed.

Buss writes that Hagar has no true sense of her womanhood as her own possession.

> Her own genitalia are unknown to her until on her wedding day when she finds that part of her through Bram, "like discovering a second head, an unsuspected area." (p. 52) Typically she names her vagina "a second head" thus translating her Eros into Logos—her body into head—refusing to accept her womanhood. Because of this denial it is impossible for her to admit her sexual response. To show response would be to accept some part of the feminine. (p. 15)

Hagar's sexual identity as an adult gradually moves back to psychological nonmembership on the Jackson Model, as she loses attraction for her virile, alcoholic husband and her life of servitude and poverty. After Hagar acknowledges that Bram's "banner over me was love" (p. 80), she lacks true maternal warmth

and attraction when she admits she cannot feel that his son Marvin is really hers. Buss details how Hagar has never been able to perform any of the acts that take a woman from childhood to womanhood in an emotional and psychological sense, such as the mothering gestures she is asked to give her dying brother, or an act of responsive love to her husband. This inability to respond to the need of the male with her feminine nature is rooted in the mother-daughter relationship. Signe Hammer, in Daughters and Mothers/Mothers and Daughters (1975), describes the mother's nurturing and protecting influence in early life as an enabling one, where the child is encouraged to grow and develop as an individual. If this enabling influence of the mother is missing from the girl's life, as it is in Hagar's, she cannot then become a truly adult woman able to offer love to those around her. Hagar's reaction to Marvin's birth verifies this repressed, nonmaternal feeling, as she could not assume enough of a female role "to walk in broad daylight on the streets of Manawaka" (p. 100) with any child of Bram Shipley's. Perhaps Hagar's brother Matt had been justified in taking back their mother's plaid shawl on Hagar's wedding day. It is significant that Hagar makes the decision to leave Bram when she is dressed in male clothing and called "the egg woman" by Lottie's daughter. When she glimpses herself in the town's rest room mirror, she realizes she must make changes in her life in order to "get beneath to some truer image" (p. 133), or some more realistic sexual identity, closer to her real self.

Hagar's sexual identity for the rest of her adult life, including her old age, can be depicted as psychological nonmembership on the Jackson Model. After she

leaves her husband, she is neither attracted to any relationship in the same way she was with Bram, nor positively accepted by anyone in the same way. Hagar distances herself from passion, grateful that Mr. Oatley is too old for anything but "business—not a breath of anything else" (p. 155). When she considers her teen-age son John, she does not "care to dwell on the thought of his manhood" (p. 159). It reminded her of the things that she had "sealed away in daytime, the unacknowledged nights" that compelled her to accept "the necessity of the sedative to blot away the image of Bram's heavy manhood" (p. 160). Hagar is so successful at attaining psychological nonmembership on the Jackson Model in terms of sexual identity that the dying Bram thinks she is the hired help.

In her old age, Hagar shows signs of beginning to realize that she has not known everything about sexual identity in the earlier stages of her life. Buss concludes that Hagar's state of remaining emotionally in childhood, or having an emotional life that is in a frozen-child state waiting to be born through the mother's love, is doubly invoked by Hagar's envisioning herself in terms of children's games: "My bed is cold as winter, and now it seems to me that I am lying as the children used to do, on fields of snow, and they would spread their arms and sweep them down to their sides, and when they rose, there would be the outline of an angel with spread wings. The icy whiteness covers me, drifts over me, and I could drift to sleep in it, like someone caught in a blizzard, and freeze" (p. 81). Psychologically and emotionally, Hagar has imitated the only concept of motherhood she has ever known, the cold angel like her father's stone monument

to womanhood. Despite all her experiences as wife, mother, wage-earner, mother-in-law and grandmother, Hagar is frozen in a lifetime of gestures of proper appearance until thawed by acts of love on the part of other women, a substitution for the "enabling" relationship with a maternal figure.

Hagar's awareness of her limited understanding of her own sexual identity, or ner preoccupation with her unrealized femininity is reflected in the imagery she uses to describe other women. Examples of these most uncomplimentary animal images are Doris, an "unwilling hen" (p. 36), Bram's daughters like "lumps of unrendered fat" (p. 56), and Arlene, a "pouter pigeon" (p. 173). However, the smallest act of kindness from another woman, such as when a young girl offers Hagar a seat on the bus, brings tears to her eyes, emblematic of her need to overcome her fear of the female and to accept her own womanhood.

Doris becomes Hagar's first enabling mother-surrogate, as she performs for Hagar all the roles of the mother of a small child, such as changing wet sheets, feeding her and scheduling doctor's appointments and babysitters. As her helplessness increases, along with her need for Doris' mothering, Hagar's pride begins to falter. On the drive to Silverthreads, Hagar acknowledges that she and Doris may share similar feminine values, as they both admire the calves in the field, creatures "struggling awkward and unknowing into life" (p. 94).

When she meets Mrs. Steiner at the nursing home, she is amazed that this woman knows so much about the brevity and surprise of life as well as the value of having a daughter. This Jewish mother is Hagar's second surrogate mothering

experience of her old age. Although Hagar carefully insists on maintaining her separateness from this woman and her predicament, Buss observes that Mrs. Steiner's words give Hagar her first tentative understanding of what has passed her by in life:

> "Do you get used to life?" Mrs. Steiner asks. "Can you answer me that? It all comes as a surprise. You get your first period, and you're amazed—I can have babies now—such a thing! When the children come, you think—Is it mine? Did it come out of me? Who could believe it? When you can't have them any more, what a shock—It's finished—so soon?" Hagar agrees with Mrs. Steiner concerning the sadness and mystery of the female condition: "You're right. I never got used to a blessed thing." (p. 104)

Hagar experiences a need to "find some place to go, some hidden place" (p. 105), in order to come to terms with feminine values she has not recognized in her own sexual identity. This is accomplished at Shadow Point, beginning with her identification of her womanhood with the figure of Meg Merrilies, an outcast, one of the dispossessed highland Scots from whom Hagar is descended. Meg, "brave as Margaret Queen" and "tall as Amazon" (p. 163), represents a womanly strength based on a female tradition, rather than a denial of femininity, which has been the story of Hagar's life.

Murray Lees in some ways acts as Hagar's next surrogate mother and priest as Hagar relates to him as if he were a female, or non-male figure, although he also plays the part of her surrogate son. Lees gives Hagar the chance to receive the comfort of his presence and support during the grief and pain of her confession concerning John's death. After a communion of wine and crackers, Hagar weeps

over her lack of motherliness. Her new growth as a result of her experience at Shadow Point allows her to release her emotions. Hagar's first real act of mothering is comforting Murray Lees over the loss of his own son. Hagar's newly developed sense of motherhood allows her to see life around her in a different perspective. She feels she must warn a young girl playing house with a boy on the beach that she should praise him, and not be so sharp with him, or she will lose him, perhaps a lesson Hagar has learned about relationships between the sexes or male and female identity. Hagar recollects that she tried to tell Arlene that she cannot change John or anyone else, something Hagar tried to do to Bram.

When Hagar thinks back to the embarrassing moment when she was unwittingly caught observing John and Arlene playing house in Manawaka, she realizes how little she really understood of sexual identity and relationships at that time in her life. She takes it upon herself to finally relate to another woman, Lottie, to separate her thirty-year-old single son and Lottie's daughter, a beautiful twenty-eight-year-old woman. Hagar later begs forgiveness for this act from Murray Lees at Shadow Point, thinking she is speaking to John and that she has told him not to bring Arlene back to the house.

Always distinctly feminine in some ways, such as her preference for silk and flowers, motherless Hagar finally comes to terms with her sexual identity, even though it remains depicted as psychological nonmembership on the Jackson model. In her last days in the hospital, Hagar learns to appreciate the company not only of women, but also of women of all social classes and races. Hagar responds to a

nurse, a conventional symbol of the mother as nurturer, by finally being able to cling and cry. Hagar's more positive attitude to other women is seen in her reaction to Elva Jardine, Mrs. Dobereiner and Mrs. Reilly, symbols of states of womanhood that are becoming Hagar's own. Elva Jardine has a loving relationship with her husband that allows her to offer care to everyone she meets. Mrs. Reilly has religious belief and Mrs. Dobereiner's song reflects Hagar's desire, in the end, to be released from suffering into joy.

The positive effect of these three women is shown in Hagar's final acts which show her acceptance of her feminine nature. She asks to have her granddaughter's perfume, symbolizing the flowers of death, brought to her. She requests that her ring be given to Tina and apologizes to Doris for never having offered it to her. Finally, Hagar's relationship with Sandra Wong, who becomes Hagar's surrogate-daughter, reflects Hagar's new maturity as a woman. Hagar has found the compassion within herself to mother the helpless daughter of another race, who has initially rejected Hagar's presence in her room. Hagar can admit her feminine nature enough to express fear and to bless her son. Thus Hagar, at the end of her life has accepted her sexual identity as a woman.

Hagar's professional identity was not as relevant to her identity formation as her familial-cultural or sexual identity. She served as Jason's hostess and storekeeper, Bram's wife and mother to her sons, and later in life, earned a living for herself and her son John by working as a housekeeper for a wealthy man. In each case she was essentially a housekeeper. This was a position in life far beneath

the initial expectations of Hagar, or what her familial and cultural identity had led her to expect from life as the daughter of Jason Currie.

On the Jackson Model, in her childhood, Hagar's professional identity could be depicted as that of preference group relationship. The young Hagar is highly attracted to learning and to making something of herself, and she experiences neither definitely positive nor negative acceptance of this by those around her, other than encouragement and discipline from her father. Jason Currie, although in later life someone that Hagar had to rebel against, probably did more than anyone to form Hagar's professional identity. Hagar, even before attending school, memorized weights and measures so she would not grow up to be "a dummy, a daft loon" (p. 7), an unseemly professional identity for "haughty, hoity-toity, Jason Currie's black-haired daughter" (p. 6). Jason's other homilies, such as "The devil finds work for idle hands" or "God helps those who help themselves," also influenced Hagar to a lifetime of industry. It is ironic that Hagar always felt quite superior to Auntie Doll, their housekeeper, as she has no premonition that later she would be desperate enough to spend her life "in caring for the houses of others" (p. 34). This eventuality would have surprised the young Hagar because, as children, Hagar and her brothers always knew their father "could never have brought himself to marry his housekeeper" (p. 17), as Aunt Doll's status was too far beneath his.

On the Jackson Model, Hagar's professional identity in adolescence remains much the same as that of her childhood preference group relationship.

While her brother Matt painstakingly collected quarters in a jar so that he could finance an education for himself as a lawyer in the east, Hagar seemed simply to assume that, since she was Jason's daughter, that was enough. Hagar's social life during adolescence consisted of a few parties Jason allowed his children to have, with a guest list carefully scrutinized so that only suitable, decent people were invited, perhaps so that his children were not contaminated by negative outside influences. Jason sends Hagar, in late adolescence, to the young ladies' academy in Toronto to ensure the development of an appropriate professional identity in his daughter, his possession. Although Hagar felt her brother Matt should have been the one to go east, she selfishly does not say anything to Jason in case he changes his mind about sending her. When she returns, Jason will not allow his refined daughter the indignity of teaching in a one-room school.

At the end of adolescence and beginning of adulthood, Hagar seemed alternately pleased and displeased with her job as Jason's chatelaine or hostess, an occupation she felt would repay him for her Toronto education.

> Oh, I was the one, all right, tossing my black mane contemptuously, yet never certain the young men had really noticed. I knew my mind, no doubt, but the mind changed every minute, one instant feeling pleased with what I knew and who I was and where I lived, the next instant consigning the brick house to perdition and seeing the plain board town and the shack dwellings beyond our pale as though they'd been the beckoning illustrations in the book of Slavic fairy tales given me by an aunt. . . . (p. 46)

On the Jackson Model, Hagar's adult years could be depicted as marginal group relationship. Although she is accepted by everyone as Bram's wife and

housekeeper, and later as housekeeper for Mr. Oatly, Hagar is never fully attracted to her professional identity of housekeeper, as she believed she was above this station in life. After her marriage to Bram, she discovered the Shipley house had not been properly cleaned since Bram's first wife's death. This did not bother Hagar as she still thought of herself as chatelaine, not housekeeper.

> I wonder who I imagined would do the work? I thought of Polacks and Galicians from the mountain, half-breeds from the river valley of the Wachakwa, or the daughters and spinster aunts of the poor, forgetting that Bram's own daughters had hired out whenever they could be spared, until they married very young and gained a permanent employment. (p. 51)

Hagar, who had never scrubbed a floor in her life, scrubbed the Shipley house the day after her wedding because she had no intention of "living in squalor" (p. 52). She was not attracted to this position, though, as she planned to get a hired girl in the fall, when she could afford it.

Hagar always considered that any money Bram made was his own, and not hers, although the marriage lasted twenty-four years. The only reason she hoped that Bram would do well financially was so that the community of Manawaka would be forced to respect him. This was the same reason that Hagar worked like a dray horse cleaning the Shipley house: "At least nobody will ever be able to say I didn't keep a clean house" (p. 112). As Bram's wife, at harvest time, Hagar was horrified to find herself, "Hagar Currie serving a bunch of breeds and ne'er-do-wells and Galicians" (p. 114). To say she was not attracted to the professional identity of a housekeeper would be an understatement. After her realization that she

had acquired the identity of "egg woman" to Lottie's daughter, she changed her life to become housekeeper for a man other than Bram. She had the same lack of attraction for the position, but felt that she was quite different from Auntie Doll, as she had a man, her son John, living with her.

On the Jackson model, Hagar's professional identity in old age has little relevance: it could be depicted as that of psychological nonmembership. At this stage of her life, she has retired and lives in her own home with her son Marvin and his wife Doris. She relives her life in memory, ensconced in her house, admiring her possessions accumulated over a lifetime and mourning her lost men.

The identity formation of Hagar Currie Shipley, as plotted on the Jackson model, while unique to this divided, complex personality, is reminiscent of several of the first female generation of white European settlers to be born and live on the Canadian prairies. Her familial and cultural identity, her patriarchal, Scottish, Calvinist background represented by her father and the town of Manawaka, is what Hagar rebels against with her marriage to Bram Shipley. However this familial, cultural identity is extremely important to Hagar, because, given the nature of the roles offered to her as the price of her full membership in family and culture, she still spends her life before achieving a sense of psychological membership with her remaining family members.

Compared with her familial cultural identity, Hagar's professional identity does not alter her idea of herself, or who she is, to any extent. Her sexual identity, however, is of great importance in her life. Hagar's lack of the essential, nurturing

mother-daughter relationship in her youth leaves her lacking the feminine strength necessary to become a complete, female adult until nearly the end of her life. Buss (1985) summarizes Laurence's achievement in the description of Hagar's identity formation, considering the distance Hagar has had to go to reach out to find the mother with little help from her society: "Laurence's achievement has not been in her portrayal of isolation but in her portrayal of the feminine search for relatedness despite all the forces of isolation" (p. 30). Motherless Hagar ends her life considering herself blessed with the identity of a woman who has led a life well spent.

Chapter 4

Rachel

Rachel Cameron, paralyzed by fear, anxiety and self-deprecation, has her quest throughout A Jest of God, her search for freedom and joy, inhibited by her inability to perceive her true familial and cultural identity. As the references to her childhood and adolescence are so few, the analysis of Rachel's identity formation will begin with adulthood and will incorporate those few references to childhood and adolescence within that of adulthood. She does not understand herself because she does not see her real relationship to her mother, her sister Stacey and her deceased father, Niall Cameron. Her familial identity is obscured by the fact that, though she appears to have psychological membership in the Cameron family, she has reluctant membership; Rachel does not like to believe how much she is a member.

Rachel's father, Niall Cameron, was another reluctant family member, who, like Rachel, had withdrawn from the family group, refusing to face what was wrong with his familial identity and relationships. Morley observes that as the town undertaker, Niall

> guarded the town's dead and its cherished pretensions. Niall's Plutonian domain occupies the dark downstairs of the Cameron house, an analogue for the human subconscious and for repressed knowledge. The transmutation of the name from Cameron's Funeral Parlour to Japonica Chapel amusingly illustrates middle-class mentality. (p. 95)

Rachel and her mother, living above the funeral parlour, attempt to ignore Niall's profession just as their culture and family refuse to acknowledge ugly truths, such as death, and true familial identity. May covers the furniture with crocheted doilies so that Niall's hands, which touch the dead, do not come into direct contact with the family furniture or herself. Rachel dreams that, in her childhood, she descends to the forbidden funeral parlour and finds her mild-mannered, alcoholic father is king over silent people with garish clown makeup: "He says run away Rachel run away run away" (p. 22). She views her father as a peculiar person. After the children who pass along the secret language of skipping rhymes age, grow grotesque, have "learned disappointment, and finally died" (p. 2), Rachel's father paints and prettifies their bodies for "decent burial."

Niall Cameron, after surviving the World War, has withdrawn not only from his family but also from Manawakan propriety and the lies of his cultural identity or Scottish ancestry. Niall's character is enigmatic with only one youthful remembrance etched indelibly in Rachel's mind:

> I came back and pounded on the door of his establishment, the only time I ever remember doing that. 'Dad—come and see—they've got pipers, and they're playing "The March of the Cameron Men".' He stood in the doorway, his face showing no feeling at all. 'Yes, I expect they are Rachel. It has a fine sound, the lies the pipes tell. You run away, now, there's a good girl.' (p. 38)

With these few words Niall is given more character than his spouse, whose conversations are more frequent.

Rachel does not want to resemble her mother in any way. This is suggested

when she finds herself thinking, "Oh God. I don't mean to be condescending. How can it happen, still, this echo of my mother's voice?" (p. 5). Rachel confesses to Nick, her lover, that she envied the Ukrainians in Manawaka. They "always seemed more resistant, I guess, and more free" (p. 108). Directly after this confession to Nick, she reveals her relationship to her mother, and her inability to be decisive or to ascertain her own identity when she contemplates her youthful reaction to losing her virginity at age sixteen and her mother's advice on this matter: "But I was neither one way nor another, not buying her view but unable to act on my own" (p. 111).

In two other brief references to her adolescence, Rachel appears to be very dissatisfied with who she is or how she appears to others; she always views herself as an outsider. At age fifteen, the first time she attended a movie with a sixteen-year-old boy, Rachel was "obsessed with one thought" (p. 82): she was terrified that he would buy a child's ticket for her and she would have to face the usherette with this recriminating proof of her age, which was not the adult age of sixteen. At age seventeen, she cringes as she considers herself "like some skinny poplar sapling," dancing with the short, broad "bulldog," Cluny MacPherson, while everyone's laughter howled louder than the music.

Thomas (1975) labels Rachel as "neurotic and egocentric," not having the maturity, initially, to establish her own identity:

> Emotionally, she and her mother are both children, each unwilling and unable to grow up and leave the other free, each battening on the weakness of the other. (p. 78)

Rachel's mother, May, in her seventies, has, as her allegorical castle, the Manawakan Presbyterian Church, a bastion of propriety. A self-made martyr, May has obviously been a guiding influence upon Rachel. Her anger at the "indecent" participation in life by an unwed mother who dared to produce twins contorts May into a demonic figure with burning face and hissing voice, perhaps suggesting her insidious influence on Rachel's life.

Thomas notes that the novel begins with a feeling of Rachel's not belonging, as she is presented first to the reader as an adult. Rachel speaks first as she stands looking out the window of her grade-two classroom at the children in the school yard. Thomas (1975) describes Rachel perceptively:

> She is walled in by glass from even the illusion of freedom that their play presents, and she is desperately afraid of her own shadow-fears and fantasies. The first page and a half of the book tell us everything basic to our understanding of Rachel's tormented, self-doubting mind and her present state of near-hysteria. (p. 80)

It is significant that the first time Rachel is introduced in the novel she is displaced from her own body, suggesting this feeling of not truly belonging. On the first page of the book she imagines her eyes looking from a pupil's desk at Miss Cameron, the "thin giant."

Roderick Hall, in A Double Vision: A Study of Symbol and Imagery in Margaret Laurence's *The Stone Angel* and *A Jest of God* (1977), analyzes Rachel's condition in Carl Jung's terms of neurotic dissociation:

> The more that consciousness is influenced by prejudices, errors, fantasies and infantile wishes, the more the already existing gap will

> widen into a neurotic dissociation and lead to a more or less artificial life far removed from healthy instincts, nature and truth. (p. 55)

Thus Rachel's unconscious mind, according to Jung, will spontaneously produce dream or symbolic messages to attempt "to restore our psychological balance" (p. 55). Rachel's rich imaginative powers may therefore be a frantic unconscious signalling to a consciousness on the brink of permanent imbalance.

The symbolic roles of names throughout the novel also make suggestions concerning character. Sandra Djwa, in "False Gods and the True Covenant: Thematic Continuity Between Margaret Laurence and Sinclair Ross" (1972), writes of the Biblical significance of the name Rachel.

> Rachel Cameron . . . like the Rachel of the Old and New Testament, weeps for her children because they are not. In Genesis this (weeping) is a lament by a barren wife; in the allegory of Rachel in Jeremiah it is the lament by the Israelites who have fallen away from the fruits of the spirit into the worship of false gods: both concepts are contained in Laurence's presentation of Rachel's character. (p. 4)

Rachel Cameron does not acknowledge or articulate her female voice, her unconscious longing for her own children and freedom. She worships false gods, fearing that she appears foolish or unconventional if she admits natural desire. The golden city of which Rachel is queen in the opening verse of the novel is later identified by Laurence as "Jerusalem the golden," the allegorical Jerusalem of spiritual freedom. Unfortunately for Rachel, the state of affairs in her golden city appears to be corrupt, as insinuated by the last skipping rhyme of the children: "Nebuchadnezzar, King of the Jews, sold his wife for a pair of shoes" (p. 2). The

middle-class morality and worship of propriety and appearances ingrained in Manawaka's children is indicated by the rhythmic lines requesting the departure from town of improper Spanish dancers.

Rachel too easily puts herself into the context of a seven-year-old child. Hall (1977) suggests the reason for this tendancy:

> the life she leads is a type of role playing reinforced by Manawakan players (Mother May especially) who possess their own self-preserving need to protect the long established identities in which they enmeshed their lives. (p. 5)

Rachel exists in a suspended state of childhood above the ever-changing Cameron-Jonas Funeral Home: the neon light of the chameleon-like sign changes with the times in order to survive, but the fairy-tale sleeping beauty or princess/Queen Rachel, waiting for her prince, does not change. Hall remarks that "this child image Rachel projects symbolizes, harking back once again to Ross's false-fronted Main Street, the small-town prairie community's concern with artificial values rather than the growth of its people" (p. 49). Rachel is trapped above her father's former funeral home by her mother's small-town values and expectations.

Hall believes that the fundamental fear of appearing to be foolish, which dominates the Cameron home, negates the celebration of life and has its roots in death, just as the Cameron household has its symbolic foundation upon the funeral home. Rachel's survival depends not on dismissing premonitions of death as undignified symptoms of mental aberration but on accepting death, sexuality, and whatever else is revealed as a part of life from which she cannot run, or live above,

without denying life altogether.

The remaining member of the Cameron family is Stacey, Rachel's older sister. Rachel resents the fact that Stacey has managed to escape Manawaka for Vancouver as soon as she could, to marry and to have children, leaving the burden of caring for their aging mother to Rachel. Rachel's attitude to her sister is contained in her thoughts on Stacey's habit of writing to May once a week: "Considering that Stacey does nothing else for Mother, writing once a week doesn't seem such an exorbitant effort" (p. 26). However, Rachel does have some feelings of affection for Stacey. After her romantic encounter with Nick, she wished she could confide in Stacey.

