THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

MOTHER AND DAUGHTER RELATIONSHIPS IN THE MANAWAKA WORKS OF MARGARET LAURENCE

by

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A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

OF

MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

WINNIPEG, MANITOBA

1981

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to express my gratitude to those whose help sustained me during the writing of this thesis.

Dr. Peter Noel-Bentley gave me, in his example and precept, a guide to thoroughness in research method.

Dr. John Teunissen offered welcome advice in my bibliographical studies and has taught me to search for the myth.

Richard Buss has been my most patient and thoughtful reader.

I would like to thank my children, Michael, Erica and Matthew who always knew when to allow their mother to become "the scholar."

I am particularly grateful to Dr. Evelyn J. Hinz, whose care, empathy and tact have exemplified the role of advisor.

to my mother,

my sister

and my daughter

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ABSTRACT

This thesis studies the relationships of mothers with their daughters and daughters with their mothers or surrogate-mothers in Margaret Laurence's Manawaka works in order to show that this concern with the primal female bond is thematically and structurally central to the cycle.

Hagar, in The Stone Angel, owes her psychological and emotional problems to the fact that she lost her mother at birth, and seeks in her old age to experience the maternal values she has never felt. Rachel and Stacey, in A Jest of God and The Fire-Dwellers, represent the condition of modern women caught between a fading patriarchy and an unarticulated feminine world-view. Vanessa and Morag, the protagonists of Laurence's two kuntslerromans, A Bird in the House and The Diviners, seek a creative reunion with feminine-maternal values.

My critical approach is archetypal. I wish to show the mythic prototypes of the Demeter-Kore configuration and the Psyche model upwelling in the characters, structures and themes of Laurence's work and by doing so to indicate the archetypal nature of her writing.

"Female children are quite literally starved for matrimony: not for marriage, but for a legacy of power and humanity from adults of their own sex (mothers)."

(Phyllis Chesler, _Women and Madness_)

INTRODUCTION

In Margaret Laurence's The Diviners the river near Morag's home flows "both ways." To date, Laurence criticism has largely tended to flow only one way--toward the exploration of themes and techniques that reflect Laurence's concerns with character development, the relationships between the sexes, the various ethnic and cultural groups, and the relationships of the protagonists to their environments.[1] But the narrator of The Diviners observes that "only slightly further out, the water deepened and kept its life from sight."[2] For Laurence criticism to begin to touch that hidden life in the Manawaka works requires the adoption of a critical position different from the traditional formulations used in dealing with Laurence's work.

This critical position has been called the "archetypal approach," and basically it involves two things: a) the consideration of various configurations in literature as the manifestation of energies irrupting from the collective unconscious in response to the psychic needs of a culture; b) the use of a wide range of interdisciplinary methods and tools.[3] The configuration I wish to explore in Laurence's works is the mother-daughter relationship, which is a manifestation of the mother archetype and which has the myth of Demeter-Kore as its prototype. My interdisciplinary sources will be mainly psychological, but supplemented by works as widely separated in time and intent as Briffault's anthropological-sociological study, The Mothers, and Penelope Washbourne's

personalistic study of the feminine, Becoming Woman.

In his essay, "Psychological Aspects of the Mother Archetype," Carl Jung describes this psychic complex as having qualities associated with "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." Jung points out that the image of the personal mother is not this universal figure, and since the personal mother has the archetype projected upon her, the figure of mother "changes markedly when it appears in the individual psyche." Thus "those influences which the literature describes as being exerted on the children do not come from the mother herself, but rather from the archetype . . . which gives her a mythological background and invests her with authority and numinosity."[4] With this interplay between the archetype and the personal mother image in mind, I wish to examine Laurence's exploration of the phenomenon of women reacting to and reaching for a concept of the feminine which is at odds with that which their society and their biological heritage provides.

In discussing the way in which the myth of Demeter and Kore informs Laurence's fiction, one is, to a certain extent, handicapped by the fact that the myth has almost been lost with the matriarchal world-view that it embodies. Erich Neumann, in The Great Mother, describes the process

by which "the patriarchal development, which began very early, effaced or at least overlaid many elements of the old matriarchal culture, so that, as in studying a palimpsest, we must first remove the upper layer before we can see the matriarchal culture beneath."[5] Even the re-tellings available to us in ancient sources are overlaid by the patriarchal world-view. For example, although the "Hymn to Demeter" describes the climactic reunion of mother and daughter in loving detail--Demeter "rushed forth as does a Maenad down some thick-wooded mountain, while Persephone on the other hand, when she saw her mother's sweet eyes . . . leaped down to run to her, and falling upon her neck, embraced her"--it is not with this encounter that the hymn concludes, but rather with a prosaic discussion of the Olympian compromise imposed by Zeus on Demeter, lauding the power and fairness of the "all-seeing Zeus."[6]

In existing pictorial depictions, in contrast, it is the reunion of mother and daughter that is emphasized and it is this iconographic moment that lies at the heart of Laurence's fiction and which unifies the Manawaka novels. This is not to suggest, however, that the configuration is a static one throughout the series. On the contrary, in the early novels the focus is upon the lack of such a relationship, and it is only in The Diviners that a satisfactory union is achieved, while in this latter novel as well the Demeter-Kore complex begins to give way to the Psyche motif. Nor is the mother-daughter relationship limited to psychological concerns; rather it involves such issues as the relationship between maternality and creativity, between female values and respective literary techniques.

My objective in this thesis, therefore, is to explore the mother-daughter relationship with a view to emphasizing its developmental aspects,

on the one hand, and its complexity and wide-ranging implications, on the other.

Notes: Introduction

[1] For a descriptive bibliography of Laurence criticism see my "Margaret Laurence: A Bibliographical Essay," forthcoming in The American Review of Canadian Studies (Fall 1981).

[2] Margaret Laurence, The Diviners, p. 3 (Toronto 1974). All further references will be to this edition and will be cited in the text.

[3] Evelyn J. Hinz and John J. Teunissen, "Culture and the Humanities: The Archetypal Approach," par rapport, 1 (Winter 1978), 25-29.

[4] C. G. Jung, "Psychological Aspects of the Mother Archetype," in The Basic Writings of C. G. Jung, ed., Violet S. deLaszlo (New York, 1959), pp. 333-34.

[5] Erich Neumann, The Great Mother: An Analysis of the Archetype (New York, 1955), p. 306.

[6] Hesoid, "Hymn to Demeter," in The Homeric Hymns and Homerica, trans, Hugh G. Evelyn-White (London, 1914), pp. 317, 321.

CHAPTER I

Hagar: The Dispossessed

> In extreme old age, we descend again into that condition where, regardless of our state of consciousness, we once more become something of a problem for others. Childhood and extreme old age are, of course, utterly different, and yet they have one thing in common: submersion in unconscious psychic happenings. Since the mind of a child grows out of the unconscious, its psychic processes, though not easily accessible, are not as difficult to discern as those of a very old person who is sinking again into the unconscious, and who progressively vanishes within it.
>
> (Carl Jung in "The Stages of Life")

Hagar proudly and angrily rejects the childlike dependence of old age. She has, in her adult life, been firmly in control of her own feelings and thoughts and there has been no room in her materialistic outlook for "unconscious psychic happenings." But now, in old age, as she becomes more physically dependent on others, she finds also that she is "rampant with memory"[1] and living more and more in that state that Jung describes as so similar to early childhood. Jung has also said that "the mother is the first world of the child and the last world of the adult" ("The Mother Archetype," p. 345). As Hagar moves toward the unconsciousness of death she reaches for acceptance of the mother on three levels: her memory of the personal mother; the rescue of her own repressed feminine self; and the experience of the numinosity of the Great

Mother, that archetype Neumann identifies as occupying "the middle position between the collective unconscious and the uniqueness of the individual" the figure that is "not only the giver of life but also of death" (The Great Mother, pp. 37, 67).

As Hagar is helped to her feet by her son Marvin after one more undignified fall in old age, as she refuses help or tenderness, as she blames her daughter-in-law and speaks crossly to her son, however, she has a sudden moment of unspoken gentleness toward another female, her granddaughter, and remembers that "On my dressing table is a bottle of eau-de-Cologne, given me by Tina . . . . It is Lily of the Valley. I do not blame her for this choice, nor do I think it was due to any tactlessness on her part. I would not expect her to know that the lilies of the valley . . . were the flowers we used to weave into the wreaths for the dead" (p. 33). In this offhand musing of unexpected softness, Hagar summons a sympathy for another woman, her granddaughter, which shows a generosity that she has offered to no other woman in her lifetime.

This moment is our first indication that Hagar's conscious world is dissolving; she is finding that the tough, uncompromising stands that she has taken all her life are no longer sufficient to suppress all the emotion, all the experience that she has refused to allow herself. Jung, in "The Stages of Life" notes that "many--far too many--aspects of life which should have been experienced lie in the lumber-room among dusty memories, but sometimes, too, they are glowing coals under grey ashes."[2] As these aspects irrupt in Hagar's memory, demanding to be felt, understood and integrated, her gentle feelings toward Tina signal a new stage in her life, one that is to bring her closer to the mother and the

values represented by that figure.

We may measure Hagar's growth in her last days by her changing attitudes toward women, her increasing ability to receive mothering love and to offer love in return. With her accepting attitude toward her own granddaughter, Hagar begins a process whereby she allows other women to touch her life in a sacramental as well as a psychological sense. At first this movement is not obvious, for Hagar's attitudes toward women she has known in the past are decidedly negative. Her first memory-ramble begins with condemnations of womanhood as a state of weakness and exploitation. Unfortunately for Hagar, whose mother died at her birth, she returns in old age to a memory-world barren except for the image of mother as a blind stone angel in the Manawaka cemetery. She speaks of her own mother as one "who relinquished her feeble ghost as I gained my stubborn one" (p. 3), and then tells us of the sacrificing, virginal daughter-type, Regina Weese, known only as a cemetery-dweller, who cared with "martyred devotion for an ungrateful, fox-voiced mother" (p. 4). Even the "graceful, unspirited" (p. 7) feminine ways of her brothers are deprecated by Hagar. Auntie Doll, who is "hired help" (p. 6), Doris, who "persists in this mouse mask" (p. 28), and the old ladies who feed "like docile rabbits on the lettuce leaves of other times, other manners" (p. 4), all come in for censure from the angry, tough Hagar.

Rejecting the weakness that seemed in her mother's case to bring only death, Hagar became her father's daughter. Lacking any firm and respected female figure in her early life, she adopts a persona that is very much a reflection of her father's patriarchal and materialistic values. She is "like a pint-sized peacock, resplendent, hoity-toity, Jason Carrie's black haired daughter" (p. 7). The peacock that displays

is the male peacock, and thus from childhood on, Hagar is the victim of a powerful animus. Jung says of the model that the animus chooses: "Just as the mother seems to be the first carrier of the projection-making factor for the son, so is the father for the daughter."[3] Hagar chooses her father's world totally and learns its weights-and-measures logic at his knee. She takes her whippings without tears and loves to voice the aggressive motto of the Curries, "Gainsay who dare," with "such ferocity that the boys snickered" (p. 15). "If only she had been . . ." (p. 14). The words "a boy" do not have to be spoken to make Hagar into a pseudo-male. Her lack of female inheritance and her impoverished sense of what Chesler calls matrimony have already done that.[4]

Besides the fact that her mother is dead, exists only as a stone monument, a monument not to her goodness but to Jason Currie's dynastic ambitions, the women around Hagar exist only as ciphers of men. Aunt Doll is a servant. The wives of her father's male contemporaries are mere shadows in Hagar's life, and a woman with no male connection, No-name Lottie Drieser's mother, has no place in the community. Even the maiden aunt after whom Hagar is named leaves her modest fortune to the Humane Society instead of to her motherless niece (p, 14). As Hagar adopts her father's values she twists them in a peculiarly female manner. Jason Currie is proud of his name on the donated church candlesticks, whereas Hagar is proud of her "new white lace gloves which show off so well when she claps" (p. 16). Both accept an external material world as the only reality. It is a world-view that works for Jason Currie, shop-keeper, church stalwart and good citizen, but 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.

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). A better description of Hagar, for the greater part of her life, would be hard to find.

In his discussion of Hagar as a woman "afflicted with a fierce animus and persona," Dennis Cooley posits that "in the end she tenuously manages--unexpectedly and painfully--to shake them [her animus and persona] off and find support in a fuller life."[5] I would argue instead that Hagar's transformation is less unexpected than it might appear, for the fuller life in which she finds support is the feminine principle which has always been latent in her psyche, just as the tendency to turn to the feminine at the moment of death is only natural in terms of the womb-tomb identification.

At some unconscious level that she has never admitted to, Hagar has always yearned for the earth-bound, the feminine. In her old age she admits a weakness for flowers and silks, a dress of real silk, the exact shade of lilac as those that grew beside her husband's house (p. 29). She finds herself wanting to reach out to Doris "to take both her hands in mine and beg forgiveness" (p. 30). One of her most vivid childhood memories is of her failure in feminine strength, her inability to play

mother to her dying brother. In her memory she knows why she failed in womanhood, remembering that "all I could think of was that meek woman I'd never seen, 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. To play at being her--it was beyond me" (p. 25). Because she 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. Only when she faces death does she see through her own facades. She begins by accepting gracefully the gift of her granddaughter--the scent of the flowers of death.

Hagar's preoccupation with her unrealized femininity is reflected in the imagery which surrounds her acts and thoughts. She tends to see other women only in terms of the most uncomplimentary animal images, Jess and Gladys, Bram's daughters, are like "lumps of unrendered fat" (p. 56); Doris is an "unwilling hen" (p. 36); later, Arlene is a "pouter pigeon" (p. 173); the old women at Silverthreads are "ewes" (p. 98). Paradoxically, the Great Mother is often depicted as the Lady of the Beasts (The Great Mother, pp. 268-80) and the feminine in its earthy and elementary dimensions is closely associated with the instinctive life of animals. But Hagar's denial of the feminine leads her to put the most negative interpretations on these images. At the same time, even the smallest act of kindness from another woman, as when a young girl offers her a seat on the bus, brings unbidden tears to Hagar's eyes. Moments like these, as when she wishes to reach out and touch Doris, are emblematic of her need to overcome her fear of the female and accept her own womanhood.

Her image of herself in youth is of an animal owned by Jason Currie; "the dark maned colt off to the training ring, the young ladies' academy" (p. 42). She has no true sense of her womanhood as her own possession. Indeed, 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.

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 for her feminine nature, is, ironically, rooted in the mother-daughter relationship. Signe Hammer, in Daughters and Mothers / Mothers and Daughters, describes the mother's nurturing and protecting influence in early life as an "enabling" one. This aspect of mothering "involves support for the child's developing autonomy in which a mother encourages a child to grow and develop as an individual in her own right."[6] If the "enabling" influence of the mother is missing from the girl's life she cannot then become a truly adult woman able to offer love to those around her.

This state of remaining emotionally in childhood 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). Hagar's emotional life is just this frozen-child state waiting to be born through the mother's love. Psychologically, emotionally, she has imitated the only concept of motherhood she has ever known. She has become the cold angel, like her father's stone monument to womanhood. She has never left maidenhood, despite all her experience as wife, mother, wage earner, mother-in-law and grandmother. She is frozen in a lifetime of gestures of proper appearance until thawed by acts of love on the part of other women. It is important to note that no loving acts of men, nor their suffering, have ever in the past unlocked Hagar's heart. Not Bram's love, nor his need for her; not John's death, nor Marvin's devoted life could substitute for Hagar the "enabling" relationship with a maternal figure.