It is interesting to note that both Rachel and Nick had favored elder siblings of the same gender who gave the impression of being well adapted to cope with parental expectations. Rachel and Nick are both saddled with the heavy responsibilities of preceding generations when Stacey and Steve, the logical inheritors, are removed from the family.

It appears that Rachel would like to believe, at the beginning of the novel, that she has psychological nonmembership in the Cameron family, that she is, in the definition in Jackson's model, a legal but not a psychological member of the family group.

However, Rachel has a marginal group relationship with the Cameron family. She has the necessary characteristics defined by Jackson's model, "positive acceptance in a group, but little or no attraction to membership." Rachel

has always belonged psychologically to the Cameron family group, as much as any Cameron could, but she suffers a definite decrement in attraction to this group. The Cameron family offers no direct or indirect means of satisfying Rachel's needs. This dissatisfaction in Rachel's life is exemplified at the opening of the novel with the skipping rhyme chanted by the children:

> Rachel Cameron says she'll die
> For the want of the golden city.
> She is handsome, she is pretty,
> She is the queen of the golden city—

The Cameron family is obviously not fulfilling Rachel's needs as she yearns for a golden city, the exotic, the unattainable.

By the conclusion of the third chapter of A Jest of God, Rachel is unconsciously beginning to realize that psychological non membership in the Cameron family as well as in life is keeping her suspended unhappily in a fruitless state of existence. Rachel appears to have thwarted maternal instincts towards one of her students. Although she has appreciated the creative qualities of James Doherty in her classroom and has fantasized about him as a surrogate son, Rachel has denied her true feelings for him. She has shocked herself by hysterically striking this favorite student with a ruler. James Doherty, a symbol of youth, innocence, freedom and vision, does not cry as he wipes away the blood Rachel has caused to flow down his face. Rachel focuses upon the ruler, an article suggesting a rigid, measured society, and not herself, as the cause of James' bleeding nose. Rachel is clearly in conflict with herself.

The question of Rachel's identity, or how her identity has been formed considering the familial and cultural boundaries of her life, as well as the frustration building up from her stiff, restrictive style of living, appears to cause Rachel personal grief as in her reaction to James. Her identity is not with her mother, whose martyr weapons were invisible, and not with her father, who would never face anything, withdrawing from Manawakan propriety, destroying himself with isolation and liquor after surviving the cruelty of the World War. Rachel is unsure of her true identity.

However, Rachel cannot help but view her culture and her colleague Calla through her mother's eyes. Thomas (1969) comments that "Rachel is embarrassed by Calla's differentness, by her uninhibited sloppiness, and, most of all, by her non-conforming fundamentalist religion" (p. 48). Rachel's unconscious attraction to the values and beliefs of her family force her to regard Calla's romantic overtures with revulsion and horror. When Rachel speaks in tongues, moaning and babbling, at the Tabernacle service, she is mortified and appears to view herself as what Jackson describes as a crank. Her familial identity is strong enough for her to reject Calla's advances completely.

The appearanc k Kazlik in chapter four signals the beginning of a change in Rachel's life. Although she believes she has no sense of belonging to her immediate family, she realizes her way of thinking or personal identity is clearly influenced by that of her mother, as she first contemplates Nick, the town milkman's son, realizing that "It's as though I've thought in Mother's voice" (p.

79).

Nick is a catalyst in Rachel's journey to attaining psychological membership in her family. He forces her to change from her child-like state of suspended animation over her father's funeral parlour and to descend into reality and long-delayed growth as an individual. She experiences a putative pregnancy after their relationship. The beginning of her liberation from social conventionality is marked by her resolve, if pregnant, to have and to keep an illegitimate child. Futhermore, Nick causes Rachel to reflect upon the prejudices deeply ingrained in her familial and cultural identity.

> Half of the town is Scots descent, and the other half is Ukrainian. Oil, as they say, and water. . . . The Ukrainians knew how to be the better grain farmers, but the Scots knew how to be almightier than anyone but God. (p. 81)

The flippancy of Nick's remarks to Rachel regarding his own alienation from the language, customs and love of his parent's land suggests Nick's lack of attraction to his own familial and cultural group. Rachel is so neurotically absorbed in herself that she has only a superficial understanding of Nick's problems, his responses to his father and mother, his Ukrainian background, and his need to be himself, not his father's confused image of his dead twin, Steve. Never attaining a sense of place or belonging is something that Nick and Rachel have in common. His failure helps her to recognize her own.

Rachel's identity formation is dependent upon her recognition of this lack of self-comprehension. Thomas (1975) believes that

> the strengths that were built into Manawaka by its pioneers—and also the terrible, inhibiting power of the town's constraints—are at battle in the person of Rachel Cameron. She begins totally in chains, some of her own making, but others of her parents, her ancestors', and the town of Manawaka's. She resents the chains, but at the same time without them she has no identity at all—she could not stand on her own strength. When the book ends . . . she also realizes that what strength she has she must use and that Manawaka, an inheritance and the source of her identity, must—and will—go with her always. (p. 95)

Rachel's sexual relationship with Nick indicates, among other things, that what Jackson defines as a rebellious relationship has occurred between Rachel and both groups representing the core of her familial and cultural identity, her mother and Manawaka. Rachel schemes to deceive her mother and Manawaka, and becomes a ruthless opponent to both as she hopes for a permanent relationship, and possibly children, with the son of the town's Ukrainian milkman. As Rachel confides to Nick that if she had a child she would like it to be his, Nick appears to realize the depth of Rachel's needs as he consoles her, saying "I'm not God. I can't solve anything." Rachel must come to terms with her own identity, her own sense of attraction to and acceptance by both her family and her Scottish, Manawakan cultural ancestry, even though she feels she has become "bounded by trivialities" as they are.

Although May Cameron has maliciously called Rachel "Cinderella," suggesting that she is in a fairy-tale existence waiting for her prince, Rachel is a survivor with some undefined quality in her that allows her to do what all living things must do to survive—change. Nick, with his polio-twisted spine, does not

appear capable of changing his rebellious attitude to his family or cultural heritage. Perhaps for this reason Laurence has Nick associated with images of death: for example, their first romantic encounter occurs in a place which he assures her is as "private as the grave." Ironically, Nick becomes Rachel's closest contact with death. Their relationship causes Rachel to reflect upon her relationship with her father's death and subsequently to move from her position of rebelliousness, on the Jackson model, with regard to her familial and cultural identity to that of psychological membership and an acceptance of who she is.

Rachel must descend to her father's funeral parlour and confront her extended childhood fears of death and of her father's miserable existence. Hector, the current proprietor of Niall Cameron's underworld, exorcises Rachel's belief that her father had lived such an unhappy lifetime. Hector convinces Rachel that Niall had chosen "the life he wanted most. If he had wanted otherwise, it would have been otherwise" (p. 153). This affirmation of her father's choice about his life strengthens Rachel's quest for her own identity.

Hall (1977) notes that Laurence uses the imagery of the remodelled funeral home to externalize Rachel's confused assimilation of reality. Just as the deterioration of the Cameron funeral home has been changed by Hector Jonas, a transfigured Rachel emerges. She decides to "pull herself together" and, from a fearful, apologetic grown-up child, she becomes a mother figure, responsible for herself.

Rachel's final moment of recognition that "I am the mother now" signals

an awareness of her psychological membership in the Cameron family group. She takes her "elderly child," her mother, to Vancouver to be closer to her remaining family member, Stacey, thus signifying her acceptance of membership in the Cameron family. This form of group identification, which completes Rachel's self-definition, this key to a degree of freedom and acceptance of herself, is achieved ironically by her desperate struggle between acceptance and rejection of a possible pregnancy that is in reality a benign tumor, a form of death instead of life.

After constantly protesting to, attacking and pleading with God, this experience matures and frees Rachel. Since she feels she is the target of a brutal joke, having had a tumor just when she had come to terms with having an illegitimate child that would have utterly disgraced her in the community, having been made a fool in various ways, she becomes wise. Rachel is strong enough to trust life and to live it heroically, because she accepts "in the end—the end—it's in other hands" (p. 237).

Thomas (1975) concludes that Rachel is "no longer dependent on her fear of the town for a kind of tortured security of identity" (p. 87). Rachel accepts not only her familial but also her cultural group as she moves to Vancouver, knowing that, "in the deepest sense the town will be with her forever, both its strengths and its constraints" (p. 87). Rachel, always afraid that she might become a fool, is relieved when she considers herself already one, because by then she has at least established her own identity.

The sexual identity of Rachel Cameron, protagonist of A Jest of God, is

especially interesting when one considers that she is the younger sister of Stacey, protagonist of The Fire-Dwellers. Although the sisters share a common family background, their sexual identities are very different, perhaps because Stacey married early and Rachel never marries.

There are not that many relevant references to Rachel's childhood sexual identity, but, on the Jackson model, she appears to have the identity of preference group relationship, attracted to her identity as a young, female child, but neither accepted nor rejected as one by those around her (see p. 20). One memory of her childhood suggests this identity, or having even less attraction to her role so that she would have the position of psychological nonmembership, as she reflects: "My great mistake was in being born the younger. No. Where I went wrong was in coming back here, once I'd got away. A person has to be ruthless" (p. 13).

Rachel always sees something wrong with herself. The adult Rachel reflects that everything would be better if she could put on a little weight: "But I've always been too thin, like Dad. Stacey takes after Mother, and in consequence has a good figure" (p. 3). Thus, Rachel sees herself as being a girl unlucky enough to have inherited a masculine rather than a feminine figure, never considering how fortunate she is not to have a problem with overweight.

Rachel was a timid, fearful child led by her more decisive older sister Stacey. Rachel would never have visited the part of the town on the other side of the tracks if it had not been for her more adventuresome, yet distinctly feminine, sister. Rachel reminisces about this dangerous part of town where the shacks are

and where the weeds grow knee-high: "that's as it used to be when I was a kid, and I would go with Stacey sometimes, because she was never afraid" (p. 13). This situation foreshadows Stacey's complete acceptance and involvement with her feminine identity as wife and mother of four children and Rachel's hesitance or reluctance to even marry.

Rachel's adolescent sexual identity continues this configuration on the Jackson model, suggesting either preference group relationship or psychological nonmembership, depending on what the reader thinks is her degree of attraction to portraying her female identity. The few glimpses of her adolescence (already referred to previously) confirm Rachel's feeling of not really belonging or not being a desirable female. She remembers herself at age seventeen, at one of the traditional Manawaka mating rituals of the Flamingo Dancehall Saturday night dances. She thinks of herself dancing with Cluny MacPherson, picturing herself like some skinny poplar sapling, as she was tall and Cluny was so short. Her other memory of this dance was that the two of them must have resembled a dog outstretched to a tree. Rachel pinpoints her neurotic feelings of psychological nonmembership when she states, "I honestly do not know why I feel the daft sting of imagined embarrassments" (p. 77).

Two other references to Rachel's adolescent sexual identity have been discussed previously concerning her familial and cultural identity and support her feelings of nonmembership. One incident is when the fifteen-year-old Rachel "worried needlessly" (p. 22) that the older boy who took her to the movies had

bought her a child's admission ticket. The other incident is Rachel's skeptical laugh when she recalls her mother's advice to herself, at age sixteen, concerning her virginity, "a woman's most precious possession" (p. 111). The fact that Rachel had ruptured the membrane "years ago" to make sure that her wedding night was not ruined shows some sort of adolescent hope to develop her sexual identity as a mature woman in a serious relationship with a man. Her cynical, adult comment, "what a joke" (p. 111), and the fact that she is contemplating this incident as she is about to lose her virginity at age thirty-four offer significant suggestions concerning Rachel's adolescent sexual identity.

Once an adult, Rachel achieves psychological membership on the Jackson model, both positive acceptance and positive attraction, in terms of sexual identity, in her affair with Nick Kazlik. She is attracted to Nick, and she is accepted by him, to the best of his ability, although he reminds her that he is not God and cannot solve all her problems. Although the reader expects a fairy-tale ending, which is almost the implied conclusion to the story of Rachel's princess-like existence above the gritty reality of life, Rachel's sexual identity begins to mature through her relationship with Nick. However, Nick is merely a stepping-stone to Rachel's maturity, not the ultimate reward who enables her to live happily ever after. When Rachel believes that she is pregnant, and acknowledges how much she wants children, she must make a decision about whether or not to have an abortion, regardless of Manawaka's excessive concern with appearances. Her relationship with Nick and her surgery become an ironic situation because she has the removal

of a benign tumor, or death, instead of the birth of a child, and life or rebirth. Facing these facts forces Rachel's sexual identity to mature to psychological membership and then to preference group relationship on the Jackson model (see p. 20). She acquiries maturity and freedom when she is willing to face Manawaka and her mother with an illegitimate child only to find she is not pregnant.

The adult Rachel displays some unusual attitudes, but with different characteristics than before. At the beginning of the novel, she admits to feeling more at ease with very young girls, "so anxious to please," than with boys who "have begun to mock automatically even at this age" (p. 6). However, she does not relate so easily to adolescent girls, even those she has taught. She wonders who teaches these "Venusians" how to do their hair, admitting that "at that age it's no shame not to know" (p. 15), as she does not know how they are so adept at hairdressing. Considering herself awkward, "this giraffe woman, this lank scamperer" (p. 93), Rachel openly admits how jealous she was of the sexual happiness of two sixteen-year-olds she happened upon in a compromising position in the cemetery. It is difficult to believe that this situation would bother a thirty-four-year-old woman, even more so since "they'd been children of mine, once" (p. 98). It concerns her because these former students are experiencing an aspect of life from which she has been excluded. Not only does this encounter bother Rachel, but she tortures herself with the memory of it. "I wish I could forget that day, and those kids, but I can't. Such moments are the ones that live forever" (p. 99). Since she has not seen Nick for a week, she has just finished imagining that

probably taking out some teen-ager now. Someone pretty, and obliging. And poised. A girl who is able to do everything easily" (p. 98). This neurotic lack of self-confidence in her ability to attract men could be part of the reason for Rachel's stilted sexual identity.

Rachel wonders how Stacey always got men to adore her. Rachel openly envies Stacey's relaxed attitude to her sexuality:

> To be nonchalant would be the best thing in the world, if I knew how. It's all right for Stacey. She'd laugh, probably. Everything is all right for her, easy and open. She doesn't appreciate what she's got. She doesn't even know she's got it. (p. 122)

However, Rachel resents Stacey's opinion of Rachel's lack of sexual feeling, suggested when Stacey does not think Rachel would understand that Stacey could only stay away from her husband for a week. Rachel asks, "What made her so certain it would sound crazy to me?" (p. 27). She admits that she has "no evidence, none, of any pitying or slamming phrases" (p. 27). Rachel then offers a "slamming phrase" of her own against her sister's spoiling of her sons. When May defends Stacey, Rachel immediately feels excluded from their shared motherhood, the ultimate expression of a woman's sexual identity, and thinks, "League of matriarchs. Mothers of the world, unite. You have nothing to lose but your children" (p. 28).

Rachel's lack of confidence in her sexual identity is suggested in her relationship and attitude to Calla, her teacher friend with homosexual tendencies. Rachel is embarrassed about Calla's attention to her and admits that "she may

guess how awkward I feel about her generosity" (p. 11). Extremely upset at displaying her innermost frustrations in an unconscious babble of tongues at Calla's church, Rachel wonders later if she might be like Calla and not know it. Rachel has enough lack of confidence in her sexual identity to wonder if this awareness of sexuality is something only men could know. This confirmation of her heterosexuality is an unusual question for Rachel to pose as, after Calla kisses her face and mouth in an unpremeditated moment after this Tabernacle incident, Rachel has admitted to feeling "violated, unclean, as though I would strike her dead if I had the means" (p. 46).

Rachel is ashamed of her sexual fantasies before she sleeps at night, questioning not only her sexual identity but also her sanity: "I didn't. I didn't. It was only to be able to sleep. The shadow prince. Am I unbalanced? Or only laughable? That's worse, much worse" (p. 22). Rachel even thinks that she could be abnormal because she has an overwhelming urge to touch Willard Siddley's "spotted furry hands" (p. 10), even though he repulses her.

Rachel's affair with Nick forces her to scrutinize her sexual identity in great detail. Her insecurity and fear of rejection are frequently suggested by her reaction to Nick and her thoughts about him. One example of this feeling is expressed by Rachel's thoughts after kissing Nick after their first movie together:

> Is he surprised, or what? I resent his surprise, if it is that. I'd like to let him know that I can want, too. I'm thirty-four. That's not old. I haven't fossilized. Why do people assume it's so different for men? Is he laughing? (p. 89)

When she pushes him away, she concludes that he has accepted this refusal so quickly because "he didn't want to touch me all that much" (p. 90). She instructs herself to think that she will probably not see him again, as this will make it easier later, "when it happens that way" (p. 91).

After her sexual experience with Nick, her lack of confidence in her female sexual identity is again expressed. "He did want me. And I wasn't afraid. I think that when he is with me, I don't feel any fear. Or hardly any" (p. 116). Although she never believes she is as beautiful as Nick tells her she is, she does admit to experiencing feelings of "warmth, against all reason" from the "knowledge that he will somehow inhabit me, be present in me, for a few days more" (p. 128). Her sexual behavior matures to the point that she easily initiates a sexual encounter with Nick and confesses that, "if I had a child, I would like it to be yours" (p. 181). Rachel congratulates herself on expressing something that is of monumental concern to her in such a trivial way: "This seems so unforced that I feel he must see it the way I do. And so restrained, as well, when I might have torn at him—*Give me my children*" (p. 181). Rachel's affair with Nick gradually changes her approach to life. When she returns to school in September, she finds herself questioning her relationship with Willard, the principal.

> I suspect myself, though. I could be seeing the situation all askew. I so often have. And now I can think only of matronly maidens I've known, in whom solitude festered until it grew a mould as gay as a green leaf over their vision, and they would lightfoot around with a mad flittering of eyelashes, seemingly believing themselves irresistible to every male this side of the grave, and hankering after heaven so they might evolve into flirtatious angels and lure all those

on the other side as well. (p. 194)

Thomas (1975) writes that Rachel's final humiliation, her desperate struggle between acceptance and rejection of the child-to-be, is brought to an anti-climax as the growth within her is not life, but "a kind of random nothingness" (p. 86). Rachel's final move on the Jackson model, back to preference group relationship from psychological membership, denotes a new Rachel. After the torture of Rachael's struggle to accept the child, and the reality of her operation, Thomas notes that Rachel does learn "to accept and to live with her limitations and life's" as "an ordinary foolish mortal" (p. 86). Rachel finds the strength, against all her mother's tears and threats, to move to Vancouver with "her elderly child," her mother. Rachel, as the mother, or decisive, authoritative figure to her remaining parent, has achieved a distinctly different, more mature and flexible, sexual identity from the Rachel at the beginning of the novel.

Rachel at the conclusion of the novel thinks of Stacey, and sounds more like her more realistic sister than ever before. Rachel can now admit that it is a possibility that she will get annoyed at her sister. Her feelings for Stacey's children are at last more maternal, as she can discuss simultaneous feelings of resentment and attachment toward them. Rachel's sexual identity has matured and become closer to that of her sister Stacey, although they are still two very unique individuals with different roles in life.

As A Jest of God has few relevant references to Rachel's professional identity as a teacher during her childhood and adolescence, the discussion of

Rachel, the teacher, will naturally focus on her adult years. One glimpse of Rachel at age seven shows a child so highly attracted to the teaching profession that the adult Rachel reflects that it "would certainly have surprised me then to know I'd end up here, in this room, no longer the one who was scared of not pleasing" (p. 1). Rachel, the adult, although immersed in her career as an elementary teacher, always attempts to detach herself from her professional identity, perhaps suggesting psychological nonmembership on the Jackson model. Rachel is not fully attracted to the profession of teaching, but has positive acceptance as a teacher from everyone around her.

Rachel's preoccupation with her feelings of remoteness from the generation of her classroom children is introduced at the beginning of the novel as she listens to the seven-year-old girls skipping rope and reflects that they "seem like a different race, a separate species" (p. 2). She sees herself apart, as "the thin giant She behind the desk at the front, the one with the power of picking any colored chalk out of the box and writing anything at all on the blackboard. It seemed a power worth possessing, then" (p. 2). Although always afraid that she is turning into an eccentric, something she regards as an occupational hazard not only of teachers but also of unmarried women and widows, Rachel consciously attempts to retain her psychological nonmembership relationship to her classroom by reminding herself to stop referring to them as her children and to stop speaking in a simple, teacherly tone.

Rachel hates the teacher image which she projects. She refers to her voice

as sounding "Peter-Rabbitish" and "false" (p. 5) to her own ears. She describes herself as condescending and overly dramatic. When she expresses feelings that James is her favorite student because he is so unique, then corrects herself to say that all students are unique, she is annoyed with herself for having expressed an educational platitude which her principal would have endorsed, even though she disagrees with it.

Her treatment of James verifies her psychological nonmembership or distance from her professional identity as a teacher. She must realize that Willard lives to punish students, yet she betrays James by sending him to Willard instead of defending him as her instincts dictate. The irony of Rachel's view of her professional identity is that she believes she sees herself realistically and Willard does not: "*I am not neutral - I am not detached - I know it. But neither are you, and you do not know it*" (p. 32). In order to make herself appear rational, Rachel must pretend to have given James the nosebleed on purpose, "as though I were at least half-justified" (p. 66). Rachel is so removed from her true feelings that she cannot accurately judge those of James' mother regarding his absences until after she interviews her. Rachel displays her underlying jealousy of James' mother, and her own longing for children, after the mother and son are reunited after the interview.

> She gains strength from his presence. This is what happens. I've seen it with my sister. They think they are making a shelter for their children, but actually it is the children who are making a shelter for them. They don't know. (p. 63)

Rachel feels trapped in her identity as a teacher; she considers her major mistake was coming back to Manawaka once she had gotten away, as "a person has to be ruthless" (p. 13). After her father's death, Rachel had no money to finish college, and her mother had impressed upon her how impossible her existence would be: "Yes, I saw, I see. Seesaw. From pillar to post. What could I have done differently? I've been teaching in Manawaka for fourteen years" (p. 14). Her mother advises her that "other people don't allow their work to get on their nerves" (p. 17) and that she is far too conscientious and worries too much about her students, but this advice does not make Rachel feel less trapped. After mother May's bridge friends patronize Rachel with their usual remarks about the marvelous way she manages "all those youngsters," and May agrees that "Rachel is a born teacher" (p. 20), Rachel again has her recurring waking nightmare:

> Yet I can see myself at school, years from now, never fully awake, in a constant dozing and drowsing, sitting at my desk, my head bobbing slowly up and down, my mouth gradually falling open without my knowing it, and people seeing and whispering until finally— (p. 20)

This is the nightmare of a teacher who prides herself on never having been late for school, never once in fourteen years.

Essentially, Rachel must feel enclosed in her teacher identity and resents how she must appear to the children, whom she must always give up at the end of the year. When she meets one of her former students on the street, she does not recognize her.

> Whoever she once was— that's long gone. Some child I was

> drawn to, perhaps and may have shown it, and she remembers and can't forgive it; for she detests now and would like to kill forever the little girl who believed it was really something if the teacher was pleased with the work she'd done. (p. 69)

Rachel confesses to Nick that she can't get used to seeing her students around for years and having nothing to do with them: "There's nothing lasting. They move on, and that's that. It's such a brief thing. I know them only for a year, and then I see them changing but I don't know them anymore" (p. 132).