Although much has been written about the process whereby Hagar in her last days comes to terms with herself,[7] insufficient attention has been paid to the importance of feminine contacts in her growth. Similarly, although most critics are aware of the role played by Murray Ferney Lees in Hagar's course of readjustment, the role played by a number of surrogate mothers has not been adequately recognized, nor the extent to which Lees himself functions in this capacity.

Doris, her first mother-surrogate, performs toward Hagar all the roles of the mother of a small child. She changes her wet sheets and even manicures her (pp. 72-3). From feeding, to doctor's appointments, to arranging for babysitters, Doris is Hagar's mother more than she is her

daughter-in-law. As her helplessness increases, and her need for Doris' mothering grows, Hagar's strong pride begins to crack. On the way to Silverthreads, Hagar is thinking her usual scathing thoughts about Doris who is admiring the calves in the field, but then thinks grudgingly: "I always had some feeling for any creature struggling awkward and unknowing into life" (p. 94). Thus, without consciously admiting it she acknowledges that she and Doris may share similar feminine values.

It is at the old folks home that Hagar meets with the second mothering experience of her old age, in the form of her encounter with Mrs. Steiner, the Jewish mother. Although Hagar is careful to insist on her separateness from such a woman and her predicament, it is Mrs. Steiner's words that 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?" This definition of what is for many women the sadness and mystery of the female condition moves Hagar to a sarcastic admission: "You're right. I never got used to a blessed thing" (p. 104).

Hagar instinctively feels such a need to salvage a part of herself left undiscovered that she determines to "find some place to go, some hidden place" (p. 105). She is not just speaking of running away from the perceived indignity of being put in an old folk's home; she is also seeking unconsciously the hidden place inside herself that will allow her finally to "get used to" some of the things that have happened to

her but which she has never truly felt.

Jung describes the phenomenon of the change that can overtake such a woman in later life:

> This type started out in the world with averted face, like Lot's wife looking back on Sodom and Gomorrah. And all the while the world and life pass by her like a dream--an annoying source of illusions, disappointments, and irritations . . . . But if she should later turn her face, she will see the world for the first time, so to speak, in the light of maturity, and see it embellished with all the colors and enchanting wonders of youth, and sometimes even of childhood. It is a vision that brings knowledge and discovery of truth, the indispensable prerequisite for consciousness. A part of life was lost, but the meaning of life has been salvaged for her. ("The Mother Archetype," p. 350)

The experience at Shadow Point is the beginning of this salvage operation for Hagar. Coming to terms with feminine values is largely accomplished for her through her identification of her womanhood with the figure of Meg Merrilies. Laurence is careful to locate the poem Hagar remembers in the Keats cannon so that the reader can locate the source of the allusion and appreciate that it provides a view of womanhood that is, at this point, still outside Hagar's experience. It is the image of woman outside the civilized order whose "house was out of doors," whose "bed it was the brown heath turf" (p. 151), that Hagar needs to touch in herself. Meg is also "brave as Margaret Queen" and "tall as Amazon" (p. 163) thus representing a womanly strength based on a female tradition rather than a denial of femininity. The fact that Meg's "bed" is the "brown heath turf" connotes not only the earth-mother aspect of the figure, but also indicates the old gypsy's connection with the mother as the archetypal female figure that welcomes the individual to death.

Meg Merrilies is an outcast, one of the dispossessed highland Scots from whom Hagar is descended.[8] The sense that Hagar has been deprived of her birthright, her maternal inheritance, is strengthened by this comparison. Now she searches for what she has lost and realizes that she has perhaps "come here not to hide but to seek" (p. 192). Like some ancient Venus, she allows her hair to spread out and places the June bugs, "jade and copper pieces" in her hair to become "queen of moth-millers, empress of earwigs" (p. 216).

The act of decking herself out as a kind of gypsy queen symbolically prepares her for her third surrogate "mother." Murray Lees would seem an unlikely mother-figure but Hagar relates to him as if he were a female, or at least a non-male figure. She first meets him through his voice, which is "high and fluting as one imagines a eunuch's would be" (p. 220). Lees becomes a kind of modern version of a eunuch serving Cybele, the Mother of the Gods. He himself emphasizes his identification with the feminine through his own mother, by explaining that his middle name, his floral name, was his mother's maiden name. His mother, Rose Ferney, wished him to be a poet. Now he serves a symbolically poetic role in Hagar's life as he is the catalyst by which she is released from her guilt into a more blessed state. He offers Hagar a communion of wine and crackers which unlocks her grief and guilt from her past lack of motherliness.

Penelope Washbourn sees this kind of absolution as essential in old age since "There is an important task in old age for reviewing, for reassimilating, for story-telling, and for coming to terms with previous disappointments and failures. We need to forgive ourselves; we need to

learn to have no regrets about what we did and did not do. We need to free ourselves from the burden of guilt about the past."[9] Ultimately, what Lees gives Hagar is the chance to receive the maternal comfort of his presence and support during the grief and the pain of her confession concerning her son John's death. By telling the story of this tragedy to Lees and weeping a mother's grief, an act she never allowed herself at the time of the real death, she is able to purge her guilt.

After this absolution, Hagar is, herself, able to offer a gentler face to Murray Lees. She says, "I didn't mean to speak crossly. I--I'm sorry about your boy" (p. 253). She realizes that "having spoken so I feel lightened and eased. He looks surprised and shaken, yet somehow restored" (p. 252). This is Hagar's first real act of mothering, the first time she has reached out to touch another person without qualification, rationalization or reserve of morality. She acts "impulsively, hardly knowing what I'm doing" (p. 253). The night her son John died Hagar was "transformed to stone and never wept at all" (p. 243). Her new growth as a result of her experience at Shadow Point increasingly allows her to release her emotions and to participate in the instinctive, feeling level of her own life.

The setting for this heightened sense of her own womanhood is the old woman's public ward of a large modern hospital. Here, besides the nurses, she meets three ancient ladies who come to represent for Hagar a new view of womanhood. While symbols of frozen womanhood, especially the stone angel, dominate the early chapters, the last two chapters have the hospital and its female inhabitants, both patients and nurses, as their central symbols. Hagar sees each bed in this "bedlam" (p. 255)

as containing a female "body" (p. 254), not a person. Within moments she becomes part of this anonymous group, a kind of chorus of doomed women who cry their fear into a night-time of delirium (pp. 256-57). The emotions, the voices, seem to come out of an unconscious dimension. To Hagar the public ward is "a mewling nursery of old ladies" (p. 264). Ironically, it is to become the symbolic nursery of her rebirth, where she is to experience what Jung calls "the colors and enchanting wonders" of life, aspects of herself that rise out of her unconscious into her consciousness.

The first indication we have of the healing effect of this symbolic place is in Hagar's more positive attitude toward other women. Washbourn says that for the old woman "being placed more extensively in the company of other women can be a destructive experience if our only understanding of being a woman is based on a relationship to a man. Learning to like other women can be a new experience" (p. 146). Hagar is still capable of real annoyance at other women, particularly those in authority. Of the pill-nurse she says, "I'd stab her to the very heart, if I had a weapon and the strength to do it. I'd good-girl her, the impudent creature" (p. 256). At the same time she is able to accept the kindness of the night nurse because "This woman's different, ample, with specks of grey in her brown hair. She's not condescending. How I like her matter-of-factness. But it weakens me, all the same, and undermines my nerve, as always when I'm sympathized with, and I find I'm shamefully clinging to her arm and crying and cannot seem to stop" (pp. 257-8). Although Hagar still consciously considers the acceptance of sympathy as weakness, it is important to note that she is able to cling, able to cry, able to respond to the act of mothering.

The nurse is a conventional symbol of the mother as nurturer. Less easily seen perhaps is the positive image of woman presented by Elva Jardine, Mrs. Dobereiner and Mrs. Reilly. This ethnically and religiously mixed trinity offers a view of suffering womanhood which at first would seem to confirm the very weakness that Hagar has always feared. Elva Jardine is so dependent on her husband Tom that she calls out to him at night. Mrs. Reilly is a prisoner of her "mountain of flesh" (p. 259), and poor Mrs. Dobereiner understands no English and can communicate with no one. In the night hours she laments:

> *Ich weiss nicht was soll es bedeuten*
> *Dass ich so traurig bin*--
> *Ein Märchen aus uralten Zeiten*
> *Das geht mir nicht aus dem Sinn*--(pp. 256-57)
>
> [I know not what it means
> That I am so sorrowful--
> A fairy tale from the ancient times--
> That won't leave my mind--]

These three women may seem to Hagar like three hags from a fairy tale but their very fairy tale quality signals their archetypal roles. They are 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 all she meets. She is generous in her dispensing of this care to Hagar and allows Hagar to form her first friendly contact with a female contemporary. Mrs. Reilly, despite her apparent ugliness, has the voice of an angel "clear and musical" (p. 259), and a religious belief that allows her to pray to the mother, "Holy Mother of God . . . Health of the weak. Refuge of sinners-- . . . Queen of Apostles, Queen of Martyrs, pray for us" (p. 257). Appropriately, for one who has a felt connection

with the mother goddess, she has a daughter who brings her flowers (p. 267). Mrs. Dobereiner's song is, in the end, Hagar's own desire to be released from suffering into joy:

> *Mein Gott, erlöse mich--*
> *Erlöse mich von meinen Schmerzen* (p. 275)
>
> . . . .
>
> *Es zieht in Freud und Leide:*
> *Zu ihm mich immer fort--* (p. 281)
>
> [My God, let me go
> Let me go from my Pain
> In Joy and Sorrow
> I am always drawn towards him]

These three women represent the three qualities of womanhood that Hagar gains in her last days. Elva's ability to respond to each individual's special need is reflected in Hagar's new willingness to give Marvin the lie that is not a lie but a mother's blessing (p. 293). Mrs. Dobereiner's instinctive need to find joy at the center of living in order to be released from pain is also Hagar's desire. Both women find it through song. Hagar becomes conscious of her past lack of feeling when Reverend Troy sings reluctantly but beautifully of rejoicing, and she suddenly realizes her life's loss:

> This knowing comes upon me so forcefully, so shatteringly, and with such a bitterness as I have never felt before. I must always, always, have wanted that--simply to rejoice. How is it I never could? I know. How long have I known? Or have I always known, in some far crevice of my heart, some cave too deeply buried, too concealed? Every good joy I might have held, in my man or any child of mine or even the plain light of morning, of walking the earth, all were forced to a standstill by some brake of proper appearances--

> oh, proper to whom? When did I ever speak the heart's truth? (p. 292)

This great change in Hagar's consciousness is accompanied by a further growth that is symbolized by the third old woman, Mrs. Reilly. Her ability to hold on to a maternal religious sense in her moment of need, and as a result to be able to relate positively to her daughter, is a quality that Hagar has never had.

The positive effect of this female trinity is reflected in three acts of Hagar's. First, she asks to have her granddaughter's perfume brought to her (p. 263). Of all the possessions she could have asked to be brought from home, this one shows best her new need to be in touch with her feminine nature. Second, she now requests that her ring be given to Tina and apologizes to Doris for never having offered it to her, the daughter-in-law (p. 279). Finally, the short, funny and moving relationship with Sandra Wong, who becomes Hagar's surrogate-daughter, reflects Hagar's new maturity as a woman.

Laurence's symbols at this point of the novel become more explicitly maternal. In his chapter "The Central Symbolism of the Feminine" Neumann says "the basic symbolic equation woman = body = vessel corresponds to what is perhaps mankind's--man's as well as woman's--most elementary experience of the Feminine" (p. 39). The symbolism is of death as well as life because "the vessel character of the Feminine not only shelters the unborn in the vessel of the body, and not only the born in the vessel of the world, but also takes back the dead into the vessel of death, the cave or coffin, the tomb or urn" (p. 45). Hagar enters the small enclosed world of her semi-private room observing that the next room will be the smallest

of all (p. 282). Here, in the womb-like atmosphere of the small room, the vessel symbolism of the maternal principle is reduced to the dimensions of a bedpan, but nevertheless plays an important function in Hagar's realization of her maternality.

Appropriately, in terms of her symbolic value, Sandra Wong is the granddaughter of one of the small "foot-bound" women who risked their lives in Mr. Oakley's false-bottomed boats so that such new world hybrids as Sandra could come into being. Hagar, emerging from her own emotional bondage in the patriarchal past into a fuller possession of her maternal inheritance, is able to offer comfort to this girl when her need is greatest. She is able now to make the first gesture of friendship in a relationship with another female by asking "How are you feeling?" (p. 298). The step seems small but Hagar has never taken any initiative in friendship before. Despite the girl's intolerance toward Hagar when she discovers Hagar is dying, Hagar is able to continue in her generous attitude.

Neumann points out that the feminine vessel symbol has both elementary and transformative dimensions. One set of symbols "belongs to the vessel character of the belly . . . . Here the elementary formal character of the Great Round predominates, but the creative aspect of the uterus and the potentiality of transformation also play a part." The symbols "deriving from the breasts of the woman-vessel consist of the . . . . vessel, bowl, goblet, chalice, grail. It combines the elementary character of containing with that of nourishing" (pp. 46-47). Thus the "bedpan" scene, on the surface so understated, even humorous, has powerful symbolic dimensions. The bedpan, womb shaped, and thus a symbol of the elementary character of the feminine, is identified by

Hagar as a "grail," thus emphasizing its importance as a symbol of transformation. It is in the mothering act toward Sandra that Hagar's final growth as a woman takes place.

The symbolic scene begins with images of "night deep and dark" (p. 298), when Hagar, despite her feeling of being a lump of coal at the bottom of a coal scuttle, is able to come out of this emotional and physical blankness, muster the energy to remember Sandra's name and to rise from her own death-bed to bring the girl some relief. The sense of some mothering instinct rising out of the darkness of the unconscious is strong, and the seemingly comic act of helping another to relieve her bladder is, despite its mundaneness, or perhaps because of it, an integrally maternal act. Outside of feeding, no other act so practically defines what mothering is than the act of cleaning the defecating child. These two nurturing acts, feeding and cleaning, are the central acts of mothering. Hagar herself sees the bringing of the bedpan in similar symbolic terms, describing her action in terms of having "gained the shiny steel grail" (p. 301). The grail, symbolic of the female nurturing function, lies at the end of Hagar's quest for womanhood, and she concludes that it "wasn't so difficult after all" (p. 301). Companions in their pain, the two women share laughter, occasioned by their brief mother-daughter relationship; "convulsed with our paining laughter, we bellow and wheeze. And then we peacefully sleep" (p. 302).

In his chapter on "Spiritual Transformation: Woman and the Eleusian Mysteries," Neumann explains that a woman's experience of herself as "the source of life" has close connections with her experience of herself as mother of a daughter. But Neumann points out that to see

this underlying mother-daughter unity we must "first remove the upper layer before we can see the matriarchal culture beneath" (The Great Mother, pp. 305-07). In the same manner, if we remove all the upper layers, the conscious happenings of the last chapter of Laurence's The Stone Angel, and examine the underlying primary relationship, what we discover is a young girl and an old woman, side by side in their hospital beds--in short the iconography of the Demeter-Kore relationship.

When Sandra is well she returns Hagar's mothering gesture by giving her a dab of her erotically named perfume "Ravishing" (p. 303). Like a modern Kore, blessing her mother for rescuing her, she dabs each of Hagar's wrists and says, "Now you smell like a garden." Hagar replies, "Well, that's a change" (p. 303). In these small understated events Laurence offers the essence of the "change" that has occurred in Hagar Currie Shipley. She has become a mother, able to give and receive love with her symbolic daughter. Now able to admit her feminine nature she is also able to admit fear and give her blessing to her son (pp. 303-4). Hagar, herself aware that the symbolic importance of her acts is greater than it seems, muses that "the paraphernalia [is] unequal to the event's reach" (p. 307).

* * *

Thus far, this discussion of the mother-daughter relationship in The Stone Angel has focused largely on Hagar's relationship with a series of mother-surrogates and an analysis of how the process of individuation is reflected and enhanced by the symbols and images of the novel. Laurence's concern with the mother-daughter relationship is not narrowly psychological, however, and what I now wish to consider is the religious

implications of this motif.

Hagar Currie grows up and grows old schooled in a patriarchal religious tradition of the kind that Angelika Maeser describes in her discussion of the religious dimension of the protagonists' quests in Laurence's fiction.[10] The religious traditions of Hagar's upbringing are ones to which her unconscious need for maternal values makes her hostile. Much of the hostility is unconscious and reaches us only through her cranky complaining against Reverend Troy, but the reader is aware from the beginning that Hagar blames her God, exactly in the way she has been taught that ethics and morality consist primarily of finding appropriate places to lay blame. She has merely added another twist to this profoundly rationalistic and paternalistic concept of assigning blame. She lays some of the blame on God, a God that for her is integrally connected with her father: "Father didn't hold it [her mother's death] against me . . . . I know because he told me" (p. 59). Telling a young child that she is not to blame is, of course, to imply that there is indeed blame and it must be assigned somewhere. This is Hagar's first lesson in paternal ethics. She learns later, through the event of the bugs in the sultanas (pp. 9-10), that to appear pure is more important than being pure. So she absorbs her father's need to project all guilt onto some external cause and his desire for proper appearances, even before she goes to school.

Nothing in Hagar's upbringing denies the validity of these values, and when life goes badly despite the fact that she seems to be behaving correctly, her logic tells her that God must be at fault. When Reverend Troy speaks of "God's infinite mercy," Hagar snaps, "What's so merciful about Him, I'd like to know?" (p. 120). Her hostility to the conventional

god she herself believes in is expressed in her bitterness during Bram's dying days: "I could not speak for the salt that filled my throat, and for anger--not at anyone, at God, perhaps, for giving us eyes but almost never sight" (p. 173). Later she sees herself and Lottie as two old women "pitting our wits against God's (p. 212). The competitiveness and antagonism she feels come from her perception of God as a punishing, unmerciful father-figure, on the one hand, and his Son as an ineffectual sacrificial victim like her mother, on the other.

Later in life, marooned at Shadow Point, Hagar remembers the prairie thunderstorms when "the lightning would rend the sky like an angry claw at the cloak of God." On the other hand she sees the coast rain as "mild" yet persistent (p. 161). Such images indicate that unconsciously Hagar's religious orientation is changing. Principally, she expresses her strong desire to return to the ocean. In his exploration of modern primitivism, James Baird speaks of the prevalence of water imagery in modern literature as symbolizing "the primal water which created all life, and must claim all life in the end. Death by water, commonly regarded as one of the major obsessions of the poet in the twentieth century, is foretold in these images of the sea from primitivism . . . . For death by water in our recent poetry means essentially the return of life to the matrix of creation. It is the ultimate destiny of life, born of the timelessness of Sea, bearing upon its face in birth the prefiguration of its watery death."[11] It is Hagar's desire to return to the "matrix" that makes her imagine that she is "tiaraed with starfish thorny and purple, braceleted with shells linked on limp chains of weed, waiting until my encumbrance of flesh floated clean away and I was free and skeletal and

could journey with tides and fishes" (p. 162). This need to rip away her old flesh, symbolic of her old persona, and put on the crown and bracelet of the natural elements, represented by the sea, expresses her desire to shed the old morality and replace it with something else. This new acceptance of feminine-maternal values is also expressed in her recitation of the lines of the Meg Merriles poem, which "give [her] courage, more than if [she had] recited the Twenty-third Psalm" (p. 163). The Psalm would have offered her a fatherly shepherd for her journey through the darkness. The romantic poem offers a vision of herself making the feminine quest on her own. Her chant of brave old Meg as "tall as Amazon" gives her a vision of female strength that she has previously lacked.

Hagar's patriarchal religious concepts are further broken down by her meeting with Murray Lees. He tells the story of his and his wife's experience with evangelical religion which led to the death of their child. His wife's guilt concerning this loss leads to an aversion to sex and Lees tells Hagar that "God is Love, but please don't mention the two in the same breath" (p. 228). Lees regrets the split between spirit and flesh which evangelical religious fervor has occasioned in his wife's attitudes. Although Hagar defensively maintains that "I never had anything to do with those sects" (p. 229), she is a victim of the same lack of integration. Traditional protestant religion of the Presbyterian kind is shown to create the cold, emotionally blocked materialism of Hagar. The evangelical Christianity of the "Redeemer's Advocates" is shown to lead to the obsession with "vigils at the Tabernacle" (p. 231) that is the fate of Lou Lees. We are left with Hagar's unconscious attempt to

discover a religious principle of her own.

The closest she comes to the conscious articulation of such a principle is in the recognition that the rules she lived by have been just "some brake of proper appearances" (p. 292). When Hagar realizes that she has never felt joy in any part of life she admits that "Pride was my wilderness and the demon that led me there was fear" (p. 292). This fear is the necessary result of a religious belief based on excluding a part of human nature as sinful in essence. In the Judaeo-Christian tradition the sinful part is generally symbolized by darkness whereas good is figured as light. In this connection we note that Hagar perceives her own womanhood as such a darkness. She says of Bram making love to her that "he could slither and swim like an eel in a pool of darkness" (p. 116). Since Hagar has internalized the good-evil, light-darkness dichotomy of Christian religion she has also assumed the corollary principle of assigning blame. To keep oneself pure, away from darkness, without blame, demands constant vigilance on the part of the Christian, resulting in an accompanying fear that leads easily to the self-protective sin of pride.

Christian religion puts great emphasis on the removal of the sinful part of human nature through some sacramental action, water in baptism, drinking of Christ's blood through the communion wine, the "born again" emotion of adult baptism and the sin-dissolving oil of the last rites. With a very different objective, Laurence shows Hagar as going through a similar progression of sacraments. She seeks a kind of baptism into a new life when she goes to the salt water of Shadow Point. This is the place where the ocean will wash things clean, make her "free and skeletal." In

addition, since the ocean is the "matrix of creation," it represents a desire to return to that "pool of darkness" that is womanhood, Hagar's own metaphor of the womb. With Murray Lees, Hagar takes a communion in which the wine frees her conscience from its past restraints and allows her to seek her second birth. Through the joyful emotional experience of Reverend Troy's song she is born again in consciousness.

To this point, Hagar's two reluctant priests have been male, with specific Christian credentials. But Hagar's last rites are administered by her surrogate-daughter, a little, second-generation Chinese-Canadian female whose religious affiliation is at best uncertain. She does not offer the balming oil to ankles, wrists and brow, only a perfume called "Ravishing" to Hagar's wrists to make her "smell like a garden" (p. 303). But there is no doubt of the effect of this rite. Sandra has been the means of Hagar's release into love, and so hers is the last blessing Hagar receives in a series of blessings from female figures.

Laurence's use of these sacramental symbols is thus ironic, and the effect of Hagar's sacraments is not to free her from original sin, or the blame of her sins accumulated in a fault-filled life. Rather, the effect of these new sacraments is to free Hagar, however incompletely, from these very reward-punishment patriarchal concepts of the Judaeo-Christian traditions from which these sacraments derive. The return to the ocean is her return to a condition of innocence before the overlay of her father's values. Her experience with Lees allows her to discard fault-finding as a basis for morality and assure him that "No one's to blame" (p. 234). In the hospital she learns to value the joy of human relationship above the stern morality of her Protestant past. James Baird notes in his chapter "Perdita: The Volcanic Center," that "the threadbare

Protestant sacrament" (p. 80) leaves the individual without a sufficient symbol system with which to explore the psychic world. This presents a feeling of loss where the individual, like Hagar, must seek to rediscover the symbols. Baird says that "To rediscover the gods as psychic factors is simply to be stripped of allegiances to existing symbols for God and to proceed to make new symbols in agreement with one's psychic condition" (p. 62).

Hagar's psychic condition is of woman feeling a profound yet unconscious lack of the mother-daughter relationship in its practical and religious dimensions. Her quest is away from a tradition that offers her the values of light, logic and paternal godhead and toward the values of darkness, emotion, instinct and maternality.

Baird, quoting Melville, says that the symbols of Christianity have come to represent a "palsied universe." But he sees this imbalance as correcting itself because "the inventiveness of the individual endures. There is no end to the possibility of new prophets and new messiahs; nor is there any limit to be placed upon the importation and extension of old symbols into unaccustomed parts of the world" (p. 4). Laurence engages in this process, which is essentially the refreshing of existing forms, not only through the "extension of old symbols" but also through her treatment of time, which involves the breakdown of the historical-linear concept of cause and effect associated with the Judaeo-Christian world-view.

The use of time in Laurence's novels is a favorite topic of discussion, and critics like Barry Callahan have regretted the "mechanical" nature of the flashbacks in <u>The Stone Angel</u>.[12] Hagar's ramblings are mechanical only on a surface level, however, for her recall operates on at least two

associative levels.[13] One is a surface, material level where things present remind her of things past. This is appropriate to a woman who in her childhood has learned to value things above people. For example, in chapter two Hagar's memory of early life in Manawaka would appear to be caused by such obvious stimuli as talking about her father's worldly goods which did not come to her, or perhaps seeing her own grey hair reminds her of the grey boards of the Shipley farm home (pp. 40-41). But at a deeper level, the memory sequence is first stimulated when Hagar sees her own eyes: "Hagar Currie, the same dark eyes as when I first began to remember to notice myself" (p. 38). Thus her memories of herself as a girl are connected to her first consciousness of herself as an individual and her sense of continuity between the past and present. Just before the memory sequence of chapter two begins Hagar has the "Feeling that if I were to walk carefully up to my room,approach the mirror softly, take it by surprise, I would see again that Hagar with the shining hair" (p. 42). Thus the present and the past start to co-exist for her.

The second level of memory-stimuli offers a level of searching the past that is more personal than the talk of her father's goods. This double recall, memory of things, and introspective memory of self operates throughout the book. It is interesting that Hagar uses the word "feeling" in the mirror passage, because it is toward "feeling" that the more introspective level of memory will lead her. In the same chapter it would seem that the materialistically-minded Hagar takes an inventory of past events in the life of the people closest to her through the device of taking an inventory of her possessions and her pictures (pp. 58-60). But at the same time the deeper insight into her past is given us through

her memory of a fight she had with Bram over his rude personal habits (pp. 79-81), which reveals the sublety of their love-hate relationship. This memory is not precipitated by any mechanical association of objects but by another fight she has, this time with her son, about moving to Silverthreads (pp. 72-77).

The same doubleness in Hagar's associative memory can be traced throughout the book. For example, consider Hagar's last two memory sequences. In chapter ten she remembers her last trip to Manawaka when she saw the Currie-Shipley stone in the cemetery and realized that they are "Both the same. Nothing to pick and choose between them now" (p. 306). This memory seems to have a simple cause-effect coupling with what has just happened in her present life. She has erased the difference she has always maintained between her "Shipley" son, Marvin, and her "Currie" son, John, by giving Marvin her blessing (p. 304). Then Hagar has a short moment of memory when she recalls how her son John fought for breath when he was born. At a conscious, logical level the memory can be seen as the effect of her current preoccupation with her two sons. But at a deeper level the memory can be associated with Hagar's own difficulty in moving into an "unfamiliar air" (p. 307). Hagar's memory, for the first time, has a future referent. She is no longer trying to justify the past or understand the present through memory. She is making a leap of faith into the future: "Perhaps the same occurs elsewhere, an element so unknown you'd never suspect it at all until--" (p. 307).

The past-present relationship is one that Hagar has always sought because of her need to make cause-effect sense of her memories. She seeks now, however, not to assign cause or blame, but to find similarity. She compares the entrance to the afterlife to the entrance of a child into the

mortal life. In seeking similarity, repetition, she seeks cyclicality. Laurence says of her own feeling about time "that the past and the future are both always present, present in both senses of the word, always now and always here with us."[14] Mircea Eliade calls this sense of time "eternal return" observing that "The phases of the moon--appearance, increase, wane, disappearance, followed by reappearance after three nights of darkness--have played an immense part in the elaboration of cyclical concepts."[15] In Woman's Mysteries, Esther Harding connects the sense of time as moon cycle more directly to feminine-maternal views of the absolute and sees the reconnection with "the initiations of the moon goddess"[16] as a way out of the deprivation of feminine values in modern life.

Hagar, always deprived of the feminine-maternal world-view, becomes aware for the first time in her life, at an emotional if not a rational level, of the cyclicality of life's experiences, and sees that death is an event very much like birth, a completion of a circle which ends in an entrance to a new cycle of life. At this moment in the book Laurence has turned the memory order around. Hagar's memories have had a neat linear-historical logic. Memories from her earliest childhood followed by youth, marriage, middle age, parallel her historical movement through old age, sickness, to near death. Now Hagar follows a memory of middle age, the cemetery memory (p. 305), with a memory of the birth of her second child. This switch in time sequence indicates Hagar's acceptance of cyclic time, a feminine-maternal concept, as her new reality.

Before leaving this brief discussion of how Laurence's use of time reflects an exploration toward feminine values, we may note that when we compare the first and last chapters in terms of their time-preoccupations

we see an interesting change in focus. Chapter one is almost entirely a memory of things past (pp. 1-28) followed by some moments in Hagar's present life (pp. 28-39). Chapter ten is almost entirely preoccupied with Hagar's present life (pp. 282-306), with the two brief memories already referred to. This change is an indication of a movement away from her obsession with past causes to a concern for participation in the opportunities for joy in the present. It also indicates a religious movement away from a patriarchal world-view that emphasizes cause-effect moral behavior based on logical rules and notions of reward and punishment, toward a maternal world-view in which one responds to the needs of the present moment through a freeing of the positive values of emotion and instinct. In such a world-view, the past is not remembered through recall on a cognitive level, but re-membered through a felt participation in life's cycles.

Hagar's last ambiguous moments leave the reader with, at best, a view of her as only partially in possession of her new values. She herself holds two views of her own behavior, knowing she is "daft" and yet knowing it is her "nature" to behave in this stubborn, independent manner. If anything, the last page of the novel shows that it is impossible to replace entirely in the second childhood what has been missed in the first. No matter how many mothering experiences Hagar has received in her last days, she still missed the first shaping relationship between the mother and daughter. Therefore the new values that have surged up in her have been only partially incorporated into her consciousness. A change in values can be said to require four operations of the psyche: emotional awakening, conscious realization, articulation and incorporation. In the few weeks of life during which we watch Hagar change, she has time

only for partial progress at all levels.