When Rachel returns to the classroom in September, she reminds herself that she "must take an interest" in her students, and is surprised to find "They've drawn it from me, being as they are—present and unaccounted for, here in the flesh, with loud voices which irk and beckon" (p. 191). Rachel cries for the first time after her operation when she receives a card signed by her grade two classroom of children. In spite of herself, Rachel realizes that she is very attracted to her profession and her students.

By the end of A Jest of God, Rachel's professional identity on the Jackson model could be depicted as that of psychological membership, attracted as fully to the teaching profession as it is possible for her to be and accepted by everyone as a teacher. As Rachel's experience with Nick and the trauma associated with her operation have taught her to accept herself the way she is, Rachel acknowledges the fact that she may or may not have children, but that her children, the students, will always be temporary, "but so are everyone's" (p. 245).

The identity formation of Rachel Cameron, as depicted on the Jackson

model, is of interest to the observer of feminine identity in the Canadian context because Rachel is a thirty-four-year-old, unmarried school teacher in the same, small prairie town from which Hagar had moved years before. While her cultural background is similar to Hagar's, as represented by her Scottish ancestry and the town of Manawaka, her familial identity is quite different. Rachel's familial identity is a difficult struggle for the protagonist, although formulated in a world where patriarchal power has weakened since the domination of Jason Currie over the young Hagar and the town.

Rachel has an alcoholic father who distances himself during his lifetime from life, reality, and his family. Rachel has an invalid, emotionally nonsupportive, martyr mother who defines herself in relation to her dead husband, spending her declining years over his former funeral parlor. While sister Stacey had the strength to leave this disfunctional family, Rachel spends her best years neurotically trapped in marginal group relationship and psychological nonmembership with her family group, imprisoned by imagined embarrassments and self-deprecation until a crisis enables her to develop enough matriarchal courage to assume psychological membership with the Cameron family group and her cultural group as represented by the town of Manawaka, which Rachel has the strength to leave behind her.

Professional identity is more important to Rachel's self-concept than it is to Hagar's. Rachel defines herself through her occupation as teacher and expends considerable time and thought distancing herself from this role, attempting psychological nonmembership from the profession, although she is accepted by her

family and the town as a teacher.

Her professional identity is uniquely intertwined with her sexual identity, which has great impact on Rachel's life. Rachel's sexual identity must mature in female strength and she must find her own female voice through her experience with Nick and her health crisis to articulate the maternal instinct she has always suppressed in her profession. Once Rachel acknowledges that she is the mother now, relegating May to the status of elderly child, her more mature sexual identity, represented by preference group relationship, allows her the liberation and strength to make necessary changes for a more productive, satisfying life.

Chapter 5

Stacey

Stacey Cameron MacAindra, almost forty when The Fire-Dwellers begins, is very different in personality and temperament from her sister Rachel. Unlike Rachel, who has spent her life in Manawaka, Stacey moved to Vancouver at the age of eighteen and became a mother of four. She acknowledges, however, that "the past doesn't seem ever to be over" (p. 231) and that she carries much of her childhood familial and cultural identity with her. "The truth is that I haven't been Stacey Cameron for one hell of a long time now. Although in some ways I'll always be her, because that's how I started out" (p. 272). Scenes from her childhood continually juxtapose Manawaka with Vancouver. Thus, the reader becomes aware that her adult life suffers from the same failure of communication that plagued her childhood and adolescence.

Stacey's childhood, on the Jackson model, begins with a marginal group relationship with the Cameron family and her Manawaka Scots Presbyterian cultural heritage. Although Stacey is totally accepted by her family and community, she is not attracted to them—a situation which was similar to that of her sister Rachel. As a child reacting to her parents' ineptitude, she promised herself that she would not fall victim to their failure, an expectation which frustrates the adult Stacey.

The earliest reference to Stacey Cameron, the child, is a memory of herself

at age eight or nine, as the adult Stacey laments the lack of communication she has with her husband Mac: "What's the matter with us that we can't talk? How can anyone know unless people say?" (p. 149). Her memory recalls her mother's horrified shock at the youthful Stacey's description of a wounded, dying gopher with distended entrails:

> *Please, dear, don't talk about it . . . it isn't nice.* But I saw it and it was trying to breathe only it couldn't and it was. *Sh, it isn't nice* (I hurt, Mother. I'm scared.) (Sh, it isn't nice.) (I hurt, you hurt, he hurts—Sh.) p. 149

At age twelve, Stacey reiterates this idea of her past as a source of isolation to which she is not attracted. Although homesick, while composing her dutiful, non-expressive letter to her parents, she admits she is "thinking of home where she didn't want to be, either, the tomb silences between Niall Cameron and his wife" (p. 21).

Stacey recollects that she was twelve years old the one time she ever heard her father speak of the war. Niall Cameron cries while speaking about the war, the only time Stacey has heard him express any emotion; she realizes this rare form of communication occurred because "My dad was drunk, but then he wouldn't have spoken of it if he hadn't been" (p. 4).

While teaching a song to her younger daughter, Jen, who refuses to speak, Stacey reflects upon the hypocrisy of Manawaka. She remembers, as a "little kid," the town drunk, old man Invergordon and how nobody knew how to tell him not to sing at local concerts.

> How I used to dislike them then, the Ladies' Aid and mother's bridge cronies and all of them, never seeing beyond their own spectacles and what will the neighbors think. What will they say? . . . Only difference between Invergordon and Niall Cameron was that my dad was a private drunk and the old guy was a public one. (p. 123)

Niall, and her mother's hypocritical attitude to him, bothers Stacey so much that, after his death, she forces herself to enter Cameron's Funeral Home, a place "never entered into by children," and particularly forbidden for Stacey and her sister. After drinking a mickey of rye in the family bathroom, and hypocritically mouthwashing after, Stacey has to endure her mother's comment that she "might consider that someone else might like to have a bath" (p. 211). The incident illustrates how Stacey had developed a lack of attraction for her parents and how she accumulated, during her childhood, all the mental baggage she is so encumbered with as an adult. For example, she constantly needs to reassure herself and those around her that everything is "all right." A hymn she sang as a child brings a tear to her eye as she contemplates her own hypocrisy in sending her children to church every Sunday while she admits her own lack of religious faith—"one more strand in the tapestry of phoniness" (p. 62).

The question of Stacey's adult identity, which she asks herself as she realizes she would rather go out with a child or her husband so she knew who she was supposed to be, reminds her of an incident in her childhood that taught her about her mother's excessive concern with proper appearance. Her mother sent her to her room for being rude to Reverend McPhail, the new minister. This

"rudeness" consisted of defending her name: "It's my name and don't you say anything about it, see?" (p. 83). Obviously, Stacey the child was confident about asserting her own identity, a contrast to Stacey the adult. She could easily defend her name and herself against parents and church and then, in true Laurence tradition, search her eyes, reflected in an oval mirror, for imaginative reincarnations of herself as "Anastasia, queen of the Hebrides, soon to inherit the ancestral castle in the craggy isles" (p. 84). The question of Stacey's familial and cultural identity is obviously of interest to her; even as a child, she could easily defend her name, a name which comes from the Greek meaning "of the resurrection," spring, when all nature is renewed.

May Cameron had a saying which the adult Stacey acknowledged was very true of herself as an older child, and later as an adolescent, and which is partly responsible for her move, on the Jackson model, from a marginal group relationship to that of a rebellious relationship with her family. Stacey's mother always said, "you have a terrible temper—you must learn to bank your fires" (p. 189). Stacey admits that her temper was not that easy to control.

Even in childhood, Stacey is associated with fire by these words of her mother. The main symbol in The Fire-Dwellers, the burning house motif, is introduced with the nursery rhyme which begins the novel. The adult Stacey is the ladybird whose house is on fire and who must live in the torture of that element. However, the few references to Stacey as an adolescent corroborate her mother's analysis of Stacey's fiery temper which perhaps causes the adolescent Stacey's

decrement in attraction to her family and culture.

The earliest reference to Stacey as an adolescent is at age fourteen; the adult Stacey recalls a fragment from the past brought to consciousness by a similar mother-daughter exchange between herself and her teenage daughter Katie. Mrs. Cameron, always thinking of community opinion and appearances, sniffles into her lace-edged hanky:

> *you are certainly not going to a public dance hall, dear. You wouldn't want to be the sort of girl people wouldn't respect, would you?* . . .
> *I never thought a daughter of mine would speak to me like that.* (p. 40)

Other encounters between the adolescent Stacey and her mother provide further evidence that it was not that difficult for Stacey to lose attraction to her mother and May's Scots Presbyterian platitudes, thus slipping from a marginal to a rebellious relationship on the Jackson model:

> Every time Stacey ran down the stairs from the apartment above Cameron's Funeral Home, which was home, she paused in flight like a hummingbird or helicopter and sneaked a glance into the mirror halfway down . . . . *Stacey, Stacey, vanity isn't becoming.* The soft persistent mew from upstairs, the voice that never tired of saying how others ought to be and never were.

Stacey hoped she was not as unaware of her daughter Katie's feelings as May had been of hers, when somehow she had convinced the adolescent Stacey of her vanity and ugliness, although photographs later made her realize she had actually been pretty.

Katie's assertion that she will never have children, because as she cannot

tolerate her brother's lack of respect for her privacy, her mother's "nerves" or the endless quarrelling of her parents, reminds Stacey of herself, at sixteen:

> watching granite-eyed while her mother retreated softly billowingly into temporary but recurring nerves, meaning the solace of flowing eyes and codeine for the headaches. *I won't argue any more with you, Stacey—it hurts me too much when you're so stubborn, and it isn't as though I could even ask your father. You wait, you just wait until you have your own children.* (I'll have them, all right, but it won't ever be like this, my setup.) p. 106

By the age of sixteen, Stacey has rejected her mother and the non-communicative atmosphere which surrounds her. She anticipates leaving her familial and cultural background and establishing her own, loving, more emotionally supportive family environment. After being described at age fifteen as questioning her life-style, "ashamed of her own distance and safety" (p. 213), as she watched the men of the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders march through the streets of Manawaka on their way overseas, by age sixteen she has become overtly rebellious toward her home and family.

Another brief reference to Stacey as a seventeen-year-old reinforces this concept of an adolescent rebel who, upon reflection as an adult, discovers herself in exactly the situation from which she struggled to extricate herself.

> Cameron's Funeral Home in the prairie town, and Stacey, seventeen, coming in late from a dance, stepping behind the caragana hedge to avoid encountering her mother, who had come downstairs and outside in her dressing gown and was trying to open the mortuary door, which was locked. *Niall—you come upstairs and quit drinking. I know what you're doing in there. I know you.* And the low gentle terrifying voice in reply—*You do? You really think you do?*
>
> No. I don't know, Mac. Okay, I don't know. Isn't it

strange? I thought it couldn't happen to me. (p. 38)

Stacey, who abhorred the silences and lack of communication between her parents, found her husband as distant as her father, and her knowledge of his innermost thoughts as elusive as May's concerning those of Niall.

The scenario of Stacey leaving Manawaka completes the picture of an adolescent, accepted and loved by her family, who escapes everyone because of her rebellious attitude and lack of attraction to everything they represent.

> Stacey Cameron, nearly nineteen, expert typist, having shaken the dust of Manawaka off herself at last. . . . Good-bye, beloved family. Good-bye to the town undertaker, her father, capable only of dressing the dead in between bouts with his own special embalming fluid. (Dad? I'm sorry. But I had to go.) Good-bye to her long-suffering mother. (Now I'm not sure any longer what lay behind your whining eyes.) Good-bye to Stacey's sister, always so clever. (When I think you're still there, I can't bear it.) Good-bye, prairies. (p. 6)

As an adult, Stacey has reassessed her familial and cultural identity and realizes she will always be a product of her family and small town. On the Jackson model, Stacey attains psychological membership with her remaining family members (and the memory of her dead father) as she becomes more attracted to them or more understanding of them, in retrospect, after the inevitable enlightenment of life experience.

She develops an appreciation for her father and his problems after she drives away to the beach following an argument with Mac about her indiscretion with his best friend Buckle. Stacey drinks from her father's flask, a souvenir of the First World War, as she contemplates her own domestic war:

> Okay, Dad. Here's looking at you. You couldn't cope, either. I never even felt all that sorry for you, way back when. Nor for her. I only thought people ought to be strong and loving and not make a mess of their lives and they ought to rear kids with whom it would be possible to talk because one would be so goddamn comprehending and would win them over like nothing on earth, and I would sure know how to do it all. So I married a guy . . . very different from you, Dad. Now I don't know. (p. 151)

Stacey thinks back to Diamond Lake, and how the pressure of encroaching society eradicated the loons. She begins to sympathize with her father, and the private anguish of the memories with which he had to live, of the war and of the atrocity of people's treatment of each other.

Stacey, always apprehensive for the safety of her children, fearing imminent disaster, nuclear war or some vague impending horror, eventually throws away another souvenir of her father, his revolver. She accepts the constant disorder and chaos in her terrifying, modern world of mass media with instant communication and finally agrees with Mac that it was useless to worry.

Stacey loved her father so much, even though she never understood him or her love for him, that for sixteen years she could not bring herself to call her father-in-law Matthew "Dad," "for this still to her means Niall Cameron, long dead" (p. 59). Stacey had come to the realization that there were reasons for her father's behavior that perhaps she did not have the maturity to understand in her youth, and that he was an important, irreplaceable part of her life. She comes to this conclusion as she views her dead father:

> My father's dead face, looking no different except the eyes closed, and I thought his face had been dead for a long time before he died,

so what did it matter, but I didn't believe that. (p. 114)

When Stacey insists that Matthew move in with them after discovering his imminent blindness from glaucoma, her strong maternal nature acknowledges the foolishness of placing such importance on a name, when it was really the fact that she could not understand her father or acknowledge her attraction or love for him that bothered her.

> Niall Cameron has been dead a long time. If someone else needs the name, no point in not using it. It doesn't mean anything to me any more. I never knew until now. (p. 252)

Stacey realizes the importance of the family and considers that perhaps they are all stronger than they think they are. As an adult, Stacey values psychological membership in the family unit, a feeling that becomes even more pronounced by the end of the novel as she welcomes her mother and her sister Rachel to Vancouver also.

Stacey's emotional exchanges with her daughter Katie help her develop some sort of empathy for her own mother, or, as she explains to her neighbor, Tess' husband, after Tess has a nervous breakdown, "The past doesn't seem ever to be over" (p. 231). Katie had just been trying to tell Stacey about her intended first date and had become so exasperated while attempting communication with her mother that she asked Stacey if she had heard what she said. Stacey's response reveals a new sensitivity and insight into the problems May must have encountered as a mother:

Katie, I'm sorry. I guess I didn't hear. I only heard what was

> pertinent to you or what I imagined to be pertinent to you. In the same way that I used to wonder if my mother ever really listened to what I'd been saying. Sorry, Mother. Now I see why. I'm a stranger in the now world. (p. 271)

Stacey, although apologizing to her mother for misunderstanding her, still admits to May's hypocrisy as she thinks the one major difference between herself and May is that "at least my mother had the consolation of believing herself to be unquestionably right about everything. Or so I've always thought. Maybe she didn't, either" (p. 271). Stacey now can recognize May's codeine and phenobarb as being the equivalent to her gin and tonic, a coping mechanism she labels "ritualized props." Stacey knows that even Katie glimpses the burdens of adulthood as she exhorts Stacey not to try the same escape mechanism as Tess had with her suicide attempt. Of Katie, Stacey thinks that "one day she will have to take over as the mother, and she's beginning to sense it" (p. 245). Stacey has the maturity now to be attracted to her familial group, as she can appreciate the problems May must have endured as a young mother.

Stacey is also attracted to her other remaining family member, her sister Rachel. After her affair with Luke, which ends with the shocking discovery that she is the same age as his mother, Stacey is horrified to encounter Luke and a young girl marching in a peace rally. She considers what Rachel would say and how she would react to Stacey's situation, thinking her insane not to be perfectly happy with four healthy kids and a good man. She realizes that Luke had shown her where she belonged, when he had asked her what she could not leave to go

away with him, and she was grateful to Luke for his encouragement of her self-knowledge. This revelation occurs as she thinks longingly of Rachel:

> I'd like to talk to somebody. Somebody who wouldn't refuse really to look at me, whatever I was like. I'd like to talk to my sister. I'd like to write to her. I'd like to tell her how I feel about everything. (p. 249)

Stacey, who has spent her life escaping the Cameron family, now finds herself inexorably wishing to communicate with the only Cameron family member of her own generation. It is also gratifying for Stacey that her two-year-old daughter, named after her sister Rachel, Jennifer suddenly begins speaking in complete sentences after never having spoken a word.

Thomas (1975) believes that Stacey never thought of abandoning her responsibilities permanently:

> Luke's function for her is symbolic of the biblical Luke's—he is a physician to her. He identifies her with water and calls her Merwoman . . . he helps her to see herself momentarily as a singular being, freed of the kaleidoscopic wife - mother - housekeeper roles in which others see her. (p. 123)

Duncan's near drowning accident has a clarifying effect on Stacey. The ocean, which she has always loved as a mysterious but free element, betrays her also. Thomas argues that Stacey has to recognize once and for all that, "dangerous and frightening as the fire-element is, neither she nor the ones she loves can move to or live in any other" (p. 123). After watching Mac carry Duncan from the ocean, Stacey accepts the idea that words do not fully translate experience or signify either satisfying or unselfish communication between human beings, as she had

previously believed—a belief which always prevented her attraction to the Cameron family.

Stacey's experiences shortly before her fortieth birthday allow her to rethink not only her familial but also her cultural identity. Stacey is confronted with her cultural past in the form of Thor Thorlakson, Mac's Richalife boss, who is in reality the tormented Vernon Winkler, an outcast of Manawaka society, and Valentine Tonnerre, the Metis street-walker from Manawaka who identifies Thor for Stacey. Stacey feels guilt as she reflects upon the treatment of the Tonnerre family by Manawaka society. Toward Val, she feels a compulsion "to explain that she never meant the town's invisible stabbing," but Stacey is still hypocritical enough not to want Val in her home, swearing in front of the children, although Stacey herself swears privately every day. At least Stacey has the maturity to realize that

> Even her presence is a reproach to me, for all I've got now and have been given and still manage to bitch on and on about it. And a reproach for the sins of my fathers, maybe. The debts are inherited and how could the damage ever be undone or forgiven? I don't want to, but I seem to believe in a day of judgement, just like all my Presbyterian forbears did . . . .(p. 237)

Stacey is aware that she could just as easily have burned down her house and children the day she burned her hand on the iron after too many gin and tonics just as Piquette, Val's sister, had perished, intoxicated, in the Tonnerre shack with her children. Stacey's acceptance of her past and awareness of her personal and cultural identity provides the means to self-knowledge and inner freedom.

Although she does not necessarily agree with her cultural past, she realizes the life advantages this past has given her.

Stacey attains psychological membership, on the Jackson model, in terms of familial and cultural identity by the age of forty. As she observes after her neighbor Tess' mental breakdown, "everything starts a long time ago" (p. 243).

The sexual identity of the adult Stacey MacAindra, the protagonist of The Fire-Dwellers, is intricately connected to her professional identity as wife and mother. As a child she has the sexual identity of a typical heterosexual girl. This childhood sexual identity could be graphed on the Jackson model as preference group relationship, as she appears attracted to the idea of being a girl, and she is neither definitely accepted nor rejected as one, although she is allowed to behave like a typical girl. As an adolescent, Stacey maintains this identity on the Jackson model, and as an adult she eventually moves to psychological membership, both attracted to and accepted by Mac as his wife and mother of his four children.

Stacey's childhood sexual identity has very few relevant references in this novel. However, there is an interesting depiction of the child Stacey Cameron interacting with Morag in The Diviners. Along with the glimpses of the young Stacey which have been discussed previously, this scene suggests that Stacey is a typical, heterosexual girl in the preference group relationship on the Jackson model, with a definite, positive attraction to this sexual identity, but with variable acceptance, neither positive not negative, from the world around her. Morag has accompanied Christie to the nuisance grounds for the first time. Her male school

friends tease Christie, then Morag. Along with two girlfriends, Stacey is depicted as looking away, pretending not to notice, but snickering a bit, trying to "get in good" with the boys. The Fire-Dwellers contains a similar description of the young Stacey in the graveled school grounds of Manawaka Public School. Nine-year-old Vernon Winkler, surrounded by a gang of older, fiercer children, is crying as he receives a series of hard knees in the crotch. Again, both Stacey and Vanessa are described as "watching from a distance, disgusted and excited" (p. 239). They are attracted to their roles as helpless, female bystanders who do not interfere with the activities of their male school friends. Everyone observing the incident appears to expect this behavior from the girls, but they display neither positive nor negative acceptance of Stacey and Vanessa. Thus, their sexual identities are assumed to be that of typical, heterosexual girls of their age and preference group relationship on the Jackson model.

Stacey's adolescence continues to be found in preference group relationship. Unlike her sister Rachel, Stacey enjoys her sexual identity as a female. At age fifteen, she watches the parade of the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders marching through Manawaka before going to war overseas. The adolescent Stacey sees her adult sexual identity in terms of marriage, as she watches the parade, thinking of the participants as "boymen whom she soon might have known, perhaps married one if they had stayed" (p. 213).

Other references to Stacey reveal this positive attraction to men and relationships with men. After too many gin and tonics, Stacey tries to recreate her

youth. She thinks of her youthful self, portrayed as loving to dance, "knowing by instinct how to move, loving the boy's closeness, whoever he was" (p. 118). At age seventeen, she is described in similar phrases, jitterbugging at the Flamingo Dance Hall every Saturday night, her association with the fire element suggested as she is "spinning like light" (p. 9). Stacey feels that in her youth she was very different:

> Stacey, travelling light, unfearful in the sun, swimming outward as though the sea were shallow and known, drinking without indignity, making spendthrift love in the days when flesh and love were indestructible. (p. 65)

As an adult, Stacey therefore looks back wistfully to her sexual identity as an adolescent, such as her night with the airman from Montreal spent by the lake, and herself at age eighteen, swimming in Diamond Lake and "feeling already the pressure on her lake-covered thighs of the boys" (p. 155). The adult Stacey facetiously remarks that everything will be okay once she is eighteen again.

The Fire-Dwellers presents Stacey the adult in conflict with her sexual identity as Mac's wife. She is accepted by those around her as Mac's wife, although she is not fully attracted to this identity. Therefore, on the Jackson model, her sexual identity could be depicted as that of psychological nonmembership.

Her attraction to Buckle Fennick is one example of this need to explore her sexual identity. She has already expressed this need at the beginning of the novel, equating her sexuality with her youth:

> I want some other man, someone I've never been with. Only Mac for sixteen years. What are other men like? . . . neither of us is

> supposed to feel this way. Except that I know he does. I wonder if he knows I do? Sometimes I think I'd like to hold an entire army between my legs. I think of all the men I'll never make love with, and I regret it as though it were the approach of my own death. I'm not monogamous by nature. And yet I am. I can't imagine myself as anyone else's woman, for keeps. (p. 16)

Stacey, who reads articles called "I'm Almost Ready for an Affair," has great difficulty sorting out her feelings towards Buckle. She has competed against him for years for Mac's attention. She detests Buckle, yet considers him sexy although she labels this "an optical illusion" (p. 42).