C. M. McLay has said that Laurence's portrayal of the "sense of isolation, where human beings reach out to each other and reach out futilely makes The Stone Angel an achievement "in Canadian and in world literature."[17] Hagar's achievements in her last days, a "joke" and "a lie," the latter her blessing to her son, the first her blessing to her surrogate daughter, may seem paltry accomplishments in ninety years of life. But Hagar calls them "victories" (p. 307), and when we consider the distance she has had to reach out to find the mother and the scant hand-holds her society offered her in her search for matrimony, we may be inclined to agree with her assessment of victory, and conclude that 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.

Notes: Chapter I

[1] Margaret Laurence, The Stone Angel (Toronto, 1964), p. 5. All further references will be to this edition and will be cited in the text.

[2] Carl Jung, "The Stages of Life," in The Portable Jung, ed., Joseph Campbell (Hardmondsworth, 1971), p. 12.

[3] Jung, "Aion: Phenomenology of the Self," in The Portable Jung, p. 152.

[4] Phillis Chesler, Women and Madness, (New York, 1972), p. 16.

[5] Dennis Cooley, "Antimacassared in the Wilderness: Art and Nature in The Stone Angel," Mosaic, 11 (Spring 1978), 33, 38.

[6] Signe Hammer, Daughters and Mothers / Mothers and Daughters (New York, 1975), p. 19.

[7] Cathy N. Davidson in "Past and Perspective in Margaret Laurence's The Stone Angel," The American Review of Canadian Studies, 8 (Autumn 1978), 61-69, sees Hagar as living out a "victim role" which she must discard by re-dramatizing her past to "become the narrator of her own story;" Joan Coldwell, in "Hagar as Meg Merrilies, the Homeless Gypsy," Journal of Canadian Fiction, 27 (Fall 1980), 92-100, sees the growth process as a movement from Presbyterian pride to a more romantic view of life; J. M. Kertzer in "The Stone Angel: Time and Responsibility," in The Dalhousie Review, 54 (Autumn 1974), 499-509, posits that the process is primarily a conscious, rational and moral one.

[8] Coldwell, "Hagar as Meg Merrilies," p. 95. Coldwell explains the connections between Laurence's, Walter Scott's and the historical Meg.

[9] Penelope Washbourn, Becoming Woman (New York, 1977), p. 146.

[10] Angelika Maeser, "Finding the Mother: The Individuation of Laurence's Heroines," Journal of Canadian Fiction, 27 (1980), 151-66.

[11] James Baird, Ishmael (Baltimore, 1956), pp. 348-49.

[12] Barry Callahan, "Writings of Margaret Laurence," Tamarack Review, 36 (Summer 1965), 45-51. See also Barbara Hebner, "River of now and then: Margaret Laurence's Narratives," Canadian Literature, 74 (Autumn 1977), 40-47, for a rather negative assessment of Laurence's technique.

[13] Leona Gom, "Laurence and the Use of Memory," Canadian Literature, No 71 (Winter 1976), 48-58, calls Laurence's use of memory "associative" and explores the use of the device in the Manawaka works.

[14] Margaret Laurence, "Time and the Narrative Voice," in Margaret Laurence: The Writer and her Critics, ed., William H. New (Toronto, 1977), p. 157.

[15] Mircea Eliade, The Myth of the Eternal Return (New York, 1954), trans. Williard R. Trask, p. 86.

[16] M. Esther Harding, Women's Mysteries, Ancient and Modern: A Psychological Interpretation of the Feminine Principle as Portrayed in Myth, Story and Dreams (New York, 1971), p. xv.

[17] C. M. McLay, "Every Man is an Island: Isolation in A Jest of God," Canadian Literature, No. 50 (Autumn 1971), 58.

CHAPTER II

Rachel and Stacey: The Voiceless Vision

> Man struggles with his unborn needs and fulfilment. New unfoldings struggle up in torment in him, as buds struggle forth from the midst of a plant. Any man of real individuality tries to know and to understand what is happening, even in himself, as he goes along. The struggle for verbal consciousness should not be left out in art. It is a very great part of life. It is not superimposition of a theory. It is the passionate struggle into conscious being."
>
> (D. H. Lawrence, Foreword to *Women in Love*)

Hagar's struggle to express her "unborn needs," to "understand what is happening" inside herself, is hampered by the shortness of the time left to her and by her non-maternal upbringing. Her two immediate successors in Laurence's fictional world, the Cameron sisters, are raised in a world where patriarchal values are losing their former power but where what D. H. Lawrence calls "the struggle for verbal consciousness" on the part of woman remains an extremely difficult task.

Early in Laurence's "sister" novels, *A Jest of God* and *The Fire-Dwellers*, there are emblematic episodes that indicate the need of each woman to express her emotions and thoughts. Stacey, in *The Fire-Dwellers*, is obsessed with her youngest daughter's inability to speak. Our first view of her shows her attempting to teach Jen "a few human words."[1] Jen speaks in her own language, answering all inquiries with "mumble mumble

squawk" (p. 5). Jen's inability to communicate is similar to Stacey's own problem in making herself understood. At a university night class she quarrels briefly with the professor's patriarchal interpretation of the Agamemnon-Clytemnestra story. Heatedly, she exclaims: "The king sacrificed their youngest daughter for success in war--what's the queen supposed to do, shout for joy?" (p. 32). But Stacey's angry defense of outraged motherhood is quickly dropped, not only because she lacks the personal confidence or knowledge to press her view in such an open forum, but also because she has never articulated the feminine values that lie behind her automatic defense of Clytemnestra's conduct. Stacey does not know that she is trying to defend the sanctity of the mother-daughter relationship.

Rachel's moment of speaking out is in a very public forum, Manawaka's fundamentalist protestant Tabernacle. More dramatically than Stacey's moment, it illustrates the problem of a woman's suppressed voice when Rachel finds herself speaking in tongues: "That voice! Chattering, crying, ululating, the forbidden transformed cryptically to nonsense, dragged from the crypt, stolen and shouted, the shuddering of it, the fear, the breaking, the release, the grieving . . . . The voice of Rachel."[2] Rachel's voice feels "dragged from the crypt" because her true feelings, like those of her sister, have remained largely in the unconscious, emerging only as fantasy and inner voices which create contradictions with outer realities in the women's lives. These first attempts at articulation are abortive and embarrassing for both women, but their need to express themselves, and thus to make conscious their true selves, continues.

The causes of the sisters' problem have been interpreted in several ways by Laurence critics. George Bowering emphasizes that the Manawaka setting, with its Scottish Christian background, is a major influence in Rachel's life because "the town teaches not only repression but also the desire to put on a good appearance."[3] Kenneth G. Russell sees the sisters' problem as a religious one and identifies the lack of "some transcendent sense" as the key factor.[4] Donna A. Bennett identifies the "failure of women to create genuine community among themselves" as the central issue.[5] Several critics have also noted the importance in the heroines' lives of words, of expression, of speaking aloud. Theo Quale Dombrowski, for example, points out that Laurence repeatedly concerns herself with "characters frantic to explain, often frustrated because they cannot find adequate words, because some acts transcend words, or because words themselves are untrustworthy."[6] Sound in their own right, however, such interpretations fail to take into consideration the degree to which May Cameron affects her daughters and the connection between the inability to articulate and that very basic relationship, the mother-daughter bond. It is the very intimate relationship with her mother that keeps Rachel emotionally a twelve-year old, while it is because May has no dominance in her world that her daughter's problems exist.

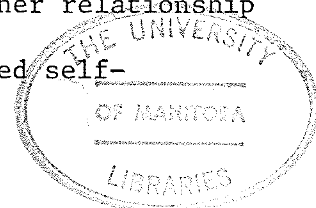
Signe Hammer emphasizes the "underground" nature of the mother-daughter relationship which she sees as caused by the fact that "In western cultural tradition women are regarded and portrayed largely in terms of their relationships with men . . . . Most of what passes between a mother and daughter falls outside the acknowledged social context . . . .

This has the paradoxical effect of making the mother-daughter relationship an 'underground' one, whose emotional power and importance may be increased precisely because it is underground" (p. xiv). This powerful, underground relationship inevitably affects articulation. Rachel and Stacey from the beginning of their lives are exposed to May Cameron's philosophy of what is "nice," especially what is "nice" to say. In addition to directing her girls only to express the "nice" thoughts and feelings, May has adopted a self-protective martyr role that allows for little real communication.

The hostility and frustration the daughters feel can be seen in their descriptions of their mother. Rachel sees her as "a simpering puce-mouthed madonna" (p. 84), volunteering to do the laundry despite her bad heart so that her daughter will not have a guilt-free evening. Stacey remembers her mother's "long suffering" attitude, her "whining eyes" and her "persistent mew" (pp. 8, 18). For Stacey, May Cameron is the voice "that never tired of saying how others ought to be" (p. 18); for Rachel, May is the one who dominates by affecting helplessness. Because May has no real power over her world, she gains it through underground, manipulative devices.

Stacey remembers her mother's admonishment on any subject of violence: "Please, dear, don't talk about it--it isn't nice" (p. 168). Rachel, revealing her nude body to her mother when answering the telephone, is told: "Really Rachel, that doesn't look very nice" (p. 172). Indeed, no aspect of violence, of nature, of sexuality, no act, except the most conventional, has a place in May's world. They are not "nice."

The stifling effect of May Cameron is best seen in her relationship with Rachel, who lives in the constant agony of embarrassed self-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consciousness, fearing that at any time the wrong word will set off the disagreement between them. A typical exchange begins with May needing to know some detail of Rachel's life that has not yet come into her possession: "I wasn't listening . . . but I couldn't help hearing you mention some course or other" (p. 97). When Rachel is vague about her plans, May tries to make her feel guilty with a self-sacrificing "it's your own business dear." Rachel's prescribed reply is "I'm sorry, Mother," but May cannot accept a mere apology. Not enough attention has yet been given the small incident that fills an otherwise empty day. "It isn't as though there were a reason to conceal it," she complains. Soon the mole hill becomes a mountain. Rachel has apologized for a major crime and May has the satisfaction of the martyred mother: "Never mind dear. Everyone's thoughtless at times I guess. I can't expect--" (p. 98). "This is our conversation," Rachel observes, "This is the way we talk, the way we go on."

All communication with her mother ends in frustration and guilt for Rachel, whereas Stacey's memory of speaking aloud the violence of the world, as in describing the shot gopher, becomes a memory of what is "not nice" to say. Rachel experiences the frustration of suppressing all the words "as though a leather thong had lassoed my temples" (p. 100). Stacey re-experiences the frustration of the hypocrisy of her relationship with her mother when she writes her pleasant, non-threatening letters home while wondering "what would happen if just once I put down what was really happening?" (p. 149).

What makes May suppress the expression of her daughters' real selves? The question is one that lies behind not just Laurence's frustrated protagonists but involves the view of emotional life in our time. Esther

Harding in Woman's Mysteries describes the twentieth-century's attitude to the emotional side of life, that part of the psyche most involved in family relationships and which is the special concern of women. She contends that we pay "Little attention . . . to the achievement of an inner development in the emotional realm. Indeed it is generally taken for granted that an individual's emotions are what they are and that they are not subject to development" (p. xiii). May's emotional life is not only underdeveloped but deliberately hidden behind the veil of proper appearances.

The character of the church she attends is a reflection of her attitude toward the inner life--spiritual and emotional. We see it through Rachel's eyes--eyes that are ironically aware of her mother's influence:

> I wonder what she believes, if anything. She's never said. It was not a subject for discussion. She loves coming to church because she sees everyone, and in the spring the new hats are like a forest of tulips. But as for faith--I suppose she takes it for granted that she believes. Yet if Reverend MacElfish should suddenly lose his mind and speak of God with anguish or joy, or out of some need should pray with fierce humility as though God had to be there, Mother would be shocked to the core . . . .
>
> The wood in this church is beautifully finished. Nothing ornate--heaven forbid. The congregation has good taste. Simple furnishings, but the grain of the wood shows deeply brown-gold, and at the front, where the high altar would be if this had been a church which paid court to high altars, a stained-glass window shows a pretty and clean-cut Jesus expiring gently and with absolutely no inconvenience, no gore, no pain; just this nice and slightly effeminate insurance salesman who, somewhat incongruously, happens to be clad in a toga, holding his arms languidly up

> to something which might in other circumstances have been a cross. (pp. 51-52)

May's world-view specializes in cleaning the world of passion and violence.

May Cameron's idea of proper feminine behavior is inadvertently expressed in her response to the incident of Cassie Stewart's pregnancy: "It's dreadful for her mother, a nice woman . . . quite a nice woman, Mrs. Stewart" (p. 71). She and her bridge club express no sympathy for the girl or hope for her good health and safe delivery. For May, the prospect of new life can be properly welcomed only under the condition of legal marriage. The moral message of such a woman to her daughters is that her approval of them is contingent on their keeping quiet about real feeling and thought as her church does and that they form proper relationships with approved males. In a sense Stacey has won that approval but labors under the necessary hypocrisy of such a situation. Both daughters crave a validation from their mother that is unrelated to their male contacts.

An incident that most reveals May's inability to allow any emotional depth in her relationship with her girls is shown in her response to Rachel's memory of her frightening dream of apocalypse: "'Don't be foolish--don't be foolish Rachel--there's nothing there'" (p. 39). May must believe there is nothing below appearance and strictly enforce a one-dimensional view of the world to keep the otherwise fearful emotions out of her life.

This desire to live in a world that is completely open to conscious understanding is expressed in May's liking for bridge, a rational, organized game where risk and subtlety are neatly hemmed in by rules and

conventions. Both daughters speak of their mother's favorite game with resentment. Stacey remembers her mother's bridge "cronies" with anger: "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?" (p. 139). Rachel refers to her mother's bridge parties as "the midsummer gathering of a coven" (p. 18). The references to old women as "cronies" and as witches indicates the almost magical spell May holds over her daughters' psyches.

Despite their anger at their mother, in their mid-thirties neither woman is able to stop thinking about her and worrying over her life with her. The power of May's opinion is indicated by Stacey's belief that it is her own bad temper that is responsible for her children's unhappiness. She recalls her mother as having admonished: "Stacey, you have a terrible temper" (p. 212). The reader's experience with Stacey may well be that given her situation she is remarkably patient.

Finding the source of all Stacey's and Rachel's problems in their relationship with their mother could easily result in another example of the tendency so prevalent in modern psychological investigations, that of blaming the mother.[7] Indeed, May's power over her daughters seems out of proportion to the woman that the objective reader sees. After all, May is really only a rather frightened, weak and unhappy old woman who lacks much insight into her own life or the lives of others. To understand how a woman becomes like May Cameron and why the effect is so devastating to her children, we must see her as a woman who has defined herself in accordance with a male concept of female psychology. As Otto Rank explains in <u>Beyond Psychology</u>:

> The change in the meaning of words epitomized the gradual condemnation of irrational terms expressed in language and their replacement by the rational. Since any positive designations for the irrational elements in human nature are lacking, woman's psychology, which still preserves those irrational elements, is non-existent because un-describable. Hence, civilization means increasing rationalization whereby man's importance and power is augmented at the expense of woman's right to herself. In particular, he took over her love-ideology in the Christian Agape, and at the same time--by denying her--interpreted her psychology in terms of his masculine ideology.[8]

Rank thus not only identifies the masculinization of the feminine as a problem for women but identifies our language, developed to describe the rational, as at the base of that problem. Rank also goes on to observe that the need "to be wanted by the man to whom she wants to submit is the strongest factor in the building of the woman's personality, and in that sense she is made a woman through her mate, not merely physically but also _characteriologically_" (p. 268). If a woman's chief way of defining herself is through relationship with a man, as in the case of May Cameron, then it is inevitable that her desire to be loved by him will lead her to shape her personality to suit him.