Stacey's psychological nonmembership in terms of her sexual identity, or her lack of attraction to her sexual identity as Mac's wife, could be caused by her feelings of guilt for saddling Mac with four children. She feels responsible for her pregnancies. Duncan's birth was accidental, and although she considers Duncan a rare, wonderful creation, Stacey questions whether or not his birth was the beginning of the time that Mac went underground, retreating into caves of isolation. When Stacey sees Mac at the Richalife rally with his arm around Delores Appleton, she realizes the extent of her problem with Mac's lack of communication.

Other than her science-fiction sexual fantasies under the hair dryer, Stacey's need to explore her sexual identity and her shift from psychological nonmembership to psychological membership on the Jackson model begins with her behavior with Buckle. Stacey has a premonition of impending crisis when she accepts the fateful ride with Buckle and listens to him complain that Mac has snubbed and ignored him after Buckle had honked his horn.

The house is burning.
Everything and everyone in it.
Nothing can put out the flames.
The house wasn't fire-resistant.
One match was all it took. (p. 135)

Stacey fantasizes about Buckle, then questions her own sanity as she realizes she does not even like him. However, she is delighted to be leered at instead of taking offense from the insinuating stares of Buckle's co-workers. She is horrified, realizing how vulnerable she has made her marriage and her dignity, when Buckle humiliates her by not only spurning her advances but also gratifying himself in front of her, using her simply to watch him before throwing two silver coins for "your bus fare, lady" (p. 141).

Stacey's indiscretion with Buckle, reported to Mac by Buckle to be far more intimate than it was, is the catalyst that begins Stacey's journey to self awareness and psychological membership. Stacey is outraged that Mac believed Buckle instead of her, and dared to question her sexual morality: "Who're you? God? You don't own me" (p. 142). Stacey is so infuriated with Mac that she drives away to her encounter by the ocean with Luke.

Stacey's affair with Luke changes her views on her sexual identity and provides insight to herself and to her relationship with Mac. Her shocking discovery that she was a mother figure to Luke, the same age as his mother, and that he is only a few years older than her daughter Katie, jolts Stacey into a more realistic way of thinking, rather than always wondering if he desires her sexually. Luke becomes Stacey's counsellor, and she speaks freely to him about Mac and

herself:

> I got married sixteen years ago and I thought he was like Agamemnon King of Men . . . that was how I thought of him only of course that view couldn't last all that long how could it if you are with somebody all the time and see how they go to sleep with their mouth open or something and I wouldn't have minded about that except he doesn't talk any more hardly at all . . . . (p. 176)

Stacey feels that she wants to explain herself to Luke and to make herself "real to him" (p. 183) because she thinks of herself as "unaccustomed to the ritual of the preliminaries" and "out of touch with the rules" (p. 180). Stacey realizes her underlying problem is her approaching birthday, when she considers herself overly eager to have an affair with Luke, a characteristic of "only women like me, who think there may not be that much time left" (p. 180).

Stacey can retaliate for Mac's attraction to Delores Appleton by visiting Luke, whom she considers "open and honest," someone who "knows how to allow himself to speak" (p. 198) and how not to tell lies. Stacey is attracted to Luke but knows that society does not condone such a relationship. While she rationalizes that if it had not been Luke, it would have been someone else sooner or later, she associates Luke with the fire element and danger to her home and family: "'Better to marry than burn,' St. Paul said, but he didn't say what to do if you married *and* burned" (p. 188). After refusing Luke's invitation to go north, finally aware of her basic sexual identity formation as wife and mother, she returns home to find Mac upset over a death. Stacey assumes she is being punished with the death of her son Ian for her sexual infidelity.

Stacey's sexual identity also encompasses that of a mother figure to Mac as she consoles him over his friend Buckle's death. Stacey communicates more fully with Mac after this crisis, wondering how she could have been so insensitive to his needs and thoughts: ". . . we carry our own suitcases. How was it I never knew how many you were carrying? Too busy toting my own" (p. 216).

After Mac confesses to his affair with Delores Appleton, Stacey cannot help but acknowledge her attraction to her role as Mac's wife, thus moving from psychological nonmembership to psychological membership on the Jackson model. Mac has confessed he was not what Delores Appleton needed, "to be cared about by some guy over a long time" (p. 217). Stacey thinks, "like I have been, by you, come hell or high water, in some way or other" (p. 217). Stacey's subsequent life shocks of Duncan's near drowning, Mathew's growing blindness and her neighbor Tess' suicide attempt enable her to complete her move to psychological membership. At the conclusion of the novel Stacey is attracted to and accepted in her life role exactly as she can now realize she is: with the sexual identity formation of a forty-year-old mature, reasonably happy wife and mother.

In The Fire-Dwellers, the professional identity of the protagonist is considered in terms of Stacey MacAindra's vocation as a wife and mother. As there are very few relevant references to her childhood and adolescence, and none to her old age, most of the evaluation of Stacey's professional identity concerns her adult life.

On the Jackson model, Stacey's childhood professional identity could be

graphed as that of psychological nonmembership. She is not attracted to being a wife and mother in the same way that she perceives May, her mother, is, and, of course, being a child, Stacey is not necessarily accepted by those around her as a potential wife and mother. She has a choice and could choose to remain single, as her sister Rachel did. The reasons Stacey the child is not attracted to her family's concept of being a wife and mother like May have been fully explored in the examination of Stacey's familial and cultural identity.

Stacey's childhood reasons for her lack of attraction to the life of a wife and mother appear to be the result of the Cameron family's lack of communication and constant need for self-restraint in order to adhere to Manawaka's strict code of appearance and middle-class propriety. Stacey's conflicting, blunt realism, a direct contrast to that of her parents and her culture, is skillfully shown in several instances, as Laurence's method of writing dialogue depicts Stacey's thoughts and conversations in such a unique manner without the benefit of quotation marks. To appreciate this ironic effect, the reader must be aware enough to decipher the contradictions between the two, which Stacey always chastises herself for as lies. This realistic perceptiveness begins in the child Stacey and prevents her from being initially attracted to the role of wife and mother as lived by May. One example of Stacey's realistic attitude to life even as a child is revealed when she recalls that, while living above the Cameron Funeral Parlour, "as a kid I used to imagine the dead men below in the mortuary, conjure them up on purpose so they wouldn't take me by surprise, although in reality I never saw even one of them" (p. 192).

On the Jackson model, Stacey's professional identity during adolescence moves to preference group relationship. She becomes more attracted not so much to being a wife and mother but to leaving Manawaka and establishing an identity independent of her family. This attraction to some career identity which would enable her to attain what she perceives as freedom is never automatically accepted or rejected by the world around Stacey. No one, such as her family or the town, expects Stacey to do only one certain thing with her life and professional identity at the end of her adolescence. Thus her identity is plotted as preference group relationship during adolescence.

Stacey as an adult has this same ambivalence toward her role as wife and mother. When she reflects on her adolescent attempt at a professional identity by the completion of grade eleven and a business course in Winnipeg, she considers herself "self-educated, but zanily" and thinks "no wonder I bore Mac" (p. 27). On the Jackson model, Stacey's professional identity as an adult at the beginning of the novel could therefore be depicted as that of psychological nonmembership. Although she has positive acceptance as a wife and mother by the world around her, she is not certain about her attraction to the position, even though she occupies it.

When The Fire-Dwellers begins, Stacey is described as a woman who is questioning her identity as a wife and mother and what she has done so far with her life professionally. Stacey's preoccupation with the safety of her family in the face of some unknown, impending danger, and the lack of communication within this

family, is suggested by the ladybird rhyme, followed by her wish "to teach Jen a few human words." Stacey's unread book on the bedside table, The Golden Bough, and her university courses, "Myth and Modern Man" and "Aspects of Contemporary Thought," hint at her aspirations to educate herself because of her frustrations with her life and identity. However, unlike her neurotic sister Rachel, Stacey lives in the real world and is not suspended or frozen into inaction. The first paragraph introduces the reader to this practical quality in Stacey as she exhorts herself to get out of bed and to begin living in an active sense: "First thing, hell. It's a quarter to nine, and here's me not dressed" (p. 1). This practicality is also displayed when she decides gruesome nursery rhymes or children's prayers about dying before they wake are acceptable because they prepare children for reality.

This philosophy of living extends to Stacey's attempt to improve her life by developing what she considers a more respectable professional identity. Attracted to educated people as having the answers, Stacey believes "Everything would be all right if only I was better educated. I mean, if I were" (p. 2). She thought the "Myth and Modern Man" course sounded classy, but she only went twice. Perhaps her practicality and the daily realities of raising four children intervened. In the opening scene of the novel, Stacey's bedroom pictures of her wedding and children are indicative of how she sees herself in terms of professional identity and precisely what identity she explores and questions throughout the rest of the book.

Stacey envies yet ridicules educated people, perhaps suggesting her struggle and insecurity with her own identity. She laughs at Dr. Thorne with good reason,

as she makes a perfectly valid point that a king in Ancient Greek Drama, Agamemnon, who sacrificed his youngest daughter, Iphigenia, for success in war was not considering the feelings of his queen, Clytemnestra, the girl's mother, or the feminine viewpoint: "Young twerp. Let somebody try killing one of his daughters. But still, he had his Ph.D. What do I have? Grade Eleven. My own fault. I couldn't wait to be on my own and out of Manawaka" (p. 27). Stacey's excellent observation, as well as the fact that she dared challenge the young academic who generously gives up his Thursday evening for the cause of adult education, reveals Stacey's perceptive realism and spirit of inquiry, especially regarding her own identity and feminine values. She has previously chastised herself for having a mind that is "full of trivialities" (p. 26), which she blames on her life as an arbiter of such matters as which son has the bigger slice of cake for dessert. However, she asks herself "So when they're at school, do I settle down with the plays of Sophocles? I do not" (p. 26).

Even the magazine articles that Stacey reads reflect her struggle with her identity as a mother. Examples of these articles are "Nine Ways the Modern Mum May Be Ruining Her Daughter" and "Are you Castrating Your Son?" Thomas (1975) notes that Margaret Laurence herself, in "Gadgetry or Growing? . . . Form and Voice in the novel," discusses Stacey's problems in relation to her identity as a wife and mother. In this essay Laurence states, "I had . . . perhaps rather too many interlocking themes to deal with . . . the relationship between a man and woman who have been married many years, when the woman does not have any

real area of her life which is her own" (p. 126).

Intelligent enough to question the advertising gimmicks of Richalife, Stacey reveals the identity she perceives she has. When her older daughter Katie proceeds to call her "mini-mind" in the next paragraph, the reader is given some clue as to why Stacey feels the way she does about her identity as a wife and mother.

> Here's to the god of thunder. He's right. If I spent my life pouring myself full of vitamins and tomato juice instead of gin, coffee and smoke, maybe I would be a better person. I would be slim, calm, good-tempered, efficient, sexy and wise.
>
> Also beautiful. Beautiful and intelligent. (p. 39)

Stacey's attempt to reason with her adolescent daughter about the difficulties of Katie's attendance at a restricted movie causes Stacey to reflect that, as a mother, she feels it is her duty to appear to be doing her duty, something Stacey labels "a farce." Stacey's former employer, Janus Uranus, the astrologer with the name of the two-faced god, is suggested as she laments the difficulties of her role as mother in a confusing age of disorder and chaos. When she was younger Stacey had considered her newly acquired identity of wife and mother an escape from the eccentric Janus Uranus, a plan which settled her whole life for her at age twenty-three.

> I stand in relation to my life both as child and as parent, never quite finished with the old battles, never able to arbitrate properly the new, able to look both ways, but whichever way I look, God, it looks pretty confusing to me. (p. 40)

Stacey's coping mechanism which allows her to be so resilient and successful as a mother of four children is also a quality she chastises herself for.

This comment on herself is made after a conversation with her elegant, beautiful but suicidal neighbor Tess, who cannot cope with anything:

> These lies will be the death of me sooner than later, if they haven't already been. What goes on inside isn't ever the same as what goes on outside. It's a disease I've picked up somewhere. (p. 28)

Stacey later describes feelings of being trapped and wanting to get out. Even though she thinks she has everything she has always wanted, she no longer thinks she has an inner self. These feelings are possibly responsible for her lack of attraction to the identity of wife and mother, and thus psychological membership on the Jackson model. As she wonders, "What's left of me? Where have I gone? I've brought it on myself without realizing it" (p. 64).

Stacey's loss of personal identity is also suggested when she wonders if she will talk to the cereal in the supermarket when her last child goes to school. Although she knows that it is a worthwhile job to raise four children, she thinks she is spending her life in one unbroken series of trivialities:

> The kids don't belong to me. They belong to themselves. It would be nice to have something of my own, that's all. I can't go anywhere as myself. Only as Mac's wife or the kid's mother. And yet I'm getting now so that I actually prefer to have either Mac or one of the kids along. . . . It's easier to face the world with one of them along. Then I know who I'm supposed to be. (p. 83)

Although Stacey is accepted by the neighborhood around her as a wife and mother who would be interested in a Polyglam Superware party, Stacey shows she is not attracted to this identity by her behavior during this event and her observation that the evening was really an occasion for the housewives of Bluejay Crescent to find

out "we're alone after all" (p. 77).

Thomas (1975) argues that Stacey, in actuality, has a very secure identity because "an identity less strong than Stacey's could be disintegrated by the series of shocks she receives in the weeks before her fortieth birthday" (p. 121). Stacey's nature is modified slightly by these "gifts of chance or, perhaps, of the God she speaks to as 'Sir,'—Duncan's life, Jen's words—are finally accompanied by more acceptance of herself, of Mac and of the irreversible processes of life" (p. 121), even though the fires outside, or life in the city, remain. She feels the city recede as she slides into sleep at the end of the novel, questioning if the city will return tomorrow. It is this series of shocks that enables Stacey to attain psychological membership, on the Jackson model, in terms of her professional identity as a wife and mother.

As a strong and maternal woman who freely admits that she does not want anyone else bringing up her children, even though she feels she cannot always cope, Stacey places Mac outside her circle of herself and children. She accepts guilt for burdening Mac with the responsibility of bringing up four children, but not for tacitly excluding him, which she does, for example, when she contradicts his discipline of his sons. Only after Duncan nearly drowns does Stacey see that she has not really wanted to admit Mac to full and equal parenthood with herself:

> He's never held Duncan before, not ever. Why did I think he didn't care about Duncan? Maybe he didn't, once. But he does now. Why didn't I see how much, before? He never showed it, that's why. . . .
>
> That's the most Mac will ever be able to say. They're not

> like me, either of them. They don't want to say it in full technicolor and intense detail and that's okay, I guess. Ian gets the messages. It's his language, too. I wish it were mine. All I can do is accept that it is a language and that it works, at least sometimes. (p. 266)

Stacey has arrived at this positive acceptance of Mac, her children and her identity as a wife and mother only after the series of disturbing events preceding her fortieth birthday, the most traumatic being Duncan's near death. These events, some of which were previously discussed, include the death of Ian's friend Peter, Stacey's sexual indiscretion with Buckle, Mac's suspicion because of this, Stacey's affair with Luke, Mac's affair with Delores Appleton, Matthew's impending blindness from glaucoma and the suicide attempt and nervous breakdown of Tess Fogler. These events comprise the themes discussed when Thomas (1975) quotes Laurence's assessment, in "Gadgetry or Growing? . . . Form and Voice in the Novel," of too many interlocking themes to be dealt with in the novel, all inherent in Stacey and her situation, and all too important to the structure of the whole novel to be abandoned:

> the frustration of Stacey in trying to communicate with Mac and her ultimate realization of his bravery and his terrible hangups in having to deal with his problems totally alone; the relationship between generations—Stacey and Mac in relation to their children, as parents, and to their own parents as children; the sense of anguish and fear which Stacey feels in bringing up her kids in a world on fire; and also the question of a middle-aged woman having to accept middle age and learn how to cope with the essential fact of life, which is that the process of life is irreversible. (p. 126)

Stacey's resentment yet love for her children are seen in various incidents before this shift to psychological membership of her identity occurs. Suggesting

this are such statements as, "I was myself before any of you were born" (p. 119), and "I'm not a good mother. I'm not a good wife. I don't want to be. I'm Stacey Cameron and I still love to dance" (p. 118). Stacey's reliance on her double gin and tonics, especially before she accidentally burns herself on the element of the stove, reveals her dissatisfaction with her life and identity: "Any normal person can cope okay, calmly, soberly. And if you can't kid, then there's something wrong with you. No there isn't. Everything is okay" (p. 122). After she has seared her flesh on the element, the practical, realistic Stacey calmly puts baking soda and a bandage on her burn.

> I'm not sure I really want to go on living at all, I can't cope. I do cope. Not well, though. Jesus I get tired sometimes. Self-pity. . . But sometimes I want to abdicate, only that. Quit. Can't. (p. 125)

Immediately before Stacey meets Luke, she is still mentally struggling with her identity as wife and mother, still questioning who her inner voice, her shadow, that won't be switched off until she dies, really is. She laments the fact that she has no time to herself, then reprimands herself for this thought: "What would you do if you weren't on duty, bitch? Contemplate? Write poetry? . . . I would sort out and understand my life" (p. 153). She daydreams that her professional identity is that of a teacher in the unspoiled Cariboo country, reminds herself she cannot add two plus two and concludes she is tired of trying to cope, because she doesn't "want to be a good wife and mother" (p. 155).

Luke is one catalyst, a clarifying element associated with the ocean, where he finds the fire-dweller Stacey, who begins Stacey's shift to psychological

membership by not only his affair with her but also his conversation concerning her professional identity. Stacey disagrees when Luke states that mostly it's okay just to *be* and she confesses that "four kids have ruined me. It's not their fault. It would have happened anyway—at least I've got something to show for it" (p. 180). Luke causes Stacey to reflect on her commitment to being a wife and mother as she thinks, "I'd like to start again, everything, all of life, start again with someone like you" (p. 184). However, she contradicts herself when she then worries that her children will be frantic. Her maternal conscience suffers when she returns home to find Katie, who admits that she admires her mother for always knowing what to say, now comforting Jen after a frightening incident with Tess Fogler.

Stacey returns to visit Luke after her argument with Mac over disciplining the boys. He wants no "temperamental display," for crying or emotion is forbidden for Mac and his sons. He shouts that Stacey can "ruin them" for all he cares. This incident reveals how Stacey shuts Mac out from her and her children just as Mac does not communicate with Stacey. At Stacey's next encounter with Luke, Luke invites her to go north with him, verbally isolating her identity crisis: "You want to get away, don't you? I thought that was the whole point with you" (p. 204). However, Stacey concludes that she can't leave her "kids and and . . .", thus realizing she has no real desire to permanently change her professional identity of wife and mother. Luke's recitation of the ladybird poem completes this newfound identity awareness for Stacey:

Ladybird, ladybird,
Fly away home;
Your house is on fire,
Your children are gone.

The fact that Luke is only ten years older than Katie, twenty-four, not twenty-nine, and that Stacey is the same age as his mother also provides some perspective for Stacey in terms of identity.

As discussed previously, after Duncan's near drowning, Stacey's professional identity at the end of the novel has definitely shifted to that of psychological membership on the Jackson model as she promises God, "I'll never want to get away again, I promise" (p. 263). Stacey is grateful to Luke for showing her where she belonged. She is now attracted to her role as Mac's wife and mother of four children, as well as accepted by everyone around her in this role. Stacey's thoughts at the end of the novel display this acceptance and ability to cope with her identity: "Give me another forty years, Lord, and I may mutate into a matriarch" (p. 277).

Christl Verduyn, in Margaret Laurence: An Appreciation (1988), argues that The Fire-Dwellers, rather than being a "somewhat dated 'housewife story'" (p. 128), as the paperback cover precis suggests, actually reflects a number of the predominant themes which have emerged in contemporary feminist writing and criticism: language, body and identity. Verduyn discusses the exploration of language as an exploration of the reality and the fiction of the body and human identity, "since language seems to construct reality and/or fiction . . . not a neutral

process, as modern theorists such as Michel Foucault have shown" (p. 129). In a world shaped and described predominantly by men, women's perspectives remain "largely unarticulated—unspoken, silenced, outside of language" (p. 129). Doubts about language are introduced at the beginning of The Fire-Dwellers with the Ladybird refrain which Stacey thinks of as she tries to teach her two-year-old daughter to speak. These doubts are further developed with the difference between reality as Stacey experiences it and the reality projected to her by media such as television.

While thinking about nursery rhymes at the beginning of the novel, Stacey considers the reflection of her aging, overweight body in a full-length mirror. Verduyn notes that many feminists have posed woman's body at the centre of their investigation of language and representation in the dominant discourse. Roberta Rubenstein (1987) identifies the body not only as the site of experiences of gender, ethnicity and language, but also as an important measure of the boundaries of those experiences. The categories of "inside" and "outside" arise as configurations in these experiences of body and self. Verduyn believes that Laurence deals with this issue directly, as Stacey always questions reality. She states that "what goes on inside isn't ever the same as what goes on outside" (p. 28). Stacey is thus dissatisfied with the image her body projects to the world, as she compares herself constantly to the images of the ideal women she sees reflected around her in magazines, television and in the figure of her neighbor Tess Fogler. Stacey sees her body as a separate, unreal self, a reflection from outside, which somehow

delineates for the world the totality of her self.

The concept of self as a separate, coherent, and centered unit of subjecthood has come under the scrutiny of many feminist scholars. Verduyn quotes Julia Kristeva's deep suspicion about the notion of identity as it is traditionally understood: "What can "identity," even "sexual identity," mean in a new theoretical and scientific space where the very notion of identity is challenged?" (p. 136). Luce Irigaray asserts that theories of the subject have always been appropriated to the masculine. For Irigaray, woman is not only the Other, as Simone de Beauvoir demonstrated, but she is man's Other—his negative or mirror-image. Woman's efforts to center herself as a unique, coherent and separate subject thus become an exercise in frustration, and one which Laurence puts Stacey through constantly in this novel.

Verduyn concludes that Laurence, in the The Fire-Dwellers, suggests that there is a conjunction of language and identity in woman's understanding and expression of self. This idea appears in the work of other contemporary women writers such as Hélène Cixous, who envisioned writing "in the feminine mode" as a way of re-establishing a spontaneous relationship with the female body in a non-sexist society. Thus, Laurence's examination of Stacey's identity provides an intriguing glimpse of female identity.

The complexities of identity formation in the life of Stacey MacAindra appear, more than that of any other of Laurence's protagonists, to be affected equally by all three aspects of identity considered in the life of a Canadian woman.

Although Stacey has long ago moved physically from the propriety and pretense of the town of Manawaka, her restrictive, Scottish ancestry and dysfunctional family, she can no more escape the effects of her familial and cultural identity than can her sister Rachel, who has never changed physical locations. As Stacey's professional identity is that of wife and mother, her sexual identity formation is thus intertwined with and dependent on developments relevant to her professional identity. Laurence's portrait of how a forty-year-old wife and mother achieves psychological membership with various groups in a crisis-plagued, changing, suburban world presents an admirable woman possessing her own female strength and voice, a distinctly different woman from the motherless, non-maternal Hagar and the spinster Rachel.

Chapter 6

Vanessa

Vanessa MacLeod's familial and cultural identity is symbolized by the house in Manawaka that her grandfather, Timothy Connor built, the Brick House. The importance of her attraction to and acceptance by the family group is introduced to the reader in the first line of A Bird in the House: "That house in Manawaka is the one which, more than any other, I carry with me" (p. 1). In "Time and the Narrative Voice," Laurence (1972) herself states that these stories are actually about the generations, "about the pain and bewilderment of one's knowledge of other people, about the reality of other people which is one way of realizing one's own reality" (p. 159). The stories begin and end with references to Timothy Connor, and he, more than any one family member, appears to force Vanessa to conceptualize her position in her family and culture.