The shaping factor of May's adult life has been her marriage to Manawaka's town undertaker, Niall Cameron. Neither Rachel nor Stacey remembers much of their parents' marriage and the little they know of May and Niall's relationship is colored by their negative feelings about their mother. We know from Stacey that her father was preoccupied with a sense of lost creativity, that he has spent his life in a kind of drunken mourning over war tragedies: "He told me about a boy of eighteen--hand grenade went off near him and the blast caught the kid between the legs.

My dad cried when he told it, because the kid didn't die. My dad was drunk, but then he wouldn't have spoken of it if he hadn't been" (p. 6). She remembers also that her parents' marriage was characterized by "tomb silences" (p. 25). Rachel is aware that little physical affection existed between her parents, for as May explains: "One thing about your father, he never was one to make many demands upon me, that's one thing you could say for him" (p. 112). Rachel believes that her mother was repulsed physically by her father but admits, "Maybe she didn't feel that way at all. Maybe it only seemed so to me" (p. 19).

As Rachel realizes, the children of a marriage are not necessarily in the best position to judge. Stacey, in the middle of a communication crisis with her own husband, sees her parents in terms of her own problems. Rachel's own fear of the male touch may well color her attitude. Perhaps a better guide to our understanding of Niall Cameron and his bride is the more or less impartial town philosopher, Hector Jonas, the new undertaker. He remarks that Niall got the kind of life he wanted (p. 153). Indeed, perhaps he also got the kind of wife he wanted. For if the male-defined woman shapes her personality and appearance to suit her husband's need then May has become the perfect wife for Niall, who seemed to prefer the dead to the living--she has become a well made-up corpse.

May is a version of womanhood with which the twentieth century is very familiar. She is what Marshall McLuhan has called The Mechanical Bride,[9] the woman as mannequin, frozen in a death-like representation of womanhood that is neither sensuous nor womanly, but allows men to approach her without what Rank calls man's fear of "woman's mortality" (p. 246). We see this in Rachel's description of her mother's physical

appearance and attitudes: "Her ankles are still slender and she takes pride in wearing only fine-denier nylons and never sensible shoes. Her hair is done every week, saucily stiff grey sausage curls, and the frames of her glasses are delphinium blue and elfin. Where does this cuteness come from, when she's the one who must plump up the chesterfield cushions each night before retiring and empty every ashtray and make the house look at though no frail and mortal creature ever set foot in it? . . . In the world she inhabits age is still as unmentionable as death" (pp. 17-18). Besides preserving her appearance like one of Niall's embalmed bodies, May has preserved a way of life above the funeral parlor that is a kind of living death. She continues to live in the place he provided and to carry on the habits of a life-time which not only inhibit her own growth but hold her daughter in an artificial maidenhood.

If May was once a perfect undertaker's wife, why does she not rebel now that he is dead? Our moment of insight comes with Rachel's understanding of why May tries so pathetically to meet the standards of womanhood she supposed her dead husband to have. After May's guard has been weakened by a heart attack and she is about to slip into sleep, "she murmured something so fretfully that I wondered how many thousand times she's stabbed herself with it. 'Niall always thinks I am so stupid.' I looked at her--she was asleep now--the ashes of her face, the ashes of her hair. I drew the sheet and blanket up around her scrawny and nicely lace-nyloned shoulders, as people do when there is nothing they can do" (p. 228). May's lifetime attempt to please has ended in the "ashes" of her old age, in which she can no longer express any positive aspects of womanhood for she has long ago lost touch with the

feminine and has become what she thought her husband wanted, a living corpse. Whether this was, in fact, what Niall really wanted, is impossible to say, since he is not a living character who is able to tell us his needs in either book. If he were, the need might still be inexpressible given the rational nature of language.

A lifetime of living up to an image of woman that is essentially male-defined has left May Cameron with no life of her own to give as an example of womanhood to her daughters. Both daughters, and needless to say their mother, are thus what Phyllis Chesler has called "starved for matrimony" (p. 18). I have posited this "starvation" as at the root of the problems of Laurence's heroines and have suggested that their lack of matrimony stems directly from the absence of cultural values that offer a context for the mother-daughter relationship to fulfill its positive functions. In _A Jest of God_ the symbolism connecting Rachel's story with the Demeter-Kore myth makes it necessary to consider this cultural lack in its religious dimensions as well as its psychological implications.

Critics have noted the pervasive symbols of the Greek story in Laurence's novel. Lois Gottlieb and Wendy Keitner suggest that the Persephone of the Greek story symbolizes the childless maiden too attached to the mother and that Rachel's positive movement is towards an Artemis-prototype of wholeness.[10] Warren Stevenson traces the abduction motif in the novel and sees the Persephone-Kore figure in similar negative terms.[11] Neither article, however, emphasizes the positive aspects of the reunion of Demeter and Kore. To discover these positive aspects, we must explore, as Erich Neumann does, the implication of the ancient Eleusinian mysteries. Neumann describes ancient reliefs of the two goddesses which show "Kore full grown and almost identical with her virgin-mother Demeter.

Virgin and mother stand to one another as flower and fruit, and essentially belong together in their transformation from one to the other . . . . The one essential motif in the Eleusinian mysteries and hence in all matriarchal mysteries is the heuresis of the daughter by the mother, the finding again of Kore by Demeter, the reunion of mother and daughter" (The Great Mother, pp. 301-08).

The world in which May and her daughter live, a world still governed by the Judaeo-Christian symbol system, has only the transformative relationship of the mother and son. Thus, the psychological maturation symbolized by the Demeter-Kore motif is not facilitated for mothers and daughters living in such a world. But the urge for such a union still exists, unsanctioned, unguided by the patriarchal world-view. This leaves women such as May and her daughters particularly vulnerable to psychological disturbances which originate in the incompleteness of the mother-daughter relationship.

Jung, in "Psychological Aspects of the Mother Archetype," identifies the mother-complexes to which such women fall victim, and his description of the woman who makes too close an identification with the mother is an exact description of Rachel. Jung describes this woman at her worst as "content to cling to her mother in selfless devotion, while at the same time unconsciously striving, almost against her will, to tyrannize over her, naturally under the mask of complete loyalty and devotion. The daughter leads a shadow existence, often visibly sucked dry by her mother, and she prolongs her mother's life by a sort of continuous blood transfusion" (p. 341). Such a woman's greatest problem arises when anything "reminds her of motherhood, responsibility, personal relationships and erotic demands." Such encounters with real life arouse "feelings

of inferiority and compel her to run away--to her mother, naturally" (p. 341). Jung feels that for these "bloodless maidens" of Rachel's type "rescue" is possible because "If she is at all normal, there is a good chance of the empty vessel being filled by a potent anima projection. Indeed, the fate of such a woman depends on this eventuality; she can never find herself at all, not even approximately, without a man's help; she has to be literally abducted or stolen from her mother. Moreover, she must play the role mapped out for her for a long time and with great effort, until she actually comes to loathe it. In this way she may perhaps discover who she really is." Jung sees such women as finding their whole meaning reflected in the achievements of men: "Such women may become devoted and self-sacrificing wives of husbands whose whole existence turns on their identification with a profession or a great talent" (p. 348).

Although she devotely wishes it, this does not happen to Rachel. Her growth, aided by her sexual relationship with Nick, is first sparked, then nurtured and later freed by her relationship with a mother-surrogate whose love and loyalty give Rachel the ability to "become the mother." Nick may help Rachel discover her Eros, but it is Calla who helps her find herself.

I would suggest that, in making the relationship between Calla and Rachel such an important part of her plot in A Jest of God and in refusing the conventional ending for Rachel (marriage), Laurence is making a psychological statement about the nature of female growth, one which stresses the importance of a satisfactory mother-daughter relationship, a "heuresis" of mother and daughter, even of a surrogate type in helping the woman reach her feminine maturity. The relationship

between Rachel and Calla also demonstrates that for real feminine growth to occur certain life changes have to be articulated in a context of love between women. Without this growth, "the rescue" by a man that Jung sees as the fate of such women, is merely a transference of dependence. Gottlieb and Keitner emphasize the "emotional" Lesbian nature of Rachel and Calla's relationship.[12] To do so, however, is to give the relationship a sexual focus which is its least important component, one that Laurence leaves ambiguous. More importantly, to label it "Lesbian" is to lose touch with the more powerful libidinal forces that Laurence is exploring in the relationship between these two women--the emotional power of the maternal instincts. As Briffault, in The Mothers, explains: "The maternal sentiment is . . . very much more primitive, fundamental and stronger than the mating instinct . . . . The latter is primarily an extension of the maternal instinct . . . . Maternal affection and not sexual attraction is the original source of love."[13]

The description Rachel gives us of Calla emphasizes her earthy, maternal qualities:

> She's kind and well-meaning. If only she looked a little more usual, and didn't trot off twice a week to that fantastic Tabernacle. She bears down through the noisy shoal of youngsters, pushing upstairs like fish compelled upstream. Calla is stockily built, not fat at all but solid and broad. She says she ought to have been Ukrainian, and in fact she has that Slavic squareness and strong heavy bones. Her hair is greying and straight, and she cuts it herself with nail scissors. I'll bet she's never set foot inside a hairdresser's. She combs it back behind her ears but chops it into a fringe like a Shetland pony's over her forehead. She wears long-sleeved smocks for school, not for neatness but so she can wear the same brown tweed skirt and that dull-green bulky-knit sweater of hers, day after day

> without anyone noticing . . . . She drenches herself with lemon verbena cologne. Her smock today is the fawn chintz that looks like kitchen curtains. Well, poor Calla--it isn't her fault that she has no dress sense. I look quite smart in comparison.
>
> Oh God. I don't mean to be condescending. How can it happen, still, this echo of my mother's voice? (pp. 4-5)

Calla, despite her unattractiveness by conventional standards, has a solid, maternal appearance that is the female opposite of the careful, lady-like qualities of May, with her high heels, slender ankles and "fine-denier nylons." Rachel is both condescending to Calla's poor taste and challenged by her openness. When Calla calls her "child" in greeting (p. 10), Rachel resents the word, but Calla's friendship is one that refuses to allow the deprecation of self that the game of "I'm Sorry" does with her mother. Early in the book Calla brings to Rachel a gift of a "hyacinth, bulbously in bud and just about to give birth to the blue-purple blossom" (p. 11). If this flower has connotations of homosexual love, Laurence's emphasis is upon its rejuvenating features and thus it becomes an appropriate symbol to pass between the two women as a new Rachel is about to be born out of the old, and Calla's love is to be the spark that begins the change.

For Rachel, her association with Calla is a form of rebellion against her mother. "If only Calla wouldn't insist on talking about the Tabernacle in Mother's hearing," Rachel frets; "Mother thinks the whole thing is weird in the extreme, and as for anyone speaking in a clarion voice about their beliefs--it seems indecent to her almost in the same class as what she calls foul language. Then I get embarrassed for Calla,

and ashamed of being embarrassed, and would give anything to shut her up or else to stop minding" (p. 32). It is the speaking aloud that is the most objectionable thing about Calla for May and it is this very characteristic that draws Rachel to her despite her embarrassment. It should be noted that Rachel lies to her mother about her relationship with Calla (p. 35) just as she is later to lie about Nick. Both relationships are of the type that loosen the ties that bind her to May: therefore they must be disguised. Rachel's experience of speaking in tongues takes place under Calla's auspices and thus the initial release of "the forbidden" (p. 44) is a result of her influence. It is she that comforts Rachel after the experience with the words "Hush Rachel. Hush, hush--it's all right, child" (p. 45). In a real sense she is mothering Rachel through a growth experience.

At the tabernacle Rachel has for the first time permitted herself the depth of her womanly emotions and spoken in her own voice, albeit in a frightening and nonsensical form. Being May's daughter, she is frightened and embarrassed by her outburst and is overwhelmed by Calla's loving response: "unpremeditated," Calla "kisses my face and swiftly afterwards my mouth. My drawing away is sharp, violent. I feel violated, unclean, as though I would strike her dead if I had the means" (p. 46). Rachel's reaction is understandable, but the depth of her anger indicates the extent of her fear of the mother. In the context of the incident, the kiss is more maternal than erotic. Calla has expressed her pain at Rachel's embarrassment concerning the glossalalia incident by weeping and saying, "Rachel honey, . . . it practically kills me to see you like this" (p. 46). Indeed, we see further proof that Rachel's fear of

Calla is fear of her mother when on seeing Calla again at school Rachel thinks that "some portion of myself wants to avoid her forevermore . . . . I hold myself very carefully when she's near, like a clay figurine, easily broken, unmendable." Rachel observes that, "she does not say child anymore. Only Rachel. I've wanted her to stop saying child or kid for a long time, yet now I feel unreasonably bereft" (p. 58).

This incident is important, for Calla as mother surrogate has not only allowed Rachel to feel her ecstatic feminine self in the experience of the Tabernacle, but she has also accepted and blessed the experience with her kiss and released Rachel from her artificially-preserved maidenhood by distancing herself and dropping the "kid" and "child" references. Rachel, although she does not understand the growth experience Calla is shepherding her through, feels the natural "bereft" feeling of the adolescent girl when the mother releases her into womanhood.

In a chapter entitled "Menstruation," Washbourn explains that "the ability of a young woman to 'successfully' negotiate the life-crisis of menstruation depends first on a recognition of it as a crisis by the girl and by the community. Ignoring its importance leaves the individual to struggle alone with her feelings and fears and provides no means for their expression" (pp. 12-13). Rachel's community has been her mother, and May has never been able to recognize either the physical or emotional womanliness of her daughter, for she is caught up in remaining in a state of artificially-preserved youthfulness. Rachel observes that May "speaks as though I were about twelve. What a strangely pendulum life I have, fluctuating in age between extremes, hardly knowing myself whether I am too young or too old" (p. 71).

All these confusing emotions of acceptance and rejection are a

necessary prelude to Rachel's entrance into adult life on a sexual level through her affair with Nick. It is not accidental that much of the imagery that surrounds their affair reminds us of the Demeter-Kore myth; May--even her name is symbolic of the earth goddess--and Rachel live above the land of death, reached by a staircase of flowers (p. 145); Nick's slavic appearance (p. 78) makes him seem to her a menacing figure, almost an abductor; they first make love near the graveyard where once Rachel picked the spring Crocuses, like Kore in her spring field.

Jung observes the importance of this myth in connection with women who have too strong an identification with the mother and notes the psychological-mythic connections that make it necessary for such maidens as Rachel to escape the mother's hold through sex with a man. Laurence dramatizes not only the necessary male connection but also emphasizes the necessary psychological leap from maidenhood to womanhood that takes place only through the agency of the mother's acceptance of the daughter's growth, the "heuresis" of Demeter and Kore. The figure of Calla is thus not a plot convenience by a psychological necessity to Rachel's development.

Calla continues in this surrogate role when Rachel returns to her after her season of love with her small town Pluto. "I have to speak aloud to someone," Rachel muses with respect to her apparent pregnancy: "I have to but I don't know anyone" (p. 213). The importance of the articulation, the speaking "aloud" of her new state, her womanhood, perhaps even motherhood, finds its inevitable surrogate figure in Calla. "Only one person" Rachel realizes, "and I've avoided her, gone to see her only rarely and only out of conscience" (p. 213). Wanting a complete and unconditional maternal acceptance, Rachel asks Calla: "Whatever it was, with me, even if it was something you hated? I could still come here?"

(p. 215). Calla's reply is a measured understanding of the friendship between them and the new equality that they need: "I guess I can't promise. You have to gamble on where the limits are. I don't know where they are" (p. 215).

When Calla finds herself responding to the possibility of Rachel's pregnancy with a new form of smothering she checks herself and says, "I'm sorry . . . I shouldn't have said any of that, should I? You think you're not asking anything of someone, and then it appears you're asking everything. To take over. I didn't mean to . . . . I don't know what I can say or offer to do. Nothing much, I guess. Except that I'm here, and you'll know, yourself, what you need to ask" (pp. 215-16). This acceptance without binding allows Rachel and Calla a love in which they are free women and immediately frees Rachel of the guilt in her relationship with her mother: "my mother's tricky heart will just have to take its own chances," she decides (p. 216). She is able to adopt an adult-maternal attitude toward her aging mother because she knows that "I am the mother now" (p. 239).

Rachel's last conversation with Calla leads to an acceptance of each other in which Rachel is as much the maternal figure as Calla (pp.241-42). Calla speaks aloud her real sorrow that Rachel did not become a mother; Rachel expresses her own regret that she could not offer Calla the kind of woman-love that she believes Calla wanted. They have recognized their own and the other's limitations and most importantly, although they are unable to articulate fully what they feel, nothing has been left deliberately hidden and shameful between them. This therapeutic relationship allows Rachel to leave a past where everything

was predictable, imprisoning and static, to enter a future where "anything may happen" (p. 245). Calla and Rachel's relationship thus presents a view of womanhood similar to the one that Neumann points to in his discussion of the relief portraits of Demeter and Kore at Eleusis and Pharsalus (The Great Mother, pp. 147-49). The portraits show a mother and grown daughter facing one another, smiling, reunited.

* * *

If we turn now to look at Rachel's sister we see a woman undergoing, not a long overdue growth from maiden to woman, but a person trying to come to terms with the ageing process--a woman ready to enter the second half of her life. Stacey expresses the feeling that she is either in puberty or menopause (p. 87), she doesn't know which. Although she is the mother of four children, she finds herself without "matrimony," the quality that Chesler names as "that legacy of power and influence" that women receive from mothers.

She is the woman that Jung describes in "Psychological Aspects of the Mother Archetype" when he says that "the exaggeration of the feminine side means an intensification of all female instincts, above all the maternal instinct. The negative aspect is seen in the woman whose only goal is childbirth" (p. 339). Jung explains that such a woman tends to live through her children, to treat her husband as a child, to be unconscious of her Eros as a personal part of herself and to express it through maternality. Her unconsciousness of her own personality leads to insistence on her maternal personality and leaves her mind uncultivated. Jung's description of the hypertrophied maternal type in the

mother-complex can be seen as central to Stacey's problems.

Now, as she enters mid-life, Stacey needs to define herself and her maternality in a more positive sense. Lacking a mature mother, believing her sister to be too controlled and intellectual to sympathize, Stacey also finds herself without female friends to help her. All the women in her life, Tess, Bertha, Val, are caught in situations where they can barely save themselves. Tess and Bertha can speak with Stacey only of Polyglam dishware, makeup and husbands. Stacey and Val Tonnerre are too distanced by social position and race for them to see their common female plight.

In the face of this paucity of feminine supporting figures, Stacey turns to the only source left to her--her daughter. The significance of this situation is best emphasized by observing that thus far Laurence has presented us with "mothers" who are really daughters. Hagar, though ninety years old, is, until the end of her life very much the daughter of Manawaka's chief merchant. Her mothering has never been deeply felt, not until her last days. Rachel, also at the end of her story, at the age of thirty-four, is finally able to view herself psychologically as "the mother." Somewhere, in the middle of Stacey's story, the daughter becomes truly the mother and the reader is aware that the Laurencian universe has shifted in point of view. Ironically, but not surprisingly, the mother, Stacey, needs mothering, and the only source she can find for it is her daughter. It is her prematurely responsible and womanly daughter, Katherine Elizabeth (Katie) that Stacey turns to in her times of crises.

Whereas Rachel can be seen as a case of arrested development between

maidenhood and womanhood, both Katie and Stacey are going through natural and important female life changes at the appropriate ages. Katie is leaving puberty and entering womanhood. Stacey is accepting that her days as a young woman are numbered and that psychologically she is entering a new stage which will be followed by the physiological changes of menopause. It is the psychological phase which Stacey is entering that Jung refers to in his "sun" metaphor in "The Stages of Life": "At the stroke of noon the descent begins. And the descent means the reversal of all the ideals and values that were cherished in the morning. The sun falls into contradiction with itself" (p. 15).

Both women, Stacey and her daughter Katie, feel the need to articulate their changing selves and in some measure gain acceptance of these changes from another woman. Washbourn comments on the nature of the psychological and physical changes of mid-adult life in the same crisis terms she used when speaking of the onset of menses:

> The need of the modern woman to find a symbolic framework for this fundamental stage of life is acute. She needs a new basis for self-understanding outside her earlier interpretation of her sexuality. The issue facing her is whether she can find new purpose, new identity, new worth, a new self-concept, and a new sense of ultimate meaning as she passes into middle age. The crisis is more than a physiological adjustment to declining hormone levels. A woman must come to terms with herself and the meaning of life on a radical level. (p. 132)

This "radical" adjustment, away from the easy definitions of young motherhood, is the problem that faces Stacey. At the end of her thirties Stacey Cameron MacAindra, or as she prefers to think of herself in her fantasies, "Anastasia, princess of all the Russians; Anastasia, queen of

the Hebrides, soon to inherit the ancestral castle in the craggy isles" (p. 95), has found little of value in what her society offers the middle-aged housewife as "ultimate meaning." Most of her inner questions meet with no outward vehicle of expression.

Stacey's crisis is different from her sister's but rests on the same foundation--the foundation of guilt formed in her life with May. As a girl Stacey was made to feel guilty about any expression of her womanhood. Even admiring her appearance in the mirror was seen as vanity by May (p. 18), while Stacey's entire growing sexual life had to be kept secret from May. But unlike Rachel, Stacey has an extroverted personality. Because of this and because of her early identification with her father--to the point that she even has his drinking problem--she has found ways of distancing herself from her mother's most negative influences. She left Manawaka early and avoids going home too often. She has entered womanhood sexually and maternally.

On the other hand, she has not avoided the guilt that seems to be the result of being May Cameron's daughter. Her days are spent in an agony of maternal doubt. Being May's daughter has also kept her from viewing her sexuality as an expression of her self. Through her affair with Luke she begins to come alive to her own Eros, but it is through her relationship with Katie that she comes to terms with the guilt and insecurity she has about her ability to mother.

Her ambivalent attitude toward mothering is seen in her attitude toward her own body. She is constantly fighting the growth of her hips (p. 4). The broadening hips, the mark of the matriarch, are resisted not just because the fashion dictates that she should resist them but

because the position of responsibility and power that they represent must be resisted. Stacey's fears of the maternal are best figured in her descriptions of Buckle's mother: "The woman is gigantic, outspread like rising dough gone amok, swelling and undulating over the stiff upholstery of the chair, gaping body covered with tiny-flower-printed dress huge and shroud-shaped, vastly numerous chins trembling eel-like separate but involved, eyes closed, and at the end of the Kodiak arms, contrasting hands neatly made, fine-fingered, encrusted with silver-and-gold colored rings which might almost have been costly, from the way the hands flairfully wear them" (p. 157). Buckle's mother, as seen through Stacey's eyes, is like the fearful figure of the terrible mother described by Erich Neumann in The Great Mother (pp. 147-73). For Stacey, brought up in May Cameron's efforts to rid life of all its violence, sex and death, this figure is a shocking reminder of the implications of mothering.

Yet Stacey struggles to understand her place as mother and to articulate its positive aspects. Indeed, the need to articulate has been her concern since she first became a mother. She remembers herself "in hospital, holding Katherine Elizabeth, age twenty-four hours. Katie with eyes shut tightly, walnut-sized fists clenched, look of utter composure. 'I did it. She's here. She's alive. Who'd believe I could have borne a kid this beautiful?' . . . You have to keep quiet about all that" (p. 14). Her feelings when Katie is fourteen are similarly unexpressed and now mixed with her own fear of ageing, her own need to be mothered through this new crisis. At one moment she accepts comfort from Katie (p. 13) as if the mother-daughter roles were reversed, and at the next she feels she must keep Katie from seeing a film about drugs. When she finds

herself doing this she remembers her own mother's attitude toward her activities: "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?" (pp. 46-47). Stacey outlines her own unsure position on drug movies to Katie and then after hearing the bolt slide across the angry Katie's door she thinks of her real desire to express her feelings aloud to her daughter: "How can I tell you what you should be doing?" she wonders; "I don't know what I should be doing. But I think if I didn't tell you, it'll look bad. If I could level with you, would we be further ahead? Do you really want to know what I'm like? I can't believe it" (p. 47).

The key word here is level. The word means not just to speak bluntly and honestly but to seek a position where mother and daughter are equals, recognizing their commonality, being able to speak of themselves as "we." This sense of equality that both women desire, the daughter wanting to be seen as a grown sexual being with a life of her own, the mother wanting to be recognized not as a negative power figure but as an unsure woman struggling with responsibility, increases during the course of the book. At first the desire for equality appears only in the off-hand but egalitarian humor between the two women: "'You missed your calling, Mother. You should've been in the army. You would've made a great sergeant-major,'" Katie kids. Stacey throws back "Nuts to you" (p. 94). The expressions "sergeant-major" and "nuts" reflect both women's tendency to speak in masculine terms to one another. Their humor covers their inability to find words to express their feminine respect and love for one another.

Later, Katie assumes equality at important moments. When her mother

returns late at night with no explanation, Katie confronts her with a combination of maternal protectiveness and adolescent rebellion: "Her words are on purpose not loud enough to wake the younger kids. 'Just don't ever bawl me out again, eh?'" (p. 94). Stacey realizes this equality when Katie has told her of the incident of Jen and the gold fish and the mother and daughter discuss what steps they can take: "Stacey recognizes all at once the way in which she and Katie have been talking. We. They have never before encountered one another as persons. At the same time, Katie has been unwittingly calling her Mum instead of Mother" (p. 209). Ironically, the moment of "we" is brought about by their mutual act of mothering towards the voiceless Jen.

But Stacey also understands the danger to Katie's fragile womanhood if she lets herself depend too much on her daughter's mothering ability: "One day she will have to take over as the mother, and she's beginning to sense it. No wonder it frightens her. It damn near terrifies me, the whole business, even after all these years. And then I give in like now, and lean on her. I mustn't" (p. 273). At the same time, Stacey is learning to accept, somewhat hesitantly and nervously, the idea that Katie will now have boyfriends, and that she will not be able to hover over her daughter's sexual life (pp. 300-01). The new relationship of equality is reminiscent of Calla's and Rachel's relationship at the end of _A Jest of God_ in that it is tentative and must not be destroyed by too much closeness, too much possessiveness.

This need to give Katie her own emotional space to grow, combined with Stacey's inability to find the proper way to articulate her love for her daughter, is shown in her decision not to dance. She vows that "From now on, the dancing goes on only in the head. Anything else, and

it's an insult to Katie, whether or not she witnesses the performance. Well, in the head isn't such a terrible place to dance. The settings are magnificent there, anyhow" (p. 303). Miriam Parker sees Stacey's decision to stop dancing as a realization on Stacey's part that the means she has used to express her womanhood is now Katie's realm and she must accept that she has moved forward.[14] What needs to be emphasized, however, is that like Rachel's growth, Stacey's is highly tentative, ambiguous. She will dance in her head but has found no fully articulate expression of the new stage of womanhood she has entered.

Esther Harding, in outlining modern "emancipated" women's dilemma of being caught between their new consciousness and their need to re-establish their "own ancient feminine nature" says: "If they are to get in touch with their lost feminine side it must be by the hard road of a conscious adaptation" (p. 11). Stacey sees herself as mutating into matriarchy, not arriving there through a conscious personality development. She sees things at the end of her book as "temporarily" all right and fears that the world may not be there when she wakes up (p. 308). Rachel similarly still sees herself as having things happen _to_ her. Her growth is in the long run highly conditional for she still must struggle with the inequality of living with her "elderly child" (p. 245). She still sees her hope for feminine development as defined through marriage: "Maybe I will marry a midle-aged widower, or a longshoreman, or a cattle-hoof-trimmer, or a lawyer or a thief" (p. 245). She continues to see a descent into madness as a real possibility (p. 246).

* * *

Why does Laurence choose to leave us with the sense that these women

have grown somewhat in their personal relationships and yet remain in highly ambiguous situations both socially and philosophically? I would suggest that the answer lies in the two women's inability to articulate, and thus to bring to consciousness, a vision that is essentially feminine and religious in nature. This vision is one of the feminine unity expressed in the "heuresis" of Demeter and Kore.

This vision is not available to Rachel and Stacey for cultural, personal and psychological reasons. In Chapter one of this work I posited a four-stage involvement of the personality in any change of values: emotional awakening, conscious realization, articulation and incorporation. Rachel and Stacey are certainly emotionally awakened in their personal lives to the need for a broader expression of themselves. There is, to some degree, a conscious realization of their needs, as the inner voices and fantasies of both women constantly remind them. On a personal level they do achieve some articulation and incorporation of feminine values in their changing relationships with men and their new-found female intimacies. Moreover, there is a new acceptance of their mother, as Stacey realizes that many of her problems must have been May's, and Rachel is able to take responsibility for May's care in old age. But on a religious-philosophical level Rachel and Stacey remain essentially voiceless.

Their inarticulateness, their unincorporated feminine values, make their situations particularly poignant and dramatic because they perform the two roles most central to society's future, the roles of mother and teacher of our youngest children. In these two books Laurence locates our society's lack of faith firmly at its core. The women at the center

of things have lost their faith. Perhaps a more accurate formulation of the problem is to say that they have never had their faith. The religious tradition in which Margaret Laurence was raised has a hymn that speaks of the "faith of our fathers, holy faith." Not only do Laurence's heroines have a very shaky hold on that paternal faith, they have no "faith of their mothers."

Both women make statements of lack of faith, each in their own characteristic ways. Stacey, who speaks to a God she doubts, but of whose power she is sufficiently unsure that she calls him "sir" (p. 10), assumes a rough equality with the deity and guesses at what he must think of himself: "Maybe He'd say, Don't worry, Stacey, I'm not all that certain, either. Sometimes I wonder if I even exist. And I'd say, I know what you mean, Lord. I have the same trouble myself!" (p. 11). She sometimes scolds this deity for lacking a maternal enough point of view and tells him that if she wants to know human misery he should get himself born a mother next time. At the same time she believes enough to pray the perennial mother's prayer, saying, "Let me die before they do. Only not before they grow up, or what would happen to them?" (p. 76). Rachel's formulation of her lack of faith is more consciously theological in keeping with her more educated background: "God hadn't died recently within the last few years, but a long time ago; longer than I could remember, for I could not actually recall a time when he was alive" (p. 49). Both women yearn for religion and miss it in their lives. As Stacey says of her children's lack of faith, "I've failed them by failing to believe, myself" (p. 71).