A grown-up Vanessa, from the viewpoint of awareness, narrates the stories which reminisce about the events of her childhood in Manawaka. Like a film with double exposure, Vanessa, the adult, a reliable narrator, contemplates the thoughts and emotions of the ten-year-old Vanessa. Vanessa accepts and acknowledges her true familial and cultural identity at the end of the stories, as she considers how she "had feared and fought the old man, yet he proclaimed himself in my veins" (p. 179). Although she attains psychological membership in her family group as other Laurence heroines eventually do, she arrives at this position, on the Jackson model,

in a slightly different way.

As a "professional listener" (p. 8), almost more often a reporter than a participant, the young Vanessa is very attracted to the intricacies of the family unit, listening to her mother and Aunt Edna discuss Grandfather Connor. She begins life as the only child of the extended family. Thus, Vanessa appears to have a natural psychological membership in the family in the first of the collection of stories, "The Sound of the Singing," as she scrutinizes her family relationships. Vanessa is loved by the family, even though her Aunt Edna remarks on Vanessa's unavoidable resemblance to the most objectionable family member, Grandfather Connor, patriarch of the family. Vanessa is therefore both attracted to and accepted by her family.

However, Vanessa, as a child, writes fiction that demonstrates her childhood preoccupation with the exotic and extraordinary which she does not perceive in her real world or family's life at all. She abandons her great work The Pillars of the Nation when she discovers that her own Grandfather Connor was a pioneer. She is frightened by the apparently mystical powers of the family's hired girl, Noreen, and gives up on her father's Metis patient, Piquette, when she does not communicate enough to be a source of esoteric detail for Vanessa's wilderness tales. As Vanessa gains experience as an observer of the human scene, she witnesses her mother's and her aunt's resignation to life, her grandfather's grief over his wife's death and her father's sadness over the losses in his life. As she matures to realize that, with the sadder realities of life, the suffering of which

average people are capable, the ordinary and the dramatic are not mutually exclusive. She eventually concludes, "Whatever God might love in this world, it was certainly not order" (p. 49). The narrative viewpoint of the adult Vanessa reconstructs the pain and fear of the child Vanessa as she confronts and accepts life's disorder while setting down her experiences as stories.

Vanessa's ambivalent feelings—particularly for her grandfather, as suggested by the boughs of the spruce trees in front of the Brick House, which "swept down to the earth like the sternly protective wings of giant hawks" (p. 1)—force her, while she is still very young, into what becomes a rebellious relationship, on the Jackson model, with her family. Her feelings appear to be similar to those of Laurence, as the author, in The Manawaka World of Margaret Laurence (Thomas 1976), confesses she has written these stories in order to come to terms with her "ancestral past" (p. 98), or her own familial and cultural identity. Laurence rebelled against the small prairie town of Scots Presbyterian stock from which she finally realized she had originated, rather than Scotland. Laurence writes that, years after wanting desperately to get out of that town, she "had to come back and examine all those things, examine my own family" (p. 99), which is what the adult Vanessa does through the stories of Vanessa the child.

Thomas (1975) reiterates Vanessa's conflicting feelings, or rebellion, toward her family group as a child when she notes that the language in which Vanessa recollects her paternal grandmother MacLeod's house suggests that Mrs. MacLeod "lives in the world of the past and of her own superficial illusions" (p.

186). Her house is grown over with virginia creeper, with a small tower and a veranda that has wrought-iron scrolls. Vanessa is not attracted to Grandmother MacLeod, who is obsessed by the past, and punishes her family inadvertently by trying to live in a world that no longer exists. "To Set Our House in Order" exemplifies this theme as Mrs. MacLeod describes how her husband never would expect her to "live roughly" (p. 37), even on the prairies, as she was a MacInnes before marriage, an ancient clan who were "the lairds of Morven and the constables of the Castle of Kinlochaline" (p. 38), whose motto was "pleasure arises from work" (p. 39). What Grandmother MacLeod calls the house which never tells lies is oppressive as Vanessa realizes the truth of her father's half-resentful, half-guilty subservience to his mother. When Ewan wearily consents to name his son Roderick, after the dead brother he had accidently shot and partially blinded, Vanessa begins to perceive the psychological damage Grandmother MacLeod does as she glorifies the remote ancestral past at the expense of those living in the present.

Even as a child, Vanessa realizes Grandmother MacLeod's prejudice against Vanessa's maternal Irish lineage, as Aunt Edna comments on the grandmother's belief that the Irish are good for only two things—manual labor and linen-making. Vanessa, an open-minded, curious child, appears to find it difficult to be attracted completely and irrevocably to such a narrow-minded matriarch. When Vanessa thought of Grandfather Connor ever clashing with Grandmother MacLeod, she concluded it "would have been like a brontosaurus running headlong

into a tyrannosaurus" (p. 53). However, Vanessa the child, always accepted completely by all members of the family, is still sufficiently attracted to this diverse familial and cultural unit to warrant marginal group relationship on the Jackson model. She sees herself, like Rachel, as slightly removed from psychological membership, a reluctant observer-member of the family who suffers a decrement in attraction to the family group.

The one person who attracts Vanessa most fully to the family is her Grandmother Connor. Thomas (1969) writes that, as a child, Vanessa "sees her grandparents more clearly and observes them more sharply than she does her own parents" (p. 56). In "The Mask of the Bear," Vanessa is infuriated and rebels emotionally against Grandfather Connor because of his unfair treatment of both Agnes, her grandmother, and Edna, her aunt. Agnes, in her brick house, is inadvertently compared to her caged canary who has finally sung for the first time in weeks. After the grandfather grumbles about how messy and useless "a fool thing like that" is, and Agnes tactfully does not attempt to reply to this complaint, Vanessa feels that her "lungs were in danger of exploding, that the pressure of silence would become too great to be borne" (p. 55). Even though Vanessa is a child, she can appreciate the strength of character that her gentle grandmother, as well as Edna, must possess to endure the constant, derogatory remarks of Grandfather Connor. It is this strong, feminine familial sense of strength and identity that not only attracts Vanessa to the family but also allows her to overcome her natural childish hostility toward anyone usurping familial attention. She can

thus welcome Aunt Edna's boyfriend to the house.

However, Vanessa realizes that her ineptitude in translating the conversation of her Aunt Edna and her grandmother is due to her youth. She admits she "felt chilled by my childhood, unable to touch her because of the freezing burden of my inexperience" (p. 59). The strength of the familial female characters appears to linger in her memory to make a definite impact on Vanessa's own sense of identity development.

The impact of female strength on the family becomes more evident with the death of Vanessa's grandmother, Agnes. This event forces the child, as well as the whole family, to consider more carefully the role of the grandmother in the family and how Agnes' strength of character affected each of them. Vanessa, horrified when her grandfather hugged her and sobbed against the cold skin of her face, could not believe that anyone she loved could die or that Agnes "would never move around this house again, preserving its uncertain peace somehow" (p. 68).

The conversation Vanessa overhears, where Agnes is discussed by her children shortly after her death, attracts Vanessa more fully to the intricacies of the family power structure and forces her to view her grandfather in a new, more sympathetic way. When Terence, the one male viewpoint in the discussion, relates to his sisters that it was too bad Agnes had never told her husband she had considered leaving him after his affair "with some girl in Winnipeg," he makes a significant observation: "It would've been a relief to him, no doubt, to see she wasn't all calm forgiveness" (p. 72). Terence goes on to say that his father must

have realized that while the whole family adored Agnes, he probably considered it just and fair that he was not equally cherished, as he did not deserve this love.

The death of Vanessa's father, Ewan, also forces Vanessa to contemplate familial and cultural identity. As Grandmother MacLeod leaves Manawaka to live with her daughter, the child Vanessa observes: "Her men were gone, her husband and her sons, and a family whose men are gone is no family at all" (p. 94). For the first time, Vanessa feels empathy, or some form of emotional attraction, for this grandmother who leaves everything familiar in her life because of the early death of the son of whom she had only one photograph, the son she always blamed for the death of her other son, Roderick.

As a child, Vanessa perhaps begins to realize the impact of cultural identity formation, her own and that of others, with her exposure to Piquette Tonnerre in "The Loons." Although Vanessa was only eleven, she knew how displaced the Metis were, speaking a language that was neither Cree nor French, belonging neither to the Cree of the Galloping Mountain Reserve nor to the Scots-Irish or Ukrainians of Manawaka. As Grandmother MacLeod explained, the Metis were "neither flesh, fowl, nor good salt herring" (p. 96). Vanessa glimpses the problems Piquette had in nurturing her own identity, cultural or familial, when Piquette spends the summer with Vanessa's family. Vanessa's mother Beth fears that the thirteen-year-old Piquette had nits in her hair. Piquette's own mother had abandoned the family, leaving Piquette to cook for her father, who could not even be trusted with Piquette's health.

Vanessa's cousin Chris is another character struggling with his identity who causes Vanessa to consider her own identity formation. He appears in Vanessa's life intermittently from the time she is age six until age thirteen, in the story "Horses of the Night." Vanessa is sympathetic to Chris' situation, leaving Shallow Creek to live in the Brick House during his high-school years, but is disgusted with Grandfather Connor's verbal treatment of the boy, not realizing, at age six, how magnanimous the grandfather's gesture was to board and educate this relative. Vanessa secretly hoped that Chris would argue or defend himself, or enter into what Jackson defined as a rebellious relationship with Grandfather Connor, as she hoped to do, or did silently, but Chris never did. He gave no sign of feeling anything. Later he escapes.

The familial situation of her cousin Chris is similar to Vanessa's childhood on the Jackson model. Although she is resentful of her grandfather's dominance and negative commentary, she remains positively accepted by and attracted enough to her familial and cultural group to remain an observer of the dramas unfolding in the Brick House and Manawaka. Vanessa, as a child, maintains a marginal group relationship, as defined by Jackson, with her family group. Chris, however, withdraws completely from his family, leaving home, and also withdraws from the beliefs of his culture, slipping into insanity rather than participating in a war in which he does not believe.

Vanessa's adolescence signals a slight change in her ways of perceiving her familial and cultural identity. Although the stories of A Bird in the House are

predominantly from the viewpoint of Vanessa the child, Vanessa the adolescent appears briefly in several instances. On the Jackson model, she moves to a rebellious relationship with her family group.

Vanessa's rebelliousness is anticipated in "Jericho's Brick Battlements" when, at age twelve and a half, she protests to her mother that she does not want to move into the Brick House because of her grandfather. Vanessa is age thirteen in "Horses of the Night," when she visits her cousin Chris at Shallow Creek. Her father had just died and "the whole order of life was torn" (p. 123). She discovers the fabrication Chris has manufactured to improve his unbearable reality, but she still is attracted enough to her own family group not to enter a rebellious relationship, according to the Jackson model. At age fifteen, in "The Loons," rebelliousness is suggested when she admits to Piquette that it was "a sore point" that she thought she was old enough to go to the Saturday-night dances at the Flamingo but that her "mother, however, thought otherwise" (p. 104). She was also fifteen in "The Half-Husky." The story opens with an open act of defiance on Vanessa's part as she is "lying on the roof of the tool-shed, reading," after her mother had told her she was "getting too old to be climbing on roofs" (p. 133). She completes this familial scene by accepting a husky puppy to which her mother and grandfather have both initially objected. By the time Vanessa is seventeen, in the story "A Bird in the House," she admits she has a rebellious relationship with her family with the observation that she was "in love with an airman who did not love me, and desperately anxious to get away from Manawaka and from my

grandfather's house" (p. 94). She was even more frustrated with her family when her grandfather proved correct with his assumption that this man was married.

However, she feels very close to her father, at the end of the short story "A Bird in the House," as she burns the French girl's picture and letter she found hidden at the back of her father's desk. With a maturity beyond her seventeen years, she hoped the girl represented "some momentary and unexpected freedom" to Ewan during the war. Vanessa, very like Ewan looking at his own father's collection of Greek plays, concludes similarly that, "Now that we might have talked together, it was many years too late" (p. 95).

At age eighteen, Vanessa leaves Manawaka for college. Just as Hagar had sold her Limoges china in order to go to Vancouver and perpetuate the kind of Currie life-style she had lived in Manawaka, Beth sells the MacLeod silver and Limoges so her daughter can attend university because Vanessa confesses she was "frantic to get away from Manawaka and from the Brick House" (p. 174). This sale does not affect Vanessa's growing feelings of rebellion toward her grandfather, the surviving patriarch of her family group. By the significant act of selling a symbol of familial and cultural identity so her daughter could achieve freedom, Beth displays maternal, female strength and helps move Vanessa closer, on the Jackson model, to psychological membership with her family.

Vanessa is also at the end of her adolescence, age eighteen, when she returns to Manawaka in "The Loons" after her first year of university. Her developing maturity is suggested in her conversation, or lack of it, with her mother

concerning the death of Piquette, the Metis girl who had spent a summer with them when Vanessa's father had attempted to heal Piquette's tubercular leg. Vanessa appears to realize the impact of cultural identity on life when she returns to Diamond Lake that summer; she finds it re-named Lake Wapakata in an effort to have an Indian name with greater tourist appeal, with a government-built, large pier, but without the loons she had listened to with her father many years ago. She concludes that, as Piquette had "scorned to come along" to listen to the loons, "in some unconscious and totally unrecognized way, Piquette might have been the only one, after all, who had heard the crying of the loons" (p. 108). Vanessa is aware of the tragedy of the death of Piquette's familial and cultural identity in the name of civilization and progress.

Vanessa's adulthood is depicted only briefly at the end of the collection of stories, in "Jericho's Brick Battlements." She is twenty years old and clearly is beginning to attain psychological membership, on the Jackson model, with her familial and cultural group. She realizes this change in herself because of the death of Grandfather Connor. Thomas (1975) explains the change in Vanessa's feelings as she discusses Timothy Connor and his cultural group.

> By his attitudes, Grandfather Connor estranged himself from his children and his grandchild, but his concept of a rigid, authoritarian, patriarchal society was as valid to his generation's vision as it was alien to theirs. And there is, throughout the course of these stories, a cumulative accretion to the character of grandfather; he moves away from Vanessa's childish conception of him as an overbearing, domineering old man to take on a mythic proportion. Finally, in "Jericho's Brick Battlements," the last story, Margaret Laurence intends—and achieves—a real catharsis of pity for the man and

admiration for his type. (p. 107)

As Vanessa views her dead grandfather, she admits: "Perhaps I had really imagined that he was immortal. Perhaps he even was immortal, in ways which it would take me half a lifetime to comprehend" (p. 177). Vanessa is beginning to suspect her own attraction to her familial and cultural group.

Similarly, Beth and Edna have to clarify their own position in the family as they discuss their dead father. The relationship of her mother and aunt to their father is an important influence on Vanessa's person-group relationships.

> "You know something, Beth?" Aunt Edna went on, "I can't believe he's dead. It just doesn't seem possible."
>
> "I know what you mean," my mother said. "Edna—were we always unfair to him?"
>
> My aunt swallowed a mouthful of rye and ginger ale. "Yes, we were," she said. "And he was to us, as well." (p. 177)

The two references to the adult Vanessa at age forty show that Vanessa has attained psychological membership with her familial and cultural group. She admits, after recalling her mother's advice concerning her married boyfriend, that she could never escape her childhood and adolescent history, as "twenty years later it was still with me to some extent, part of the accumulation of happenings which can never entirely be thrown away" (p. 174).

The collection of stories concludes with Vanessa viewing the Brick House, her grandfather's monument. As Vanessa mentally noted what her grandfather's reaction to the condition of the house would be, she admits to herself that she had "feared and fought the old man, yet he proclaimed himself in my veins" (p. 179).

Even though she "had another family and my own elder child was already fourteen," she realizes how much a part of her original family group she was, both attracted to and accepted by them, as she remembers saying things to her children, "the clichés of affection," that her mother "perhaps inherited from her mother," had said to Vanessa: "*It's a poor family can't afford one lady. Many hands make light work. Let not the sun go down upon your wrath*" (p. 178). The novel ends as the forty-year-old Vanessa views the Brick House "only for a moment" (p. 179) and then drives away, secure in the knowledge of who she is.

As a child, Vanessa's ideas of sexual identity, or who she is as a sexual being, are probably formed mainly in reaction to the patriarchal head of her family, her Grandfather Connor. Vanessa is always aware of herself as the young lady of the house, identifying with her mother, Grandmother Connor and Aunt Edna, attracted to stories of affairs of the heart, but never accepted or rejected during childhood as an object of anyone's romantic affection. Many of her childhood ideas of love and sexual identity are formed from conversations she has overheard in her role as a professional listener in the family, or from stories she reads or writes.

In the collection of stories in A Bird in the House, Vanessa is predominantly written about as a child, with some references to her adolescence and a couple of references to adulthood in her forties. Although her sexual identity can be described on the Jackson model as that of psychological membership as an adult, as she is attracted to and accepted by a husband, her sexual identity as a child

and adolescent appears to remain in the preference group relationship. Vanessa is attracted to all things that suggest the sexual identity of a young lady, but she is neither accepted nor rejected consistently as a young lady, except briefly in adolescence.

The grim necessity of financial support in a marriage becomes obvious to Vanessa at a very young age. She was shocked, at age ten, to hear her Grandfather Connor say that her father should stay away from her pregnant mother sexually if he cannot get people to pay their medical bills. She also learned that Grandmother Connor rejected Uncle Dan, in order to marry the more financially secure brother Timothy. Vanessa is surprised that Edna counts this marital choice of Timothy Connor as a blessing, even though Grandfather Connor's rude temperament has cost Edna five boyfriends. Vanessa later experiences this interference with her life and her choices influenced by her adolescent sexual identity when Grandfather Connor comments on her boyfriend.

Vanessa's childhood idea of sexual identity and love themes is derived from material from the Bible, especially The Song of Solomon, which provides models for the exotic heroines of her own stories. The young Vanessa fantasizes about love after reading these Biblical passages:

> *Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, for thy love is better than wine,* or
>
> *By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth; I sought him but I found him not.* (p. 53)

Although she is attracted to her imaginative fantasies of what love and love objects

are, she is sickened by her eavesdropping on Aunt Edna's real life drama with Jimmy Lorimer when she hears Edna cry. Vanessa abandons her fiction, The Silver Sphinx, when she realizes the torment of love and the potential pain of having a sexual identity in the real world. This idea is reinforced for Vanessa after Grandmother Connor's funeral when she hears the adults discuss Grandfather Connor's affair with another woman in Winnipeg and Uncle Terence's sympathy for Grandfather Connor, having to have a sexual relationship with "an angel," as everyone labelled Agnes. This realism in regard to sexual identity is reiterated when Beth assures Ewan that Noreen, the hired girl, will not marry because "Who's she going to meet who could afford to marry?" (p. 81). Vanessa's feelings of disenchantment with fictitious sexual identity are reflected in her Quebec tale of the early fur trade, as her heroine does not marry or escape her confining situation. The statement, "the only thing that would ever happen to her was that she would get older" (p. 153), is a sobering conclusion for a twelve-and-a-half-year-old.

Ironically, the one situation in Vanessa's life where she could have been attracted to and accepted by a male object of her affection passes without incident. At age thirteen, she camps outdoors with her cousin Chris, age twenty-one, and comments on the situation by saying that she felt a sense of unfamiliarity at being only three feet away from him, "a self-consciousness" that she would not have felt even the year before. She does not think that Chris, a kindred spirit, felt this "sexual strangeness" (p. 127). As Vanessa passes from childhood to adolescence,

her sexual identity thus remains in the preference group relationship on the Jackson model, attracted to but neither accepted nor rejected as a young woman by Chris, the male object of her affection at age thirteen.

The few references to Vanessa in adolescence verify this depiction of her sexual identity. At age fourteen, Vanessa watched Aunt Edna marry Wes and wondered how long she would have to wait to find someone of her own. At age fifteen Vanessa argues with her mother that she is old enough to attend the Saturday night dances, a clear indication of her attraction to the opposite sex. She is neither accepted nor rejected by any of the airmen from the RCAF training camp at South Wachakwa until she meets Michael when she is seventeen years old, even though she has decided early that she must do the best she can with what she has. Vanessa is mortified when Grandfather Connor proves correct in his assessment of Michael as a married man. Vanessa believed that she had been positively accepted by Michael, as he had been by her. She learns later with sadness that she never really had been accepted by him, because he was married. However, it was with Michael that she fantasized about a mature sexual relationship, despising herself because she could not overcome her fear of sexual experience. At age eighteen, Vanessa wonders about the problems sexual identity have caused Piquette when she hears of Piquette's tragic death.

The collection of stories ends with Vanessa's visit to Manawaka as a happily married woman in her forties, mother to her own family now, with her elder child already fourteen years old. On the Jackson model, her sexual identity

would be described as that of psychological membership, as she is both positively attracted to and positively accepted by her husband. As she examines the Brick House, Grandfather Connor's monument, Vanessa appears to attribute her identity formation to her family.

The professional identity of Vanessa MacLeod, the heroine of A Bird in the House, can be described on the Jackson model as being that of a preference group relationship. Vanessa is positively attracted to being a writer, but, in the stories, is neither accepted nor rejected as an author by the world around her. Vanessa's story deals mainly with her childhood years. There are some references to her adolescence and only a brief passage depicting her return to Manawaka as an adult of age forty. Her professional identity remains consistent throughout her life.

As a child, Vanessa is highly attracted to reading and writing and exhibits these characteristics in several instances. In "The Sound of the Singing," Vanessa, at the age of ten, reveals that she had already read large portions of the Bible by herself because she was "constantly hard-up for reading material" (p. 4). Instead of listening in Sunday school, she entertains herself by composing stories of "spectacular heroism" in which she is the central character. She already displays one of the traits of a potential author; she is a professional listener, having "long ago discovered it was folly" (p. 8) to try to conceal herself. As well as being a thoughtful observer of human nature, Vanessa has a precocious vocabulary for a child of ten, demonstrated when she refers to a "Mitigated Baptist." She dramatizes and fabricates stories while performing simple domestic tasks such as

calling her grandfather to dinner.

Vanessa spends her leisure hours writing poetry and two scribblers of a story called "The Pillars of the Nation." Her story of pioneers is promptly abandoned when she learns that her grandfather is one. Unlike Morag, who has no one to discuss her childhood writing with, Vanessa is encouraged to write by her Aunt Edna, who is impressed by her diligence. While Edna does not perceive Vanessa to be a future great literary figure, she does not show rejection or negative acceptance, on the Jackson model, implying that Vanessa could never attain the professional identity of a writer. Thus, Vanessa's professional identity is established in the preference group relationship.

Vanessa's family, while never pushing her to become a writer, provides surroundings conducive to promoting literary tastes. Vanessa could be attracted to writing initially because of this stimulating environment. Her Grandfather MacLeod had read Greek plays in the original Greek, although there was no one else in the prairie town with whom he could discuss these tragedies. Her father's books of adventure and far-away places impressed her. Her Grandmother MacLeod certainly does not accept Vanessa as a future author because she cannot understand why Vanessa is even looking at his books. Grandmother MacLeod was only concerned that the books be put back in order, because order was what God loved, according to her. Vanessa's innate humor, and intelligence are shown on her tenth birthday when, instead of receiving a brooch from Grandmother MacLeod as she had hoped, she got <u>The Clans and Tartans of Scotland</u>. She

promptly imagined her friends gamely living their harsh family slogans.