Stacey and Rachel have reached their thirties, a natural time in their lives when questions of a religious nature become important. In the

past, people entering middle age turned to their churches for answers to the questions of life's second half. But as Jung explains, today "we have no schools for forty-year olds . . . . Out religions were always such schools in the past, but how many people regard them as such today? How many of us older ones have been brought up in such a school and really prepared for the second half of life, for old age, death and eternity?" ("The Stages of Life," p. 17). Furthermore, the image of God which their church gave Laurence's protagonists is distinctly masculine. Russell observes that "We call these strong male figures images of God, but it would be more accurate to speak of God as the projection of these men and their values. The life-denying church is the institutionalization of the fearful father."[15]

In Manawaka the tinkling chimes in Rachel's church sing out "The Church's One Foundation" (p. 21), expressing its one-dimensional, Logos orientation. Stacey and Rachel live in a world that has been so successful in this orientation that it now possesses the secret of the sun it has worshipped. Without an equal and compensatory sense of earth religion, the "Eros" principle that women acknowledge instinctively through the experience of their bodies, the religion of the Logos principle through its servant, science, may destroy the world. Stacey lives in the first generation of mothers to have to face this stark possibility that their children's future may not exist. It is this nightmare that made Stacey keep her father's gun for so long, so that if need be she would be able to put her children out of their pain if such a nuclear catastrophe occurred (p. 306). The recurring images of apocalyptic destruction in the Fire-Dwellers (pp. 3, 11, 29, 60, 126, 282) express Stacey's unconscious fears of the results of too great an emphasis on the

Logos concepts of monotheistic patriarchy.

Otto Rank has described the takeover of the love principle by masculine ideology as the greatest psychological paradox of all time, "That man, who was molding woman according to his own sexual will . . . [has] taken over into his ideological philosophy the love-principle so deeply rooted in woman's nature. The conception of Agape . . . revived the vital principle of woman-love which had been lost in Antiquity, particularly in Greek civilization, where the original mother-goddess was finally replaced by the masculine ideal of the self-created hero" (Beyond Psychology, p. 235). But there remains in woman a desire to return to an identity "lost in antiquity." It is the power of the mother-goddess that Rachel yearns for when she fantasizes about "Egypt's queen" (p. 73) or when she compares herself to the voice of "some woman mourning for her children" (p. 221). For Rachel the continuing references to Grecian women in Dionysian ecstasy portray her need to break with Logos-oriented religion (pp. 38, 44, 143).

When Stacey yearns to explain that "Under this chapeau lurks a mermaid a whore a tigress" (p. 12), she is seeking a sense of her own power as a vessel of the goddess. She is not "pre-mourning" when she thinks of possible apocalypse but mourning a loss that occured in pre-history when man, as Rank puts it, "usurped some of her vital functions" (Beyond Psychology, p. 239). Stacey sees much of her life in ironic religious images. From the Polyglam lady as the "new oracle" (p. 84), to the "priestesses" at the beauty parlor (p. 99) she unconsciously tries to invest her life with some religious principle. Despite the fact that she fights patriarchal forces in the person of Thor and his materialistic power principle, and in the person of her husband Mac who discourages

her from softening his sons with too much maternal affection, Stacey is not able to grasp the feminine principles on which her instincts are based. She has no language for it.

Briffault delineates the problem of expression in The Mothers when he explains that "Conceptual mentality depends upon the symbolism of language. Thought is in fact but repressed and unuttered speech . . . . To be speechless is the same thing as to be without logic, without mind" (pp. 2-3). He sees the relationship with the mother as the incubator of language development. Thus May Cameron's daughters are doubly handicapped. They did not have a personal relationship with their mother that encouraged verbal expression and on a societal level they lack a "mother" language, a tongue that might express their deeper instincts and feelings. Stacey takes university adult courses in such ideologically based topics as "Aspects of Contemporary Thought" (p. 12), "Varying Views of Urban Life" (p. 72) and "Mythology and Modern Man" (p. 4). But these courses will not allow Stacey to articulate her feminine vision for she not only lacks the "logic," the "mind" of ideological language, but also, what she wants to express perhaps could not be expressed in such a language even if she were to stay in her courses long enough to learn it.

Laurence expresses this terrible inarticulateness of women in the face of the destruction of all they value in one of Stacey's many frightening visions: "Newspaper photograph--slash-eyed woman crouched on some temporarily unviolated steps in the far city, skull and bones outstanding under shriveled skin, holding the dead child, she not able to realize it is actually and unhelpably finished and yet knowing this is so. The woman's mouth open wide--a sound of unbearability but rendered in silence by the camera clicking. Only the zero mouth to be seen,

noiselessly proclaiming the gone-early child" (pp. 278-79). This dreadful mother-pain, brought to her every day by her television screen, increases Stacey's doubts about her ability to hold her world together, and the novel ends with her wondering whether the world will continue at all: "she feels the city receding as she slides into sleep. Will it return tomorrow?" (p. 308).

Although Rachel thinks less consciously in images that can be said to be a feminine reaction to a patriarchal world-view, it is she in the end who is able to make the more radical feminine statement. Perhaps this is because, despite all Stacey's problems, it is Rachel who has had to face the greater personal loss, the greater physical trauma in the defeat of her dream of having a child. She has come out of this experience able to bless; "God's mercy on reluctant jesters. God's grace on fools. God's pity on God" (p. 246). The voice of Rachel, despite the loss of her children, has taken on the quality of a priestess giving her blessing. She asks mercy for people like herself who must become, as St. Paul says, fools to be wise (p. 166) and asks for the gift of grace for such sufferers. Finally, she voices the strangest blessing of all, "God's pity on God." Given that Rachel has previously announced herself "the mother," one can only conclude that she speaks unconsciously for the maternal principle. The subject of the sentence is thus the matriarchal God who gives pity to the patriarchal God.

Laurence has said of the sister heroines that "Stacey is Rachel's sister (don't ask me why; I don't know; she just is)."[16] I would suggest that these two women are sisters because they are two sides of the same problem. Rachel is woman yearning for a feminine definition of her

instinctive, emotional self in a context that allows for a religion of ecstasy. Stacey is woman desperate for a social context in which she can raise her children inside articulated feminine-maternal values.

Notes: Chapter II

[1] Margaret Laurence, The Fire-Dwellers (Toronto, 1969), p. 3. All further references will be to this edition and will be cited in the text.

[2] Margaret Laurence, A Jest of God (Toronto, 1966), pp. 44-45. All further references will be to this edition and will be cited in the text.

[3] George Bowering, "That Fool of a Fear: Notes on A Jest of God," Canadian Literature, 50 (Autumn 1971), 41-56.

[4] Kenneth C. Russell, "God and Church in the Fiction of Margaret Laurence", Studies in Religion, 7 (Fall 1978) 435-46.

[5] Donna A. Bennett, "The Failures of Sisterhood in Margaret Laurence's Manawaka Novels," Atlantis, 4 (Autumn 1978), 103-09.

[6] Theo Quale Dombrowski, "Word and Fact: Laurence and the Problem of Language," Canadian Literature, No. 80 (Spring 1979), 50-61.

[7] Christine V. Abramowitz, "Blaming the Mother: An Experimental Investigation of Sex Role Bias in Countertransference," Psychology of Women Quarterly, 2 (Fall 1977), 24-34.

[8] Otto Rank, Beyond Psychology (New York, 1941), p. 248.

[9] Herbert Marshall McLuhan, The Mechanical Bride: Folklore of Industrial Man (New York, 1951), pp. 98-101.

[10] Lois Gottlieb and Wendy Keitner, "Mothers and Daughters in Four Recent Canadian Novels," The Sphinx, 4 (Spring 1975), 21-34.

[11] Warren Stevenson, "The Myth of Demeter and Persephone in A Jest of God," Studies in Canadian Literature, 1 (Winter 1976), 120-23.

[12] Gottlieb and Keitner, pp. 21-34.

[13] Roger Briffault, The Mothers: A Study of the Origins of Sentiments and Institutions (London, 1927), vol. I, p. 131.

[14] Miriam Packer, "The Dance of Life: *The Fire-Dwellers*," *Journal of Canadian Fiction*, 27 (1980), 124-31.

[15] Russell, p. 446.

[16] Laurence, "Ten Years' Sentences," *Margaret Laurence: The Writer and Her Critics*, p. 21.

CHAPTER III

Vanessa, Morag and the Creative Spirit

> As for the artist, he is preoccupied with problems that are so utterly unlike those of the ordinary man--problems of pure aesthetics which don't so much as present themselves to people like myself--that a description of his mental processes is as boring to the ordinary reader as a piece of pure mathematics. A serious book about artists regarded as artists is unreadable; and a book about artists regarded as lovers, husbands, dipsomaniacs, heroes, and the like is really not worth writing again.
>
> (Mr. Slogan in Crome Yellow)

In Ivory Towers and Sacred Founts, when Maurice Beebe quotes Mr. Slogan's wry commentary on kunstlerromans, he identifies the risks of choosing this genre, given the fact of its enormous popularity in the twentieth century.[1] My question, in turn, is what do Margaret Laurence's portraits of the artist have to say that has not already been said? How does she avoid the dangers inherent in this genre--pure theory and cliche? The answer I hope to advance involves a restatement of Slogan's definition of the artist: "[she] is preoccupied with problems that are [not] so utterly unlike those of the ordinary [woman]."

As Laurence moves from what Clara Thomas has called her "ordinary" women, Hagar, Rachel and Stacey, to her "extraordinary" women,[2] it is not so much for the purpose of showing the differences between these two types but, through an exploration of the psyches of these more articulate

women, to extend her exploration of the problem of their Manawaka sisters. Vanessa and Morag are "different" primarily in their ability to express their dilemma and their desire in words. The lives of Laurence's female artist-figures, like the lives of her other heroines, are placed firmly in the context of the mother-daughter relationship. In _A Bird in the House_ we discover the experience of this relationship to be the primary motivating factor in the shaping of the female-artist. In _The Diviners_ we find how a creative relationship of mother and daughter is integrated with the artistic process itself. Thus we move from a psychological view of the nature of this bond to a religious view; we move toward Laurence's most positive statement of the mother-daughter relationship as it becomes the source of inspiration for the artist-figure.

In the closing story of _A Bird in the House_, "Jerico's Brick Battlements," Vanessa's mother Beth tells her that she has sold the MacLeod silver and Limoges and asked help from the family to get Vanessa to college. The daughter protests:

> "What have you done?" I cried. "Canvassed the entire family?"
> "More or less," my mother said calmly, as though the tigress beneath her exterior was nothing to be suprised about. "Father is also selling some bonds which he's been hanging onto all these years."
> "Him! How did you do that? But I'm not taking a nickel of his money."
> My mother put a hand on my shoulder.
> "When I was your age," she said, "I got the highest marks in the province in my last year high school. I guess I never told you that. I wanted to go to college. Your grandfather didn't believe in education for women then."[3]

In this moment of truth between mother and daughter we not only begin to

see the "tigress" that Beth has hidden for a lifetime from the view of her daughter and others, but also, as readers, we are forced to reassess much of their relationship and much of the book's content in the light of this new knowledge of Beth's lost opportunities and the different future she hopes for her daughter.

On the surface, A Bird in the House would seem to be largely about the dominance in the lives of others of the Manawaka patriarch, Timothy Connor. Beth would appear to be, to her daughter's eyes, one of the chief defenders of Timothy's authority. In the opening story, "The Sound of Singing," she hurries Vanessa along to dinner at "the Brick House" with, "you know how your grandfather hates people to be late" (p. 4). When Vanessa chants, "Step on a crack, break your grandfather's back," Beth responds, "that's not very nice Vanessa . . . I always thought it was your mother's back" (p. 5). Vanessa is "hurt that she could imagine the substitution to have been accidental, for I had genuinely thought it would please her" (p. 5). She quickly learns that she cannot openly enlist her mother as ally against her grandfather. Indeed, her rebellious spirit must develop underground through her eavesdropping on her mother's real opinions, as voiced to Beth's sister Edna.

Signe Hammer, who has described the "underground" nature of the mother-daughter relationship, also emphasizes that the daughter often receives a "double message" from the mother, one in which the daughter is encouraged to obey the patriarchal definition of her womanhood and another message which pushes the girl toward defining her identity in more achievement-oriented ways (p. xv). Vanessa, quite literally, receives a "double message"; her mother insists on her obedient submissiveness to Timothy and his ideas and yet engages, with Edna, in the

expression of quite opposite viewpoints. In these stories much of what Vanessa learns about her mother's real views is a truly espionage effort since she hears them by listening through stove pipes or air vents or by making herself invisible. "The best concealment was to sit quietly in plain view " (p. 11) she explains, as she yearns to hear her mother's and Edna's whispered rebellions.

Aunt Edna, a mother-surrogate in many ways, represents for Vanessa a more obviously rebellious and self-directed female figure than her mother. When Beth reprimands Vanessa for criticizing her grandfather, Edna defends Vanessa and corrects Beth (p. 13). The two women, in their physical appearance, seem to be the two sides of femininity that she needs to reconcile. Beth is described as "slight and fine-boned, with long-fingered hands like those on my Chinese princess doll, and feet that Aunt Edna enviously called 'aristocratic' which meant narrow . . . . Aunt Edna on the other hand, was handsome and strong but did not like being so" (p. 11).

The attempt to heal the results of the "double message"-- that the female is either fine and beautiful (but weak) or tough and strong (but unacceptable), combined with maternal disapproval of the expression of her viewpoint--leads Vanessa to turn to writing. She first imagines a story of a man "sick to death in the freezing cabin with only the beautiful halfbreed lady (no woman) to look after him" (p. 16). The "beautiful halfbreed lady (no woman)" is a combination of beauty and strength; the slightly exotic and unacceptable connotations of "halfbreed" reflect the beginning of an awareness of an archetypal female character that appears later in Vanessa's stories as "some barbaric queen, beautiful and terrible, and I could imagine her, wearing a long robe of leopard skin and

one or two heavy gold bracelets, pacing an alabaster courtyard and keening her unrequited love" (p. 64).

The emergence of such a figure in the young female writer is in response to both personal and cultural needs. Psychologically, Vanessa must invent a version of womanhood that is not as powerless as her two maternal figures, her mother and her aunt. On a cultural level, the split our society makes between the feminine as beautiful and the feminine as strong must be healed by the irruption of this figure in the imagination of the creative girl, in order to create the archetypal wholeness that the feminine world-view seeks. In The Great Mother, Neumann defines the collective and individual manifestation as "the primordial image or archetype of the Great Mother . . . [it is] not . . . any concrete image existing in space and time, but . . . an inward image at work in the human psyche. The symbolic expression of this psychic phenomenon is to be found in the figures of the Great Goddess represented in the myths and artistic creations of mankind" (p. 3). Outside her writing, Vanessa finds no such manifestations; she searches her family circle in vain for the qualities of womanhood that rise unbidden in her fictional creations.

Much space in the first four stories is devoted to an analysis of the "womanhood" of five characters: Beth, Edna, Agnes Connor, Grandmother McLeod and Noreen. While Beth and Edna represent two potentially positive but imprisoned versions of womanhood, the two grandmother figures can be seen as the two traditional modes by which women adapt and hide their true selves to meet the demands of the patriarchy.