Vanessa's attraction to writing is shown in the fact that she is able to express her feelings so well. One example of her clear articulation is her expression of how she felt about her newborn brother, a mixture of "tenderness and such resentment" (p. 45). Her father makes a literary reference to the newborn's name, chosen at his mother's request, remarking that the name suggests a character from Sir Walter Scott. This prompts Vanessa to display great maturity, and early awareness of professional identity, in wondering whether her father had abandoned his original choice of profession because of guilt over his brother's death.

Vanessa's poetic imagination and gift for metaphor are evident in several stories. At age six she shows great imagination in her mental depiction of the tales told by her cousin Chris about Shallow Creek and his horses. At age nine, as Chris leaves the Brick House, he asks Vanessa if she has ever considered what it would be like to be a traveller. Showing a confidence that she will have the kind of future that includes travel, Vanessa thinks of taking an elephant over the Alps and "swimming illicitly in the Taj Mahal lily pool by moonlight" (p. 118). At age ten and a half, Vanessa, in her head, calls Grandfather Connor "The Great Bear," not only because of his bear coat and his surliness, but also because of his habit of stalking around the house on Sunday, his only enforced day of rest. Vanessa imagines Grandfather Connor and Grandmother MacLeod as a "brontosaurus running headlong into a tyrannosaurus" (p. 53). At age eleven, Vanessa sees

Piquette through the romantic, literary imagination of Pauline Johnson, and understands that both Piquette and the loons are representatives of endangered species. Vanessa's mental construction of heaven and hell, taken from the stories of the hired girl Noreen, are worthy of an artist. At age twelve and a half, Vanessa writes a story about Quebec and the early fur trade.

Vanessa realizes at a very young age that life contains every exotic thing she looked for in fiction. At age ten and a half, in "The Mask of the Bear," she laments that "death and love seemed regrettably far from Manawaka" (p. 54). She tore up her story when she overheard the true-life love drama of her Aunt Edna. Her grandmother died soon after. Vanessa had the writer's instinct of acknowledging that her art reflects life for both elements of what she had thought only occurred in fiction were present in fact in her own house.

As a child, Vanessa possesses a maturity beyond her years. Perhaps this quality, as well as environmental acceptance that Vanessa would someday "get out" of Manawaka, as her mother hoped, enabled Vanessa to be ambitious for a professional identity and attracted to a career. When Chris returns during Vanessa's eleventh year, Vanessa knows enough about the world to realize Chris will not make a career of selling vacuum cleaners. At age thirteen, Vanessa is mature enough that her twenty-one year old cousin confides in her. Perhaps the hopeless career plans of her poverty-stricken cousin give Vanessa an incentive to work for her own career. She comprehends later how little she really understood of what Chris was trying to tell her and how desperate he must have been to be able to

talk only to her.

The references to Vanessa's adolescent years still support the depiction of her professional identity as preference group relationship on the Jackson model. Vanessa remains attracted to the writing profession, and is neither accepted nor rejected as an author by the world.

Vanessa continues to show her strong attraction to the writing profession by the way she expresses herself concerning her reality or the world around her. At age fourteen, she sees Wes Grigg, Aunt Edna's boyfriend, as a literary figure, a character from an Oz book. At age fifteen, in "The Half-Husky," Vanessa dramatizes everything that happens to her and expresses herself with literary references. One example is the imaginary, suspense-filled plot structure she fabricates concerning the demise of Harvey, the paperboy. When she discovers Harvey has stolen the MacLeod telescope, she expresses her joy at finally being able to blame something on Harvey by "quoting some embattled line from Holy Writ" (p. 142).

Not only Vanessa's literary references have matured in adolescence, showing her greater attraction to writing, but also her perceptions of reality. At age fifteen, she sees the tragedy of Piquette, "terrifying hope" on her "defiant face," as she brags that she is marrying an "English fella." Vanessa has the maturity to think "how great her need must have been, that she had been forced to seek the very things she so bitterly rejected" (p. 105). At age seventeen, Vanessa burns the hidden picture of her dead father's French lady friend, wisely knowing the anguish

it would cause her grieving mother. Vanessa is also described at age seventeen attempting to relate her maturing perceptions of reality to literature by discussing writing and poetry with her airman boyfriend.

Vanessa's late adolescent years reveal a highly motivated student "frantic to get away from Manawaka and the Brick House" by attending university and thus establishing her independence and her own professional identity. At age eighteen, Vanessa's attraction to writing and the poetic image is shown when she remembers Piquette with "a kind of silence around the image in my mind of the fire and the snow" (p. 107).

Vanessa is still neither accepted nor rejected as an author, but her family is supportive of her quest for a career. Her grandfather, who had never believed in education for women, even though Vanessa's mother had the highest provincial exam results, sold his bonds to finance Vanessa's education. Vanessa's mother bought Vanessa a chance at having a professional identity by selling a symbol of familial and cultural identity, the MacLeod Limoges china, remnants of the time that the family had superior wealth to that of others.

The final references to Vanessa as an adult remain the same on the Jackson model as those of her childhood and adolescence, a preference group relationship, as nothing indicates any change. The reader is never really told of Vanessa's status or non-status as a professional writer. Vanessa appears secure in her own identity. She states that there is nothing left for her in Manawaka now. At age twenty, she has matured enough by the time Grandfather Connor died to realize that, to him, his

MacLaughlin-Buick must have been a symbol of his financial success, or the pinnacle of his professional identity. At age forty, Vanessa acknowledges that the monument to Grandfather Connor was actually the Brick House and herself, as "he proclaimed himself in my veins" (p. 179). The reader assumes that Vanessa would have been sufficiently attracted to her chosen profession to have worked as diligently as Grandfather Connor would have expected in order to be accepted by the world as a success. As no evidence is given in the stories, Vanessa's professional identity will have to remain in the preference group relationship as an adult.

Vanessa's identity formation, as depicted in the stories of A Bird in the House, is most fully explored in regard to her familial and cultural background. Her professional identity as a writer is an extension of this background. Perhaps because the stories deal mainly with Vanessa as a child, not as an adult, her sexual identity is not revealed to the same extent as that of Hagar, Rachel and Stacey. Vanessa's identity formation serves as a transition from the previously mentioned protagonists to Laurence's final heroine in the Manawaka cycle, Morag the artist and mother. While her problems achieving familial and cultural psychological membership are reminiscent of those of Hagar, Rachel and Stacey in Manawaka, Vanessa foreshadows Morag, Laurence's last depiction of a strong, female author-artist who clearly articulates the problems of female identity.

Chapter 7

Morag

As an adopted child, Morag Gunn, the protagonist of The Diviners, is, of all Laurence's heroines, the one who is most concerned with her true familial and cultural identity. Growing up in the home of Christie and Prin Logan, Morag must rely on Christie's tales and her "memorybank movies" to ascertain any sense of who she really is. As Christie's Scottish background was the same as that of her biological parents, Morag utilized his legends in the complex task of developing her identity based on Christie's fiction.

Morag's first five years of childhood, spent with her biological parents, are reconstructed as she self-consciously interprets her own memories with the help of flashback narratives. These narratives are labelled either "Snapshot," or "Memorybank Movie," which is a scene with action and dialogue like a film script. On the Jackson model, Morag would probably place herself in psychological membership with her natural parents, Colin and Louisa Gunn, as she fantasizes that Colin always smells good and has time for her, unlike Christie, and that Louisa does not whine like Prin. However, she admits her memories could be invented, as they most definitely are: "All this is crazy, of course, and quite untrue. Or maybe true and maybe not. I am remembering myself composing this interpretation, in Christie and Prin's house" (p. 8). Morag is here, as well as elsewhere in the novel, self-consciously constructing her identity, as everyone eventually does and must.

Around the time of her mother's illness, five-year-old Morag begins to imagine a complete spruce-house family that she remembers more than she does her parents. After examining a snapshot of herself at age four, she realizes how much it bothers her that she cannot really remember her parents' faces at all and wonders why it did not bother her for years:

> Why should it grieve me now? Why do I want them back? What could my mother and I say to one another? I'm more than ten years older now than she was when she died—and she would seem so young to me, so inexperienced. (p. 11)

History and legend merge in Morag's pictures of herself as a small child with her parents. Morag puts the pictures into chronological order "as though there were really any chronological order, or any order at all, if it came to that. She was not certain whether the people in the snapshots were legends she had once dreamed only, or were as real as anyone she now knew" (p. 6). Morley (1981) argues that the creative vision that underlies The Diviners is located in Laurence's understanding of the way in which humans experience time and life itself, "an understanding of time as a living river incarnate in human generations, a river which flows two ways" (p. 121). Significantly, Morag's first snapshot contains a reference to herself "concealed in her mother's flesh . . . a little fish, connected unthinkingly with life, held to existence by a single thread" (p. 7). Conversely, Morag, at the end of part one, realizes that she had been angry, at age eight or ten, with her parents for leaving her, and that perhaps she only wants their forgiveness for having forgotten them, remembering their deaths but not their lives. Despite

having forgotten them, however, she realizes that "yet they're inside me, flowing unknown in my blood and moving unrecognized in my skull" (p. 19).

Morag's childhood familial and cultural identity are introduced in part one, as Morley (1981) succinctly summarizes her life as the novel begins.

> Despite its brevity, Part 1 establishes the middle-aged Morag, loving, anxious, ironic, defiant, "born bloody-minded"; the succeeding generation's rebellion; the preceding generation's battle with poverty, drought, and disease; their ancestors' trials in the Scottish Highlands; and the river metaphor, identified with the generations, genes, instinct, blood, memory, cultural values, and individual experience. (p. 122)

However, Morag experiences blatant discrimination after age five as the adopted child of a couple scorned by the establishment, the town's garbage collector and his obese wife. They live on the Scots-English equivalent of the wrong side of the tracks. Morag hates the Logans for exposing her to pain, and hates herself for her failure to respond adequately to their goodness. The many examples of cultural discrimination that Morag endures cause her to move from psychological membership with her biological parents, on the Jackson model, to that of a marginal group relationship with her adopted parents. With the Logans, Morag is totally accepted by Christie and Prin as their adopted daughter. They freely give and share with her everything they have, but Morag cannot bring herself to be attracted to them, loathing Prin's simplicity and obesity and Christie's odious occupation and address.

Morag acquires the cultural identity of Prin and Christie in the community, and discovers the hypocrisy of Manawaka very early in her childhood, even though

she has no accessible memories for a year after she was adopted, from age five to six. Attempts to humiliate Morag, such as the cruel rhymes of the children or the remarks of Mrs. Cameron and Mrs. McVitie regarding "those" people who spend their money on jelly doughnuts, dress Morag in gangling dresses and never cut her hair, only encourage Morag's inner toughness and resolve to create a new identity for herself.

The reactions of Prin and Christie to Morag's childhood encounters with Manawaka hypocrisy are a significant factor in Morag's final, adult acceptance of her adopted parents. The daughter of a remittance man, an outcast of English society, Prin, who had to endure the snide remarks of Manawaka that marrying Christie was a good thing, as at least they did not spoil two families, comforted the sobbing seven-year-old Morag by apologizing for not knowing how to be any different or to look after Morag any better. She also wished the townspeople had made their comments to her and not to Morag. Instead of appreciating Prin's honesty, Morag views her as a poor example of female strength or womanhood. Christy, grimacing clown, fool, hero and religious prophet, despising Manawaka hypocrisy, consoles Morag by saying, "By their garbage shall ye know them" (p. 39). Manawaka children are ignorantly reflecting what is said by their parents, whose hidden trash composed of contraceptives, rye and pill bottles and aborted babies reveals their own imperfections. Christy assures her that people of any class are "only muck" and that his ancestors, his ancient kin and clan, are as good as theirs, as he was born a Highlander with the motto, "This is the Valour of my

Ancestors," the war cry The Ridge of Tears and the crest badge of the Logans, a passion nail piercing a human heart. Christie, whose name means little Christ, blends romance and legend, history and myth, while, as Morley (1981) points out, his compassion is a life-giving force:

> The loving simpleton, or foolish sage, points to the limitations of reason and to a supra-rational vision. The fool figure, in White and in Russian novelists such as Dostoyevsky, is generally a mystic, whose simplicity and honesty is interpreted by conventional society as stupidity, even madness. (p. 127)

Because of her adopted parents, Morag realizes that "nice" people in Manawaka pretend that cruelty, such as Gus Winkler's sadistic beating of his young son Vernon, class discrimination, and the dump itself do not exist. As Manawaka's cemetery adjoins the dump, Morag notes that the "dead stuff" is together on the same hill, except that the cemetery is decent and respectable. Morley observes that Christie has few delusions about human nature: "His gospel of muck is not materialism, but resembles Christ's teaching that we are defiled by inner, not outer filth" (p. 126). Thus, Christie wanted to bury Prin himself in the Nuisance Grounds; later, Morag thinks Christie should be buried there. Morley draws an implicit parallel "between the dump, with its euphemistic name, and the subconscious, seen by Freud as a dump of repressed childhood memories" (p. 126). Certainly, Morag had a realistic childhood education living with Prin, Christie, Manawaka and the Nuisance Grounds.

Morag's adolescence is marred by more discrimination and embarrassment over Prin and Christie. Although accepted as fully by the Logans as she was

during childhood, despite her arguments with Christie, she loses even more attraction to them and enters, on the Jackson model, a rebellious relationship. Her exposure to Manawaka society forces her to become even more determined to finish school and to leave the town as soon as possible. At age twelve, Morag must endure conversation overheard in the teachers' room, labelling her moody, boisterous and sullen, with the probable cause given as being that Morag lives in the home "of old Christie and that half-witted wife of his" (p. 63). Morag sees herself in grade six as the town sees her—a tough, poorly-dressed near-adolescent who is, in social status, only above the beaten, abused, "gutless" Eva Winkler, whom she loves and defends, and Piquette Tonnerre, who belongs to a "dirty and unmentionable" cultural background that people in Manawaka talk about but not to. Morag realizes the plight of the Metis in Canada when the class sings "The Maple Leaf Forever." At the line, "The Thistle Shamrock Rose entwine," which represent the Scottish, Irish and English cultural groups, Skinner Tonnerre, a representative of Canada's first people, stops singing. Morag thinks, "He comes from nowhere. He isn't anybody" (p. 70).

Morley (p. 128) writes that Morag's personal growth illustrates Laurence's idea of the need to come to terms with one's ancestors, to understand their experience in order to be released from its bondage:

> Christie introduces Morag to the Ballads of Ossian the Gaelic, as an antidote to the cultural imperialism of Wordsworth's "Daffodils." Ossian stimulates Morag so that she is able to imagine Piper Gunn's woman building a chariot with materials and motifs drawn from the Canadian prairies: her imagination has been repatriated.

> Thomas notes that folk literature becomes myth when it is deeply accepted by an individual as personally relevant. It then assumes power to shape that individual's identity. (p. 129)

Morag's familial and cultural identity has been clearly shaped by Christie's "First Tale of Piper Gunn," as she had gone to sleep, at age nine, comforted by a bravery she now felt as her own. She laughed at fear, thinking "Forests cannot hurt me because I have the power and the second sight and the good eye and the strength of conviction" (p. 52). With his first tale of her ancestors, Christie has created this inner strength and identity for the orphan Morag, which remained with her for the rest of her life:

> 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. That was an old name, and that was the name Piper Gunn's woman went by, and fine long black hair she had . . . . (p. 51)

Thomas' belief in the power of oral folk literature to become myth and to shape identity when it is deeply accepted by an individual is demonstrated when Morag meets Skinner in the Nuisance Grounds and they exchange family myths in an argument over which family arrived first in Manawaka. The lack of attraction that Morag feels for Christie is apparent as she denies that he is her father.

> "Christie's not my old man! My dad is dead."
> "Sure, I know. So he's yer ol' man now, ain't he? What the diff?"
> "Plenty. Plenty difference, So there." (p. 72)

When he offers "to tell the garbage . . . like telling fortunes," Morag thinks she hates Christie, and hopes he will fall down immediately with a heart attack, only

grateful that it is Skinner who is listening and not an élite member of Manawaka society such as Stacey Cameron. However, although she does not fully value Christie's gift of a knife or his story of how Colin Gunn saved him, she still listens to Christie. For example, after his "Tale of Piper Gunn and the Long March," she asks him if the halfbreeds and Indians who had been slain by the dozen were bad. Christie's wise reply was indicative of the events of the history of Canada: "They weren't bad. They were—just there" (p. 86).

At age fourteen, Morag realizes that no one will speak to Prin or Morag after church. Prin must slip into church shortly before the service so no one will see how she has "let herself go." Because of the obvious hypocrisy and piety of these Christians, Morag decides not to attend church any more. Even after caring enough about Prin to buy her a new coat, to style her hair, and to admit she loves Prin, Morag can no longer bear to be seen with her in public.

She still has to endure the criticism of the town. Mrs. Cameron compliments her on how she has "smartened" herself up since working in Simlow's Ladies' Wear. Morag's determined spirit of rebelliousness, or refusal to become what the town expects her to become, is shown to be strengthened: she is now horrified to speak to Eva Winkler, ashamed that she is only too glad they no longer walk to school together. "Eva seems like she is beaten by life already. Morag is not—repeat not—going to be beaten by life. But cannot bear to look at Eva very often" (p. 113). Morag realizes how emotionally torn she is when she sits in the Lobadiak's car on Main Street, Saturday night, watching Christie in his

doormat act with Mr. MacVitie. She "stifles a laugh. But wants to cry. Wants to go out and be there with Christie. Also, wants Christie not to be there" (p 119). Her only conclusion is to work hard at her education, get out of Manawaka and never come back. Morag's self-image and consequently her identity change as a result of this exclusion or self-exclusion from the town.

When Morag is in grade nine at Manawaka Collegiate, her rebelliousness is becoming more apparent. She is blatantly rude to Christie as he attempts to console her after she gets glasses. Prin has the tact to caution him to leave Morag alone. After he queries why he should know better, as he is only the Scavenger, Morag coldly replies, "That's exactly all you are" (p. 123). She instantly regrets it, thinks "How to make the words unspoken?", but does not back down. Morag defiantly smokes with Skinner when she accidently meets him in the valley by the swinging bridge, but refuses sex. She begs Christie for the comfort of one of his stories when she returns home. He is surprised, as "she does not talk to him much these days" (p. 129).

By grade eleven, Morag's relationship with Prin and Christie is one of distance. Prin barely speaks, and Morag complains to Skinner, who appreciates Christie as "quite a guy," that Christie has never tried to do anything. After Eva Winkler's self-induced clothes-hanger abortion, Morag vows that nothing is ever going to endanger her chances of getting out of Manawaka—"And on her own terms, not the town's" (p. 153). Morag has not yet learned the lesson that her boss, Lachlan MacLachlan, editor of the *Manawaka Banner*, attempts to teach her.

> Those people know things it will take you the better part of your lifetime to learn, if ever. They are not very verbal people, but if you ever in your life presume to look down on them because you have the knack of words, and they do not, then you do so at your eternal risk and peril. (p. 155)

Morag has not learned this, as, when Christie rants his tales, Morag thinks "fraud," and does not care if the Gunns have no crest, motto or war cry, because she considers it all a "load of old manure" (p. 162).

When she leaves Prin and Christie in order to attend university, she shows her lack of attraction to them. As she kisses Prin good-bye, she is "overwhelmed with past love and present repulsion" (p. 173). Perhaps Morag suffers from a tension between attraction and repulsion or between love and guilt feelings for being so repulsed. She prays no one will see her driven to the train in Christie's garbage truck. However, once she is safely in the washroom, she cries, as she had shortly before when she viewed the smoking ruins of the burned Metis shack where Piquette and her two small children died. She cried "as though pain were the only condition of human life" (p. 161). Thomas (1975) sees this event, Morag's viewing of the burned bodies, as Morag's passage from innocence to experience. The Metis deaths create in Morag a temporary mood of cynicism. She leaves Manawaka, Christie, Prin and her past behind, still ignorant of the fact that she carries them inescapably within her.

The adult Morag, age twenty, has so completely attempted to deny her past that when her university professor, Brooke Skelton, who later becomes her husband, asks her where she is from, she answers "nowhere, really." She cannot

speak Christie or Prin's name, as she tells him, "I don't have any family, actually . . . . I was brought up by some friends, well, acquaintances of my parents" (p. 193). After explaining that her parents had died when she was very young, she assures him that she was too young to be affected much. However, Morag has previously contradicted herself by crying, at the home of her friend Ella, at the warmth of Mrs. Gerson and her daughters, as she admits to herself, for the first time in her life, that she never knew "she has missed her mother as much as her father, for most of her life" (p. 185). She is also ashamed of herself for not wanting to see Prin. Her feeling that she has no past is contradicted again after her first sexual experience with Brooke, as she imagines herself sent home in disgrace when Brooke discovers she is not a virgin. Prin would not understand what was going on. Christie would laugh his fool head off. For one unbelievable and appalling second, Morag is suddenly homesick for Manawaka.

When Morag visits the dying Prin, after requesting Christie's permission to marry and questioning whether or not she had been legally adopted by him, not knowing yet it is irrelevant, she forgets she cannot fib to him by pretending it would be such a small wedding that he need not bother attending. He assures her she is lucky to have "got away from this dump," but "It'll all go along with you, too. That goes without saying" (p. 207). Morag's rebelliousness is apparent as she questions this:

> "You mean—everything will go along with me?"
> "No less than that, ever," Christie says.
> "It won't, though," Morag says, and hears the stubbornness in her

own voice. (p. 207)

He then exhorts her to go, "don't look back," and never use the "useless christly awful word" *sorry* again. The adult Morag proves Christie correct in the assumption that she will never forget her Manawaka childhood, because she desperately wishes she could talk to Christie some seven years after his death and finds herself echoing Christie, as she quotes to her daughter his advice concerning the word *sorry*.

Part three, Halls of Sion, shows a parallel movement between the life of Morag, from age twenty to thirty, and that of her daughter Pique. By the end of part three, Morag has broken her relationship with Brooke, Pique has broken her relationship with Gord, and both have headed west to Vancouver. The past and present strands for mother and daughter interweave as the adult Morag comes closer to acknowledging her true familial and cultural identity by means of her memorybank movies.

By the time Prin dies, Morag realizes that she has been wrong, not in wanting to escape Manawaka, but in "the turning away, turning her back on the both of them" (p. 248). She is attempting to assume a different identity as the compliant wife of an English professor, and she finally perceives that "she hates it all, this external self who is at such variance with whatever or whoever remains inside the glossy painted shell. If anything remains. Her remains" (p. 248). She has moved far enough toward psychological membership, on the Jackson model, that she wishes for Christie's "lost wilderness," his ranting and raving, as it would

no longer embarrass her. After Eva remarks to Morag that Prin had always been good to her, Morag realizes that, although Prin had given Eva the occasional jelly doughnut, she had given Morag her only home. As she sings of Jerusalem the golden, and the Halls of Sion, Prin's favorite hymn chosen for her funeral, Morag comes to the ultimate conclusion that something is very wrong in her own life. She has become a trapped princess in an elegant apartment tower in Toronto who does not know the sound of her "own voice" or her true self. When Brooke orders her to merely put her past and the town out of her mind, Morag replies that she "never forgot any of it. It was always there" (p. 257).

Morley (1981) writes that adultery with Jules, after Brooke has insulted him, is a joining that is also a severing of the chains which have separated her from part of herself. Morag has not been allowed to develop her own identity, as much a travesty as the town's refusal to allow Jules to bury Lazarus beside the shack or in the Catholic graveyard: "The Metis, once lord of the prairies. Now refused burial space in their own land" (p. 268). What an inglorious ending for the descendant of the heroes of Jules Tonnerre's tales and songs, Grandfather Jules and Chevalier Tonnerre.

The title of Part Four of the novel, "Rites of Passage," describing the next twenty years of Morag's life, including the birth and growth of her daughter, is a reference to an anthropological term usually applied to ceremonies where an adolescent, after undergoing rigorous rituals, is accepted as an adult member of the tribe. Morag grows in maturity, self-acceptance and self-awareness after

experiencing her own "rites of passage."

Morag's adulthood thus clearly begins with a rebellious relationship with her family and culture. The adult Morag has found that it is a popular misconception that we can't change the past—everyone is constantly changing their own past, recalling it, revising it. By the time Christie dies, Morag has moved from a rebellious relationship, on the Jackson model, to that of psychological membership, realizing "you have to go home again in some way or other" (p. 302), and, although she wouldn't go back to Manawaka, "yet the town inhabits her, as once she inhabited it" (p. 227).

Morag's journey to psychological membership is complete when she realizes she does not have to travel to Sutherland, Scotland, to find her identity. She explains this to McRaith:

> "I thought I would have to go. But I guess I don't after all . . . . It has to do with Christie. The myths are my reality . . . .
> I always thought it was the land of my ancestors, but it is not."
> "What is, then?"
> "Christie's real country. Where I was born." (p. 391)

Two months later, receiving the cable that Christie is ill, Morag informs Pique that they are going, significantly, home. When she reaches the bedside of the partially paralyzed Christie, she has the maturity to acknowledge his role in her life:

> "Christie—I used to fight a lot with you, Christie, but you've been my father to me . . . ."
> "Well—I'm blessed." Christie Logan says.

Morag has finally acknowledged her true familial and cultural identity.

In a similar manner, Pique has embarked on her own identity quest, at one

time asking Morag why she had her, selfishly, not considering her father or the baby. Morley (1981) argues that Pique is drawn in two directions, like the river. She inherits two mythologies. Her ancestors, represented by Jules' songs, and by Christie's tales as retold by Morag, contain her future and her past. In Ontario, she experiences discrimination for having Indian blood, and for having a mother who is not conventional socially. "Rites of Passage" ends significantly with Morag receiving the Currie plaid pin, traded by John Shipley to Lazarus for his knife. Morag gives Jules Lazarus' knife, the long-ago gift from Christie, which she had not appreciated. Pique inherits her father's songs, and after his death, his knife. In Part Five of The Diviners, she finds her own voice and sings for Morag, for the first time, a song which she has composed: "There's a valley holds my name. . . ." Pique has begun her own quest for her familial and cultural identity. Morag thinks about Pique's impending quest or journey, and concludes that, "although at this point it might feel to her unique" (p. 441), it was not unique. Morag's concluding thought in The Diviners, while observing the river that seemed to be flowing both ways, was "Look ahead into the past, and back into the future, until the silence" (p. 453), an appropriate comment on the familial and cultural identity search of both mother and daughter.

Morag's sexual identity develops normally over the years in The Diviners. Although to the reader Morag's childhood is not that enlightening in terms of her sexual maturation, her adolescence and adulthood contain so many explicit references to Morag's sexuality that this aspect of her identity is not difficult to

ascertain. Instead of a person-group relationship on the Jackson model, Morag's sexual identity will be explored in relation to the male object of her affection, or to the lack of one, although it is understood that everyone has a sexual identity as a child.

Morley (1981) observes that Morag's sexuality is threatening as she flouts social conventions and structures, from fashion to marriage and formal religious affiliation. Her sexuality "offends ancient, firmly entrenched stereotypes of women as much less highly sexed than men" (p. 132). The Huron County School Board in southwestern Ontario attempted to ban The Diviners in 1978 because of Morag's sexuality and language. Morley also notes that a 1978 Toronto conference concerned with the politics of sexuality heard a statement from sociologist John Alan Lee which is particularly relevant to The Diviners:

> Society's attitude toward sex is a real touchstone. There are two taboos rarely open to discussion or challenge: sex and power. It's only in the last ten years we realized that they are related. (p. 131)

The development of Morag's sexual identity is symptomatic of her inner growth, which is partly a personal adaptation, a coming to terms with the growth of her own strength and power.

Morag learns early in her adolescence that weakness attracts bullies. The example of Eva Winkler, beaten by her father and sterilized by a self-induced coat-hanger abortion, illustrates clearly to Morag the humiliation a lower-class girl without Morag's determination must endure, betrayed by her own sexuality. Morag thus appears to be in the position of a preference group relationship on the

Jackson model. She is very attracted to anyone who offers to satisfy her sexuality, such as Jules. In the Memorybank Movie, "Down In the Valley The Valley So Low," Morag encounters Jules, significantly, on the swinging bridge, perhaps suggesting a precarious transition. However, she is too afraid of the consequences to participate, so she can not be accepted as a sexual partner.

In "Memorybank Movie: Down In the Valley, Act II," Morag's sexual identity on the Jackson model develops from the position of a preference group relationship (although she is attracted to boys, having the sexual identity of a normal girl, she is neither accepted nor rejected by them), to that of psychological membership, as she is attracted to and accepted by Jules as a sexual partner. It is interesting to note that Morag's first sexual experience is with Jules Tonnerre, with whom she shares a feeling of being an oddity, an outsider or outcast from the chosen or élite of Manawaka society and with whom she shared the back row of desks in the school classroom. Morag's childhood has been characterized by introverted timidity, but her blossoming into adolescence contained moments of aggressive, raucous toughness and vulgarity in speech, followed by an attempt at refinement and taste learned in her Saturday employment at Simlow's dress shop which is so successful that Mrs. Cameron embarrasses her by commenting on the improvement. All these changes in Morag's exterior personality seem to be attempts at establishing a sexual identity of some sort.

This sexual identity marked by psychological membership on the Jackson model does not last very long, however, as Morag becomes aware of Eva's

dilemma and vows that nothing is going to endanger her chances of getting out of Manawaka. She reverts back to her preference group relationship on the Jackson model, as she discovers she is too tall and too intellectual to be accepted enthusiastically by the RCAF men at the Flamingo Saturday night dances, as Eva is. A chance encounter with Jules, newly returned from the war, confirms her vow of celibacy; he notices her burning ambition, which influences her sexual identity. The adolescent Morag is torn between pride and the desire to be popular with the opposite sex, although she hates "the way they are contemptuous of the girls they are trying to make. Not as though it might be something both might want to do, but only as though the girl were a mare to be mounted by a studhorse" (p. 149). Traditional role expectations cause Morag pain and frustration.

At university, Morag's sexual identity continues, on the Jackson model, as preference group relationship; she is attracted to but not accepted by eligible males. It is not loneliness that makes it unbearable to lack dates, but the sense of being downgraded, devalued and undesirable. Half of Morag wants "to be glamorous and adored and get married and have kids" (p. 182). The other half of Morag wants something she does not yet fully understand but acknowledges: "All I want is everything" (p. 182). After her perm with Ella's sister Bernice, Morag feigns interest in boys in whom she is clearly not interested because she "aims to please" and admits to the despicable attitude of being willing to "go out with Dracula if he asked her" (p. 187).

Although she attempts to please Dr. Skelton with her commentary on

Donne's poetry in class. Morag still has a definite enough idea of her own sexual identity to take offense at Donne's line, "For God's sake hold your tongue and let me love." However, Morag's sexual identity moves back to psychological membership, on the Jackson model, with Brooke Skelton, as she is both attracted to and accepted by him when they marry. Morley (1981) summarizes this union with the observation that "Morag marries her prince, and the relationship becomes a prison and a lie" (p. 132). Morag believes she has found her "Halls of Sion," as part three of the novel is called, but does not realize he expects her to remain a child forever and loves her because she appears to have no past. She must dress to please him, conceal her black moods, pretend to be always cheerful and happy, and eagerly agree to go out with him when she feels like writing. She feels compelled to simply read instead of taking classes and pursuing her degree and, above all, to participate in his demeaning game before they have intercourse by answering his question, "Have you been a good girl?" (p. 245). Morag thus leaves adolescence and begins adulthood in what she believes to be, and perhaps what is at first, psychological membership on the Jackson model—attracted to and accepted by her handsome husband Brooke.

Thomas (1975) perceptively explains Morag's loss of attraction to her husband, as she realizes she is captive in her Toronto apartment, moving from psychological membership, in her relationship with Brooke, to that of a rebellious and then a blatant war relationship in this marriage. Thomas writes that Brooke is "very much a part of the Establishment of society. Underneath an impressive

façade, he is as insecure as Morag herself, and he is woefully lacking in the ability or the desire to imagine her needs and potentials beyond her physical self" (p. 150). Morag comments later that she and Brooke were merely acting out each other's fantasies. To her, he represented everything she had ever wanted—prestige, security, intellectual fulfillment, glamour and mutual sexual attraction. However, Brooke's condescension in his attitude to Morag, his basic insecurity and, consequently, his unwillingness to have a child, and, most importantly, his refusal to take Morag's writing seriously, end this relationship after ten superficial years of marriage.

Morag's move to a rebellious relationship on the Jackson model in her marriage to Brooke begins to become evident when she throws a Benares brass ashtray through the kitchen window. She is appalled at what she has done and conceals it from Brooke, not yet realizing that he is preventing her from being herself and discovering her own voice, strength and creativity. Morag finds her role in this marriage stifling and artificial, as it has been defined for her by a man who was delighted to accept Morag as a woman without a past, relatives or an obvious identity of any kind. Brooke regards Morag as one-dimensional, knowing nothing about her beyond the present and the superficial, and therefore he cannot take seriously the creativity she wishes to express through her writing and her desire for a child. Morag realizes something serious is wrong with their relationship when she finds it increasingly difficult to act in order to please him when she forgets to stop writing and make his dinner. He refuses to admit that she

knows anything about writing that she could share with his students. The fact that she has submitted her first novel to the publishers without his knowledge, and under her maiden name, are indications of her loss of attraction and rebelliousness toward Brooke. Late in life, she counsels her daughter, who is in the similar situation of extricating herself from a confining relationship with her boyfriend Gord, that the only alternative is to "destroy yourself," a reference to the denial of self that Morag felt being married to Brooke, a "feeling of being separated from herself" (p. 263). It is when she returns for Prin's funeral, and Christy comments on how smart she looks, that she realizes how much she hates "the external self who is at such variance with whatever or whoever remains inside the glossy painted shell. If anything remains" (p. 248). It is during Prin's funeral service, during the singing of Prin's favorite hymn about the Halls of Sion with the Prince ever in them, that Morag realizes the futility of her marriage to Brooke: "What had Morag expected, those years ago, marrying Brooke? Those selfsame halls?" (p. 253)

Morag believes she has the sexual identity of Rapunzel, captive in her Toronto Crestwood Towers, "the lonely tower," and vows not to go to a hairdresser any more simply to please Brooke. After seeing Christie at Prin's funeral, she feels a compulsion to speak as he used to speak, "the loony oratory, salt-beefed with oaths," but acknowledges that she must form her own identity, sexual and personal, because she does not know the sound of her own voice—"Not yet, anyhow" (p. 257). She confides in Royland, some years later, that

Brooke kept her on the straight and narrow for years, another way of saying she never developed her own identity, but followed his ideas of how she should be because, she realized when she left him, "he has believed he owns her" (p. 278). Her frustration at Brooke's lack of appreciation of her growing literary expertise and his treatment of her as a child finally cause another act of frustrated rebellion, the throwing of an Italian glass bowl against the living room fireplace. She changes her sexual identity permanently after Brooke's insult to her guest, Jules.

Morag then moves to a war relationship with Brooke, on the Jackson model, as she is no longer attracted to Brooke and, after her pregnancy, no longer accepted by him. He attempts a reconciliation until after he learns of the child, the ultimate expression of Morag's independence and sexual identity change. When Morag becomes a mother, she acquires an identity too threatening for Brooke to accept. Jules expresses this identity change eloquently when he asks if he is the shaman who is "doing magic" to help her get away from Brooke. She wonders later, after Brooke's attempt to reconcile, if she would have gone back if she had not been pregnant, or whether she had gotten pregnant "so her leaving of Brooke would be irrevocable? So she would not be able to change her mind? And had chosen Jules only so there wouldn't be the slightest chance of pretending the child was Brooke's?" (p. 295).

Brooke has felt he owns his wife, and after she leaves, he wants legal proof of what is and is not his property. Morag learns the high cost of an independent identity, both psychologically and economically. Morley (1981) quotes Marian

Engle's observation, which parallels the problem of Morag's sexual identity, that "the conflict in The Diviners is between an intense desire to belong to a rejecting and constricting society, and a desire for a life of one's own" (p. 133).

Morag gains control of her sexual identity as well as her life after she moves to Vancouver. With no husband or permanent lover, Morag's sexual identity on the Jackson model could be described as one of psychological non-membership, as she is attracted to and accepted by no one particular person, but a series of inconsequential men, such as Harold and Chas. Chas, with his cruel hatred of women, teaches Morag that the flesh and the self are two separate entities; Morag contemplates with horror the frightening prospect of having a child with a man she despises.

Morag's conversation with Fan, her landlady, concerning their respective sexual activity, or lack of it, reveals Morag's wistful longing for a mate. She dreams of being back in the T[illegible]h Brooke, but wakes up from her nightmare thinking her daughter, the ultimate symbol of the fulfillment of her independent sexual identity, is not real. She hates herself for applying makeup, feeling "alienated from herself," but, thinking that women who are successful with men always use it, wears makeup, although she is "not that fond of games" (p. 318), a trait she had in common with Jules but not Brooke.

Morag's letter to her friend Ella, written when Morag is thirty-two years old, reveals that Morag remains, on the Jackson model, in psychological non-membership in terms of her sexual identity. Her novel, Prospero's Child, parallels

her own relationship with Brooke. The heroine worships the Governor of an island, and then must "go to the opposite extreme and reject nearly everything about him, at least for a time, in order to become her own person" (p. 330) and recognize her own strength, and the real enemy, "despair within."

Morag's move to Britain, in order to someday ascertain her true identity in Sutherland, Scotland, the land of her ancestors, provides her with her final male companion, Dan McRaith, a married Scottish artist. Although for a while, Morag might move into psychological membership, on the Jackson model, with Dan, both attracted to and accepted by him, ultimately she realizes that she does not want to be "on call" for him, or owned by him in any way, as it interferes with her work schedule and with Pique. When she visits his home in Scotland and meets his wife, whose chief interest in life is having Dan's seven children, Morag returns to permanent psychological non membership, as she acknowledges Bridie's claim on Dan. Morag perceives her own lack of ownership of Dan, and thus her independent sexual identity, when she visits Crombruach and understands the nature of Dan's sexual identity and the relationship between Dan and Bridie:

> McRaith does not, at the deepest level, want a woman who will stand up to him. For some of the time, he may indeed want this. But not for most of the time. McRaith stays, Morag now begins to see, because of the kind of woman that Bridie is. (p. 390)

At age forty-four, Morag has lived at McConnell's Landing for four years. Her sexual identity remains, on the Jackson model, at psychological non-membership as she concentrates on her writing profession. When Jules makes his

last visit before his death, Morag realizes her sexual independence since the sheer force and urgency of her former need for sexual expression are diminished. Her daughter Pique, from whom she had not been able to conceal her jealousy at Pique's relationship with Dan, now embarks on her own quest for sexual identity, a journey which has not been made any easier by that of her mother. At the end of the novel, Morag's male companion is her fellow artist, the diviner Royland, with whom her sexual identity has never been a factor.

Morag Gunn establishes her professional identity in the opening pages of The Diviners. She acknowledges at age forty-seven that, if she had not been a writer, she might have been a first-rate mess. Morag's level of acceptance by and attraction to the writing profession is an important part of her life story.

As a child, Morag, on her first day of school at age six, shows her early attraction to writing by pondering the meaning of words, such as *law*. She has already invented her childhood and her childhood memories by looking at the few remaining photographs of her mother and father. Displaying the creativity of a writer, Morag's "Snapshots," "Memorybank Movies" and invention of the spruce-house family of characters are the early signs of a gifted artist. As an adult recalling her childhood, Morag is impressed with the literary value of her "totally individuated persons (as the pretentious phrase has it, when describing okay fiction)" (p. 12). Morag's creative characters were an escape from the loneliness of being an only farm child with no young playmates, and a shelter from the cruel reality of the death of her parents when she was only five years old. Her strong

childhood attraction to the writing profession is demonstrated in her reaction to their sudden deaths.

> The lowest and largest boughs of the spruce reach down and touch the earth, making a cave, a small shelter into which no one can see. She is not doing anything. Cowboy Joke and Rosa Picardy and the others are not here now. They have gone away. For good. Once and for all. (p. 17)

Morag's grief is expressed with the loss of what has been a major part of her intellectual life, her imaginative friends of her own creation.

Morag is attracted to writing as a child, confessing that she "used to think words could do anything. Magic. Sorcery. Even miracle. But no, only occasionally" (p. 5). However, she is not in a childhood environment which accepts her as a potential author or member of the writing profession. On the Jackson model, Morag's professional identity could be classified as a caste relationship. She is attracted to the profession of writing, but she is not accepted as a writer. She does not have societal approval that she is a gifted author or future talent. Part of this lack of public acceptance of her artistry may be the result of her life situation as the adopted daughter of the local garbage man and his simple wife, the situation which ironically gave her the intense desire to succeed in her chosen profession.

The best example of Morag's childhood caste relationship with the writing profession is dramatically illustrated in her "Memorybank Movie: Morag, Much Older." The first time Morag, at age seven, accompanies Christie to the nuisance grounds, she is enchanted by the meaning of the words *scavenger* and *nuisance*

grounds. The power of words intrigues her, and, after viewing the work of a blacksmith, she reveals her hidden, creative artistry, unknown to the society around her:

> Morag thinks of the sparks, the stars, and sees them again inside her head. Stars! Fire-stars! How does it happen? She wants to ask, but won't. Christie would think she was dumb. She isn't the dumb one. Christie is. (p. 37)

The chanting ridicule and scorn of the children in Morag's classroom and Christie's comedic reaction to their rhymes force Morag to realize her position in Manawaka society. This position is not one of a future award-winning author.

At age nine, Morag still shows the same strong attraction to the writing profession. She is mesmerized by Christie's tales of her ancestors and writes faithfully in her scribbler, beginning with "Morag's Tale of Piper Gunn's Woman." Finding Morag shivering and still dressed, sitting on her bed late at night contemplating Christie's "First Tale of Piper Gunn," Prin labels Morag a "mooner". This word suggests Morag's caste relationship to the writing profession as she mulls over the meaning of the word:

> A *mooner*. That sounds nice. She knows what it means. It isn't meant nice. It means somebody who moons around, dawdling and thinking. But to her it means something else. Some creature from another place, *another planet*. Left here accidentally. (p. 51)

The adult Morag acknowledges that "her childhood had taken place in another world" (p. 57). Although as an adult she is recognized as a writer, no one would have ever accepted this orphan child as having any writing potential.

The ultimate expression of society's rejection of Morag as a talented

member of the writing profession is the reaction of Mrs. McKee, Morag's Sunday school teacher, to Morag's poetry. After registering surprise that Morag wrote poetry, Mrs. McKee read a poem by Hilaire Belloc, instead of reading "a talented poem written by one of our members," as Morag had hoped. Feeling like a complete failure, Morag burned her poetry in the stove without even explaining to Prin what she was burning.

Morag, in adolescence, shows an even greater attraction to the writing profession and receives a greater acceptance by society as a member of the profession. On the Jackson model, Morag's professional identity could be depicted as that of a preference group relationship, with positive degrees of attraction to the writing profession and neutral acceptance by society and the writing profession as an author. That is, while she is not naturally considered or universally accepted as a talented writer, it is not out of the question that she could be one. She has neither positive nor negative degrees of acceptance, by society, as a professional writer.

Morag's growing attraction to writing is very visible in her adolescent years. She has long ago discovered her love of Christie's tales, and marvels at her own, natural writing ability as she fills her scribblers with stories.

> She does not know where it came from. It comes into your head, and when you write it down, it surprises you, because you never knew what was going to happen until you put it down. (p. 87)

Even Morag's itemizing of merchandise in Simlow's Ladies' Wear, her Saturday job, sounds like free-flowing, unrhymed poetry.

In grade nine at the Manawaka collegiate, Morag worships her composition teacher, Miss Melrose, because no one has ever talked to Morag about what was good and bad in writing, and shown her why. Morag's new school policy of "work like hell, that is, like the dickens" (p. 120), demonstrates her growing awareness that becoming educated, and developing a professional identity, will someday be her ticket out of Manawaka.

Miss Melrose's awareness of Morag's talent is a measure of society's gradual acceptance of Morag as a professional writer. When Miss Melrose wants to publish Morag's composition in the school newspaper because it was one of the very few that showed any originality, Morag declines, thinking of the scorn of her peers. Miss Melrose wisely replies that Morag must take her own time then, and assures her "you will." Morag's reaction to this advice provides one of her first adolescent acknowledgements that she is aware of the professional identity she must develop. She is so highly attracted to the writing profession, dreaming that she is a successful, published author, that she longs to be accepted by society as a writer.

> She has known for some time what she has to do, but never given the knowledge to any other person or thought that any person might suspect. Now it is as though a strong hand has been laid on her shoulders. Strong and friendly. But merciless. (p. 122)

"Memorybank Movie: Down In The Valley, Act II," shows Morag's growing awareness of the nature of a professional identity. In her previous Memorybank Movie, she wondered who decided that Christie is called by his first

name on the streets of Manawaka but the town lawyer is addressed as Mr. McVitie. When Skinner confesses his admiration for Christie, Morag reveals how frustrated she is that Christie has "never tried to do anything" (p. 134). Morag is horrified to learn how Skinner is advised by Simon Pearl, with whom he is staying, that a person such as himself "might do well to set their sights a bit lower" (p. 135) than becoming a lawyer—perhaps being an apprentice mechanic at the garage.

By the time Morag, in late adolescence, works for Lachlan MacLachlan, editor of the *Manawaka Banner*, she demonstrates her attraction to the writing profession and the limited acceptance of society that she can write adequately, at least to some extent. Morag's professional identity is forming, but Lachlan has to remind her not to look down on people who do not write as proficiently as she does, because "those people know things it will take you the better part of your lifetime to learn, if ever" (p. 155). He also lectures her on "feeling set upon," and reminds her that she is not trapped in Manawaka: "the doors are open" (p. 156). His final words of advice to Morag are that she learns "hard, with that stiff neck" of hers and that "there's no shame in not knowing something" (p. 157), as she is not alone.

When Morag meets Jules the summer before she goes to university in Winnipeg, he perceives her strong attraction to developing her professional identity. After telling her that he does not feel compelled "to do anything all that much" (p. 165), as he is "not like you," he remarks: "You want it so bad I can just about smell it on you. You'll get it, Morag" (p. 165).

By the end of her adolescence, Morag realizes this compulsion to succeed dominates her life, as well as a desire to "be glamorous and adored and get married and have kids. . . . All I want is everything" (p. 182). Her desire for acceptance as an author is demonstrated by her happiness at having her short story published in the university newspaper and noticed by her English professor, Brooke Skelton.

Morag's professional identity as an adult can be described on the Jackson model as that of psychological membership. She is attracted to the writing profession and she is accepted by the world as an accomplished, published author.

Morag has the professional identity of an accomplished author who is still highly attracted to her profession. As the novel opens, Morag acknowledges that she is fortunate to have her work to take her mind off her life. She demonstrates the extent to which she has assimilated the identity of an author and artist by attempting to find the correct words to describe the river and marvelling at the myopic Royland's gift of water divining, from which she always "felt she was about to learn something of great significance . . . but things remained mysterious, his work, her own, the generations, the river" (p. 4).

Morag has an ambiguous, apparently contradictory belief in Royland's profession as well as her own. She confesses to Royland that she can believe in divining with only one part of her mind. She questions why it works and how long the gift will remain. Royland reprimands her lack of faith, reminding her that he does not have to understand his talent, but "I just gotta do it" (p. 26).

Morag's attraction to her own profession is equally ambiguous, although

very strong. As she attempts to depict the color of the river, she has to admit the limitations of her profession:

> Probably no one could catch the river's colour even with paints, much less words. A daft profession. Wordsmith. Liar, more likely. Weaving fabrications. Yet, with typical ambiguity, convinced that fiction was more true than fact. Or that fact was in fact fiction. (p. 25)

However, Morag has dedicated her life to her chosen profession, and the world accepts her as a professional writer. While attempting to convert Morag, a "detester of physical labour," into a gardener, A-Okay Smith finally admits that her writing is her real work, and it is there that she must make her statement. Royland wonders why the only meaning the word "work" had for Morag was writing, "considering that it was more of a free gift than work, when it was going well, and the only kind of work she enjoyed doing" (p. 98).

Morag Gunn, "inveterate winkler-out of people's life stories" (p. 101), has to endure certain aspects of society's acceptance of her as an author. Strangers took the liberty of phoning Morag early in the morning in order to learn the secrets of her writing success. Pique had to endure the criticism of her schoolmates who taunted her about her mother's life-style. When Jules visited, even he heard from the McConnell's Landing local people that Morag was "crazy as a bedbug" (p. 424), a reputation that was rather severe for someone who had not yet decided what she was divining for in her chosen profession. Her imaginary conversations with Catharine Parr Traill illustrate Morag's feelings of frustration, "caught between the old pioneers and the new pioneers" (p. 170). Morag laments that she lacks the

faith, which she thinks allowed Catharine Parr Trail to write, garden, and have nine children.

Perhaps one of the most difficult periods in Morag's adult life in terms of acceptance of her professional identity was the time she spent as Brooke Skelton's wife. Brooke cannot accept or acknowledge her talent and does not see the necessity or purpose of Morag's completion of her university degree, thinking that she could simply read on her own. Brooke was definitely not considering what would be best for the development of a person who admits, at the prospect of marriage, that "words haunt her, but she will become unhaunted now, forevermore" (p. 202). Brooke is pleased when the unfamiliar noise of the city of Toronto causes Morag to hold tightly to his arm when they walk in the streets. His condescending attitude to her, such as remarking to her that she was a "good girl, sweetheart, to sit there so quietly" (p. 215) while he marked essays, forces her to explode with an opinion on Hopkins during Brooke's student meeting. From sheer frustration at Brooke's lack of recognition of any sort of potential intellectual growth or professional identity on her part, Morag reminds him that she is not his child but his wife. She is also reminding him that she has a mind of her own and that she is a talented reader of literature.

One of her first lies to this man who promises his "woman" that he would "be with" her and "protect her always" was to cover the fact that she would rather work on her novel than go to a movie with him. Morag finds it increasingly difficult to submerge her growing professional identity, and to "get outside" her

writing before her husband arrives home each day. After three years of writing, she submits her manuscript, in her maiden name, without telling Brooke. At the same time, she realizes that she will never again discuss the subject of having children with him. Morag's attraction to writing has surpassed her attraction to Brooke and his cold sexual games.

By the time Prin dies, Morag hates her external self and realizes she must develop her talent instead of concealing it to please Brooke. Morag's heightened awareness of a person's professional identity causes her to reflect on Niall Cameron's profession and how it affects him, as he appears to her to "bear now the mark of his calling upon him" (p. 254). After having returned to her restrictive tower existence in Toronto, Morag finally realizes, after screaming at Brooke in Christie's speech pattern, that she does not yet know the sound of her own voice. "Not yet, anyhow" (p. 257), she thinks. She is determined to develop this identity, however, and finally tells Brooke she "can't bear" not to be taken seriously or "treated as a child" (p. 258). She even dares to stand up to Brooke in his own profession when, after finding that she is able to defend her own work, she rejects his offer to edit her novel, telling him that she too knows a lot about novels—"different from reading or teaching" (p. 260).

Morag's feeling of "being separated from herself" increases until she meets Jules accidentally on the streets of Toronto and decides she has to leave Brooke in order to stop living his "fantasy." When she leaves Brooke, she is "shocked and awed by his pain" and discovers "for the first time that he has believed he owns

her" (p. 278). This belief would not allow Brooke to consider the development of Morag's professional identity or total self. Only the crocuses growing out of the dead, cold snow, viewed by Morag on her train trip west to Vancouver, suggest any hope of renewal or rebirth for Morag.

The time Morag spends in Vancouver is a part of her adult life in which, on the Jackson model, her professional identity can be depicted as that of psychological membership. She is highly attracted to the writing profession, spending all the time she can writing, and she is accepted by society as an author. Her novel has been accepted by a publisher in England and the United States. She writes short stories, instead of doing domestic work, in order to support herself while working on her next novel.

At age thirty-two, Morag's letter to her friend Ella reveals that one of her novels, Prospero's Child, loosely parallels the development of her own professional identity during her marriage to Brooke. The protagonist is a young woman who marries the governor of an island, "who virtually worships him and then who has to go to the opposite extreme and reject nearly everything about him, at least for a time, in order to become her own person" (p. 330). The novel, accepted by three publishers, from Canada, the U.S.A. and England, shows Morag's complete acceptance by the literary world. This is not enough for Morag, however, as she writes Ella that she wants to go to London for a while because it is "a kind of centre of writing" (p. 331).

Morag's years in London are spent as an accepted, published author of a

short story collection, Presences, and a novel, Jonah. She works in a bookshop and befriends a Scottish painter, Dan McRaith, with whom she can discuss the creative process and her own work, and who understands her need for her own identity. Her professional identity, or concept of herself as a writer, is so firmly established that she has the strength to protest if she cannot find time to write, thinking "why should I not inconvenience anyone?" (p. 375). The demands of a sick child or a lonely lover must be secondary to Morag's need to write.

She realizes this even more when she meets McRaith's wife, Bridie, who has devoted her life and identity to motherhood. Although McRaith tells Morag he appreciates her because she will stand up to him, Morag knows he is held to Crombruach by Bridie because of the woman she is, a woman who remarks of her children as they leave home, "when they have been your life, it's hard to see them go" (p. 387). At the same time, Morag no longer has to seek her identity in Sutherland, Scotland, the land of her ancestors.

When Morag returns to Manawaka to visit the dying Christie, even the attending nurse at the hospital recognizes Morag's fame by telling her how glad the community is that she is from Manawaka, where her books are now in the local library. The child that no one expected anything from is now accepted by her most severe critic, her home town. Even Mrs. Cameron told everyone, after Morag's second book was in the town library, that she had known Morag since she was "knee-high to a grasshopper" (p. 400). Morag still remembers Mrs. Cameron's public pity for Morag when she bought jelly doughnuts for Prin at Parsons' Bakery

and sold clothing at Simlow's.

The last part of Morag's life that is described in the novel, is spent at McConnell's Landing. Morag's acceptance by the literary world continues, demonstrated when she is referred to, in the reviews of her latest novel, as an "established and older writer" (p. 420) at age forty-four. Her attraction to writing is as strong as ever, as words rush out "in a spate so that her hand could not keep up with them" (p. 404). Morag does not question from whence and how the characters and dialogue appear. She only hopes that they "keep on coming" in the same way that Royland hopes he will not lose his gift of divining.

Morag has realized Christy's gift of seeing reality and has questioned her own:

> Christie, tell the garbage—throw those decayed bones like dice or like sorcerer's symbols. You really could see, though. What about me? Do I only pretend to see, in writing? (p. 412)

She can finally appreciate that her talent is very different from that of Jules and Pique, who express themselves in song, communicating in a different way than Morag does, as they do not have to "analyze the words" (p. 426). The Diviners thus ends with Morag accepted for her literary contribution by the world. She is very aware of her attraction to writing and the necessity of having to spend her life establishing her own unique professional identity.

As the final protagonist in the Manawaka cycle, Morag, with her complex search for her identity, embodies several of Laurence's themes and ideas of the development of the female voice. Of the five protagonists, Morag is the one in

whom all these categories of identity formation are most equally and fully realized. Her familial and cultural, sexual and professional identities all appear to have had a significant influence on her final identity formation. Morag overcomes numerous obstacles to construct for herself a strong, yet feminine, definition of womanhood.

In her memoirs, Laurence (1989) wrote that Virginia Woolf, who said that a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction, was a writer whose perceptions and feminism helped shape Laurence's view of life. However, by the time Laurence was in her late twenties, she felt that Woolf's writing was immaculate and fastidious in ways that most people's lives are not. Lacking a sense of physical reality, Woolf's characters lack "ordinariness, dirt, earth, blood, yelling, a few messy kids" (p. 130). With Laurence's portrayal of Morag Gunn, the author has created a character with a profound sense of physical reality who speaks to all women establishing their own identities in their own lives.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine Margaret Laurence's exploration of the formation of female identity in contemporary Canadian society as depicted in the Manawaka cycle of novels. Specifically, the thesis examined the five female protagonists in these works in an attempt to analyze and comprehend the factors of major significance in the formation of their identities. A conceptual framework devised by Jay M. Jackson, the Jackson model, was employed as a diagnostic tool to analyze the identity formation of the protagonists. The Jackson model was chosen because of its usefulness for describing, over a period of time, various types of group membership in terms of attraction to and acceptance by a group. Familial-cultural, sexual and professional identity formation were examined during the lifetime of each protagonist, where possible, in childhood, adolescence, adulthood and old age.

Chapter one described the study, its purpose, the critical context and research methodology. Chapter two depicted the life and work of Margaret Laurence, emphasizing the development of her view on female identity. Chapters three to seven discussed the identity formation of Hagar, Rachel, Stacey, Vanessa and Morag respectively.

Hagar's familial-cultural identity formation, as plotted on the Jackson model, reflects the unique problems of women of Hagar's time, growing up as the

offspring of first-generation transplanted white European settlers living on the Canadian prairies. With her marriage, Hagar attempts to attain her own identity, rebelling against her father and her culture as represented by the town of Manawaka. Hagar's lifetime is spent suffering the consequences of this act of rebellion and eventually growing emotionally to achieve the strength of character and insight or self-knowledge necessary for psychological membership with her remaining family members.

Rachel's familial-cultural identity formation, on the Jackson model, beginning with a marginal group relationship and moving to psychological nonmembership, shows that the world of the protagonist has become a place where patriarchal values are losing their former power in comparison to the Manawaka of Hagar and Jason Currie. However, Rachel's struggle for verbal consciousness and the articulation of her own female voice or identity are constricted by her relationship with her martyr mother, her dead father and the propriety of the town of Manawaka, as well as that of her Scottish ancestry. Rachel, through her experience with Nick and a benign tumor, begins to realize her female strength, acknowledges that she is the mother figure now rather than May and seeks a new beginning and her own mature identity in Vancouver near her sister Stacey. Rachel is beginning to attain independence of thought as an individual and freedom from her neurotic need to distance herself from her family. Thus, Rachel has psychological membership with her familial and cultural identity, after a rebellious relationship, at a much earlier time of life, age thirty-four, than Hagar does, at age

ninety.

Although Stacey hopes that she could leave her familial and cultural identity behind when she leaves Manawaka for Vancouver, Rachel's sister at age forty acknowledges that this is an impossibility. She will always be Stacey Cameron in some ways, and the past never seems to be over, even though she has moved from a small prairie town to the west coast and is now the matriarch of her own family of four children, a contrast to her spinster sister. With both sisters equally affected by their dysfunctional family and restrictive culture, Laurence suggests that the mature adult female identity formation of a woman is influenced to the same extent by her early familial cultural background, whether she remains single or produces a family of her own. The only difference is that Stacey has the support of her love for her daughters, sons and husband, even though these relationships are plagued by a lack of communication epitomized by her daughter Jen's failure to speak or find her own voice. Although Stacey rebels against her familial and cultural identity much earlier in life than Rachel does, both sisters move from a marginal group relationship on the Jackson model to a rebellious relationship. The major difference between the sisters, other than the age they are when this change occurs, is that Rachel moves to psychological nonmembership first, before a rebellious relationship, feeling quite removed or distant from being a part of the Cameron family of Manawaka. Stacey becomes rebellious as a teenager, despising May's critical hypocrisy and the lack of communication between her parents and among the people of the town. While Rachel, through personal crisis, realizes the feminine

strength to proclaim that she is now the mother figure, Stacey appreciates the pow[illegible] of the mother-daughter relationship as she sees Katie's growing awareness of her future role of taking over as the mother. Stacey's affair with Luke also shocks her into contemplation of the significance or power of identity of the mother role when she calculates her age as that of Luke's mother: she feels she has betrayed her family. Stacey thus moves to psychological membership with her familial-cultural identity by finally appreciating what May must have gone through as a young mother and longing to communicate with her remaining family member, her sister. This occurs after Stacey's own crises of nearly losing her son Duncan in a drowning accident and her husband Mac to infidelity. At the same time, Stacey confronts her cultural, Manawaka past in the form of Mac's boss and Valentine Tonnerre, two representatives of the lower stratas of that society.

Vanessa's familial and cultural identity formation takes place in Manawaka during the years of the Depression. Although Stacey the adult only reminisces briefly about her childhood and adolescence in Manawaka, the stories about Vanessa are dominated by Vanessa as a child growing up in Manawaka, with an adult Vanessa narrator at the end of the book. From women who could not easily articulate the problems of the formation of their familial and cultural identity in Manawaka (Hagar, Rachel and Stacey), Laurence moves, with Vanessa and later Morag, to women who are professional writers capable of expressing their dilemmas and desires. As a female artist-figure, Vanessa clearly describes the difficulty of attaining psychological membership on the Jackson model in terms of

familial-cultural identity formation, a problem aggravated by the apparently patriarchal, autocratic domination of Grandfather Connor.

Of all Laurence's protagonists, Morag, as an adopted child, is the one most concerned with her true familial and cultural identity. She has self-consciously constructed an identity from Christie's tales and her own invented memories. While the mother-daughter relationship was more subtle in Laurence's previous novels, the relationship between Morag and Pique is of great importance in The Diviners. This relationship provides considerable insight into all aspects of female identity formation, since Pique, as daughter, is essential to Morag's identity as woman and as artist, in the same way that Morag, as mother, is necessary to Pique's identity as woman and artist. As the female artist has the task of recreating cultural values that have lessened in significance to society, Morag and Pique's relationship is extremely interesting as they attempt to determine who they are or what groups they should strive to be a part of for psychological membership with their unique familial and cultural identities. In A Bird in the House the mother-daughter relationship exists as a subtle underplay, but in The Diviners the relationship is at the centre of the novel's structural and thematic organization. Thus, Laurence's treatment of familial-cultural identity formation in the lives of the five protagonists is extensive, penetrating and insightful.

Laurence's treatment of the five heroines' sexual identity is equally revealing. The factor of major significance in the sexual identity formation of Hagar appears to be her inability to accept her womanhood or her femininity, as she

has no mother or mother figure with whom to form the essential, nurturing mother-daughter relationship in her youth. Hagar's life story suggests that the mother-daughter relationship is necessary for the complete development of healthy sexual identity in the adult female. This is something Hagar never achieves until shortly before her death, with the help of surrogate mother figures, or people who make Hagar aware of her own humanity, including her recognition of the value of the feminine.

Laurence's second heroine has a sexual identity formation as complex and intricate as that of Hagar. Rachel's sexual identity, her neurotic inability to see herself, at age thirty-four, as capable of being attracted to and accepted by someone in a relationship has several causes. Her problem of finding her mature female voice, or articulation of feminine values in terms of sexual identity can be traced, in one respect, to the failure of the important women in her life to communicate. Stacey exists in a world too far away from Rachel. Mother May keeps Rachel as an emotional twelve-year-old by having all communication end in frustration and guilt on the part of her daughter.

Ironically, Rachel's homosexual friend Calla, not May Cameron, provides the maternal figure of female strength which Rachel needs to deal with her possible pregnancy and to become the mother figure herself, attaining feminine maturity in terms of sexual identity. Laurence makes a psychological statement about the nature of female growth and sexual identity through the fact that it is a woman in Rachel's life, not Nick, who helps her through her crisis: the maternal instinct is

more primitive, fundamental and stronger than the mating instinct, which is primarily an extension of the maternal instinct. When Rachel realizes this, her more liberated sexual identity is that of preference group relationship.

Rachel has always envied the ease with which her sister Stacey appeared to accept her own sexual identity at a very early age. While Stacey's early sexual identity is that of a normal healthy young girl growing up on the Canadian prairie, preference group on the Jackson model, her adult sexual identity, psychological nonmembership, represents a problem in Stacey's marriage. She questions her attraction to her husband, as well as to other men such as Buckle and Luke, as she equates her need for sexual expression with youth and a need to explore her sexual identity. Stacey's indiscretions with Buckle and Luke are the catalysts that begin Stacey's journey to self-awareness and psychological membership. The novel ends with Stacey's realization that her sexual identity formation is that of a forty-year-old wife and mother who will mutate into a matriarch, the ultimate expression of mature female sexual identity, if she is fortunate enough to be given another forty years.

Since Vanessa's sexual identity is depicted mainly as a child and adolescent, with only a few paragraphs describing Vanessa the adult, her mature sexual identity formation cannot be discussed in great detail, as it is in the exploration of Stacey's sexual identity. However, the strength of the female figures in Vanessa's life, particularly her mother, aunt and grandmothers, displays the fundamental power and nurturing influence of the mother-daughter relationship in a

patriarchal society. This relationship is suggested by that of Stacey and her daughter Katie, but Vanessa is the first protagonist to have a strong mother figure, something absent in the sexual identity formation of Hagar, Rachel and Stacey. Vanessa's self-assured, articulate female voice is a testimonial to the power of the mother in her daughter's search for a mature, fulfilling sexual identity as a woman.

In contrast, Morag's sexual identity formation occurs without the support of a mother, but her life includes a daughter who is also seeking her own identity. Symptomatic of her inner growth, which is a coming to terms with her own developing strength and power, Morag's sexuality is threatening as she offends society's conventions, sexual stereotypes and unspoken taboos. As an artist-author, Morag can describe her female quest for sexual identity in language that transcends the boundaries of gender. Laurence's novels therefore reveal the complexity and intricacy of female sexual identity formation.

Hagar's professional identity does not have the impact on her idea of who she really is, throughout her lifetime, that her familial-cultural and sexual identities do. As a writer of feminist literature, Laurence depicts Hagar as a traditional woman of her generation, obtaining her status first from her father, ancestors and culture, then her husband and finally her male employer and his ill-gotten fortune. Her professional identity would therefore be plotted as psychological nonmembership on the Jackson model.

Rachel's professional identity, as an elementary teacher in Manawaka, has far more significance in her life than the professional identity of Hagar has in hers.

Rachel spends much time and energy neurotically distancing herself, or attaining psychological nonmembership, from her occupation and classroom. The basic conflict in Rachel's professional identity is that she desires children of her own. Her maternal instinct is thwarted at the end of each school year as she must relinquish her students. Rachel's professional identity is that of psychological membership at the end of the novel, as she can accept the necessity of change in life. She has acknowledged her sexual identity with the words that she is the mother now, and has arrived at the realization that, although she may or may not have children, her children, the students, will always be temporary, "but so are everyone's" (p. 245).

Ironically, the professional identity of Rachel's sister Stacey is that of wife and mother, an irritant to Rachel, who longs for permanent children of her own, even though her occupation forces Rachel into temporary contact with children from whom she attempts to distance herself. Although Stacey actively questions her identity as wife and mother from the beginning of The Fire-Dwellers, unlike Rachel, who is suspended above reality, the professional identities of both sisters as adults can be graphed as psychological nonmembership and move to psychological membership on the Jackson model. Although constantly searching for her real self, Stacey is perceived by the reader as having a more satisfying professional identity, as she is a happier, better adjusted person than her sister, although Rachel's occupation has more apparent status and financial reward. While Rachel is a woman attempting to find feminine definition of her instinctive, emotional self

in her occupation as teacher, Stacey yearns for a society in which she can raise her children inside feminine-maternal values. Stacey's final acceptance of her professional identity of wife and mother win the reader's admiration for her female strength in the midst of a confusing, modern world of chaos and danger.

Vanessa's professional identity as a writer is not developed to the extent that Stacey's identity as wife and mother is. However, she exists as a transitional Laurence protagonist between Stacey, the wife and mother, and Morag, the divorced wife, mother and professional writer or artist.

Morag's quest for her own professional identity is especially significant in view of the fact that the modern female artist is faced with discovering her own sense of the feminine. Buss (1985) notes that, "whereas the traditional masculine hero undertakes largely physical adventures that reflect psychological stages of growth, Morag undertakes psychological adventures, a divining of the unconscious, which involves her in physical change and growth as well as psychological movement" (p. 66). The fact that Morag is a writer and artist as well as a daughter, wife, friend, lover and especially mother makes her an especially articulate spokesperson for the examination of female identity formation. Laurence's examination of professional identity formation is thus complete with the study of Morag.

The initial impetus for this study was a concern that currently high school curricula provide limited opportunity for students to explore issues of identity from a female perspective and a question about whether the novels of Margaret Laurence

might provide a remedy for this situation. A detailed examination of identity formation of the five protagonists in the Manawaka cycle has shown that women have their own unique problems in determining or establishing their identity at different stages of their life cycle, whether they are single, married or divorced, have children, careers or both. Their varied, individual time or place in history does not make this quest for their own female voice any easier. An explicit study of the protagonists' identity formation provides evidence that Laurence's novels most definitely would remedy any curriculum deficiency where students lack the opportunity to explore issues of identity from a female perspective.

While Margaret Laurence's novels provide many opportunities for the discussion of important issues in the classroom, teachers selecting literature for secondary school use must also take into consideration many other factors such as the reading ability of the students and the complexity and sophistication of the work. Although A Bird in the House is the most easily accessible of Laurence's works for younger high school students, it would be useful in any of the senior high school grades. Of the other four novels, The Stone Angel possesses attributes that make it most appropriate or teachable at the high school level. The remaining three novels are of a high literary quality and deal with themes of interest and importance to high school students. Sexuality, generational conflict, societal and racial prejudice and the human need of learning to accept death as a part of life and to come to terms with familial-cultural ancestry are all fully explored in Laurence's novels.

Teachers in some communities would have to be sensitive to the possibility of parental objection to sexual explicitness. Because of literary sophistication of technique in The Fire-Dwellers and The Diviners, these novels would be recommended for more advanced or able readers. During her lifetime, Margaret Laurence actively battled against censorship of her novels, particularly The Diviners, declaring that if young people were old enough to fight and to die for their country by going to war, they were old enough to read about life and sexuality in her novels. Laurence has detailed the reality of living a women's life in a phenomenological sense for the benefit of males as well as females.

Her first literary work was published under a male pseudonym at the University of Manitoba, and Laurence lamented how long it took her to find her own true voice as a woman. With her graphic portrayals of how five Canadian women found their female voice, Laurence has given all women an insight into the complexities and problems peculiar to their own identity formation. With the Manawaka cycle and five apparently ordinary women, Laurence puts into print what every woman knows but no one says: the reality of being a woman.

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