Grandmother Connor, more admired by Vanessa, adapts by channeling

her strength into a kind of sublime and tolerant detachment. She attempts to ignore what she cannot change and works in the lives of others in only the most indirect ways. Yet all those around her credit her with an enormous depth of feeling and colossal strength, and hold a saintly image of her. As Vanessa puts it, "it was a family saying that she couldn't tell a lie if her life depended on it" (p. 6). Through her, Vanessa sees the Old Testament religion softened and humanized: "to her everything in the Bible was as gentle as she herself. The words were spiritual only, strokes of lightness and dark and the wounds poured cochineal" (p. 7). Less positively, Agnes Connor is obedient to the point of exhaustion to her oppressive and possessive husband, Timothy. When she finally does ask something for herself, that Timothy be tolerant of her brother Dan, she is really asking the favor for the benefit of a man. Her defenses of her daughters against Timothy are largely strategies to avoid confrontation. Since her daughters are convinced that she will be terribly hurt if they make a fuss, the paternal dictatorship is reinforced. There is no proof that Agnes ever objected to Timothy's refusal of an education for their daughter. Thus the saintliness of Agnes consists of silence and detached serenity.

Vanessa receives an insight into the other side of sainthood when, eavesdropping as usual, she hears a conversation between her mother and her Uncle Terence following Agnes' funeral. Terence has just revealed that their father was once unfaithful to their mother:

> "How could he?" my mother said in a low voice. "Oh Terence. How could he have done that? To Mother, of all people."
> "You know something, Beth?" Uncle Terence said. "I think he honestly believed that about

> her being some kind of angel. She'd never have thought of herself like that, so I don't suppose it ever would have occurred to her that he did. But I have a notion that he felt all along she was far and away too good for him. Can you feature going to bed with an angel, honey? It doesn't bear thinking about."
>
> "Terence, you're drunk," my mother said sharply, "As usual."
>
> "Maybe so," he admitted. Then he burst out, "I only felt, Beth, that somebody might have said to Vanessa just now, 'Look, baby, she was terrific and we thought the world of her, but let's not say angel, eh?' All this angel business gets us into really deep water, you know that?" (pp. 85-86)

Vanessa not only begins to learn more tolerance of her grandfather whose ways are often her own, but she also realizes that the struggle to achieve the saintly model of womanhood, represented by her Grandmother Connor and to some degree her own mother, is often achieved only by way of cutting off real human contact and love.

On the other hand, the grandmother who is recognized as both physically weak and not admirable, Grandmother McLeod, turns out to have a perverse strength that Vanessa must grudgingly admit. In "To Set Our House in Order" we receive several descriptions of Vanessa's paternal grandmother which show her to be, in the young writer's mind, a kind of negative version of the queenly character she writes about: "at the top of the stairs . . . Grandmother McLeod . . . standing there in her quilted black satin dressing gown, her slight figure, held straight and poised" (p. 39); her voice is "distinct and ringing like the tap of a sterling teaspoon on a crystal goblet" (p. 40); she is "steel-spined despite her apparent fragility" (p. 41). Stoically, she scolds her son for "encouraging the child to give way" to emotion when Vanessa's mother is in a long and difficult labor (p. 41). Grandmother McLeod is

obsessed with her possessions and cannot be stopped from buying fine linen even in the depths of the Depression. To Vanessa, she is the hypochondriac occupant of the walnut spool bed which "had obviously been designed for queens or giants . . . my tiny grandmother used to lie within it all day when she had migraine, contriving somehow to look like a giant queen" (p. 43). Her words of guidance for Vanessa are "God loves order," but through watching the tragedy of the lost life around this woman, Vanessa learns "that whatever God might love in this world, it was certainly not order" (p. 59). Grandmother McLeod has opted for the materialistic concept of womanhood as defined by patriarchal values. She has spent her life being refined, reserved, physically manicured and correct, by surrounding herself with the physical paraphernalia of being "a lady" (p. 53).

With sainthood and ladyhood rejected as unworthy models, a bizarre yet curiously powerful kind of female figure enters Vanessa's life. Noreen, the hired girl from the country, embodies a version of womanhood outside Vanessa's middle-class experience. With her physical earthiness and religious excesses Noreen, like Rachel's Calla, is a shocking contrast to the other two women in the McLeod house. Beth spends some time trying to improve Noreen by getting her to shave under her arms; Grandmother McLeod refuses even to speak to the girl, Vanessa herself, however, is fascinated:

> I began to think of her as a sorceress, someone not quite of this earth. There was nothing unearthly about her broad shoulders and hips and her forest of dark red hair, but even these features took on a slightly sinister significance to me. I no longer saw her through the eyes or the expressed opinions of my mother and father, as

> a girl who had quit school at grade eight and whose life on the farm had been endlessly drab. I knew the truth--Noreen's life had not been drab at all, for she dwelt in a world of violent splendours, a world filled with angels whose wings of delicate light bore real feathers, and saints shining like the dawn, and prophets who spoke in ancient tongues, and the ecstatic souls of the saved, as well as denizens of the lower regions--mean-eyed imps and crooked cloven-hoofed monsters and beasts with the bodies of swine and the human heads of murderers, and lovely depraved jezebels torn by dogs through all eternity. The middle layer of Creation, our earth, was equally full of grotesque presences, for Noreen believed strongly in the visitation of ghosts and the communication with spirits. She could prove this with her Ouija board. (pp. 100-01)

Noreen is the first female figure of any spiritual dimension that Vanessa has encountered.

Because it is Noreen who has made the dire prediction, "A bird in the house means a death in the house" (p. 102), when Vanessa's father dies, she becomes the focus of Vanessa's spiritual and physical anguish: "I hit Noreen as hard as I could. When she swung around, appalled, I hit out at her once more, my arms and legs flailing. Her hands snatched at my wrists, and she held me, but still I continued to struggle, fighting blindly, my eyes tightly closed, as though she were a prison around me and I was battling to get out" (p. 109). When Noreen tries to assure Vanessa that her father is in heaven, the girl responds coldly with, "He is not in Heaven, because there is no Heaven" (p. 110). At this moment, just when Vanessa has lost her faith in the traditional patriarchal religion of her father's world, Noreen has taken on the darkest side of the maternal world that is emerging in Vanessa's consciousness; she seems to be the terrible mother who devours the hero in death. Actually, however, Noreen represents an aspect of the feminine that is essential but

which Vanessa has not integrated into her psyche.

In the youthful Vanessa's writing career, her creative efforts have ceased. She stopped writing her pioneer stories, "The Pillars of the Nation," because she found out that her disliked Grandfather Connor was one of those brave pioneers she so worships. After turning to love stories she realizes that love in a fallen world is too complicated when she hears Edna crying for her lost love (p. 78). Her cliched world of expiring pioneers, half-breed ladies and barbaric queens has been much shaken by the powerlessness of the women around her, the death of her father and the terrifying implications of womanly strength and power represented by Noreen. "Everything changed after my father's death," Vanessa says (p. 110). Not just economic and social arrangements, but her whole world-view is changing. She has lost the one positive male character that tied her to patriarchal values. She has not gained the insight to establish her own values in their place. Her mother has needed her daughter to be adult and maternal during the crisis and Vanessa remembers that "I stayed close beside my mother, and this was only partly for my own consoling, I also had the feeling that she needed my protection" (p. 108). In the past Beth has sought this care from her sister Edna. Now she turns to her own daughter. The daughter is strong but much of her own bitterness and confusion remain unexpressed except in her brief fight with Noreen.

For Vanessa, the writer, the expression must come later in life through her writing. Significantly, although the childhood scribblings end at this time, the stories of the adult Vanessa, the stories we are reading, reflect a marked change in narrative technique. In "Crossing

Jordan: Time and Memory in the Fiction of Margaret Laurence," Sherrill Grace notes that "with A Bird in the House (1970) and The Diviners (1974), Laurence herself discovered the philosophical and technical means to present her vision of past, present and future embodied in characters young enough to re-create the past in the present process of living."[4] The technical device involved here is the wide-ranging breakdown of historical time which begins with the fifth story of the Bird collection, "The Loons." As Grace says, "each of the first four stories has a comparatively simple temporal structure" whereas "the last four stories . . . . are convoluted, moving back and forth over long stretches of the past, stitching the past, as it were, into the 'spiritual fabric' of the present."[5] I would suggest that, as in the case of The Stone Angel, the primary reason for the technical change is to dramatize the breakdown of the old patriarchal world that at her mother's urging Vanessa lived in and believed in The traditional order has collapsed, and accordingly the masculine logic of cause and effect, linear time and tightly organized plots also come to an end. Vanessa begins now to employ the logic of "Eros" and to search for more subtle connections between events. Similarly, instead of merely reflecting the problem, she begins a detailed exploration of the lives of the victims of the patriarchal world.

Thus in "The Loons" the underside of the pioneer conquest of the West is shown in the form of the tubercular Piquette Tonnerre. The youthful Vanessa has turned away from Piquette at thirteen in favor of cliched versions of Indians, and turned away again from the young woman Piquette in embarrassed discomfort. The middle-aged narrator attempts to deal with the world that created a Piquette, dead with her babies in a

tragic house fire. "Horses of the Night" diagrams what happens to a sensitive young man as he attempts to block out his emotions in order to become the success that the materialistic and belligerent world demands and wherein manhood is equated with material success and the ability to kill. In "The Half-Husky" Vanessa sees the negative mirror-image of the world which made her grandfather's boast of self-made success possible.

In each story the youthful Vanessa is vaguely aware of her own implication in the world that caused these victims' fates but cannot consciously accept that the safe world she grew up in is also an evil and fallen world. At the end of "The Loons," the adult narrator comes to a realization of her own limitations when she says, "it seemed to me now that 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. 127). Similarly, with reference to Chris's tragic life, at the ending of "Horses of the Night" she notes how her youthful self found it difficult to speak the half-realized truth out loud: "I could not go on, could not say that the letter seemed only the final heart breaking extension of that way he'd always had of distancing himself from the absolute unbearability of battle" (p. 153). At the end of "The Half-Husky" she admits her own unfairness in not being able to speak to Harvey Shinwell's violent aunt. She had first seen the dog as victim of Harvey's sadism, then Harvey as victim of his aunt's violence. In turn, she had vaguely understood that the aunt was pandering to something in her grandfather's attitude.

She does not, however, fully confront the unfairness of the world she has lived in until the moment of truth with her mother. Then it is

that for Vanessa "Jerico's Brick Battlements" tumble down.

I mentioned at the beginning of this discussion that this moment alters the mother and daughter relationship for Vanessa and Beth and forces our reassessment of the events of the stories. Two important realizations emerge. Beth has been able to do for her daughter what she was never able to do for herself: stand up to her own father. In addition, Vanessa's search for victims has led her to the mother. The implications for Vanessa are contained in those two statements referred to earlier: that she is not "free" and that her mother's death remained "unhealed" the longest. The reader senses that for the middle-aged Vanessa the telling of the stories has been a way of healing and freeing herself.

Much of what she is integrating into her psyche through the writing remains unconscious. On a conscious level Vanessa realizes that although "I feared and fought the old man, yet he proclaimed himself in my veins" (p. 207). Thus, on the one hand, the book is about Vanessa's coming to terms with her grandfather as a patriarchal figure and the feminine vision remains unspoken for Vanessa herself. At the same time, however, this feminine vision is available to the reader through Laurence's subtle use of bird symbolism.

Throughout the collection the female characters are associated with trapped birds. Grandmother Connor keeps a canary in a cage. Vanessa tells us that "when I asked my grandmother if the bird minded being there, she shook her head and said no, it had been there always and wouldn't know what to do with itself outside" (p. 6). Grandmother McLeod has a "Chinese carpet with its birds in eternal motionless flight" (p. 43). Piquette is associated with the vanishing loons. Vanessa hears trapped

sparrows in the attic (p. 53). Grandfather Connor says that Edna has "no more sense than a sparrow" (p. 71). The feather duster that Vanessa uses to dust her Grandmother's precious possessions is "like a dead bird" (p. 50).

The most obvious use of the symbol, of course, is to be found in the title story of the collection, where a bird is caught between two layers of window glass and Vanessa releases it into the further captivity of her room. Terrified, she sees that "The sparrow had exhausted itself. It lay on the floor, spent and trembling. I could not bring myself to touch it. Noreen bent and picked it up. She cradled it with great gentleness between her cupped hands. Then we took it downstairs, and when I opened the back door, Noreen set the bird free" (p. 102). This story, like the others, is on the surface largely concerned with Vanessa's relationship to the paternal world. In this case we are being told the story of her father's death. Thus the statement by Noreen that "a bird in the house means a death in the house" seems a prediction of the father's death. On another level, however, it is Vanessa's paternal world that is dying. Thus Noreen's prediction must be seen in a larger context, that of the growth of unconscious matriarchal feelings and values.

Joseph L. Henderson in "Ancient Myths and Modern Man" describes symbols as "the means by which contents of the unconscious can enter the conscious mind, and they also are an active expression of those contents," and he goes on to observe that "the bird is the most fitting symbol of transcendence."[6] In the Vanessa stories the bird has become the symbol of female entrapment, not just in a sociological sense but in a psycho-spiritual one. It is important to notice, for example, that it

is Noreen, the only maternal figure of any religious dimension, that releases the bird. Robert Gibbs in his introduction to the collection has said that this title story is the "localizing of her [Vanessa's] own release, her own uncaging."[7] But Laurence means us to see the uncaging as something more than a simple gaining of personal freedom. The attention she has given to the symbolic significance of Noreen and her influence in Vanessa's life suggests that the "release" is the feeling of previously caged feminine feelings and values. These have been present in the youthful Vanessa's writing in the figure of the barbaric queen. The more conscious dimension of these feeling and values takes the form of a changed consciousness of the older Vanessa narrator who is now able to write the victim stories and who is able finally to see the "tigress" in her own mother.

Thus, in the Vanessa stories, Laurence makes an important statement about the motivation of the female artist. Vanessa writes to free herself, to tell the story of the maternal world existing unrealized and often unnoticed inside the patriarchal structure. In telling these stories Vanessa defines her own womanhood by describing its shaping influences. Appropriately, these ideas are expressed not so much on the conscious planes of plot but on the level of image and symbol.

Esther Harding has said of modern woman's dilemma that "if woman is out of touch with the feminine principle . . . she cannot take the lead in what is after all the feminine realm--that of human relationship," and she feels that if women "are to get in touch with their lost feminine side it must be by the hard road of conscious adaptation" (p. 11). I would suggest that this is the very process Laurence is depicting in her

two kunstlerromans. In _A Bird in the House_, the process is somewhat implicit: the mother-daughter relationship exists as a subtle underplay and is presented largely through imagery and the narrator's growing artistic preoccupation with female figures. In _The Diviners_, however, the mother-daughter relationship is used as the very principle of structural and thematic organization.

* * *

One indication of the degree to which the relationship has emerged from its previously subtler form into a highly conscious presence is shown in the fact that most critics dealing with _The Diviners_ see the importance of Pique and/or her relationship with her mother. David Williams sees Pique as the resolution of the heritages of the Metis and the Sutherlanders; Barbara Hebner sees Pique's search for identity as parallel with Morag's own; Clara Thomas sees Pique as a catalyst in Morag's own process of "recognition and integration."[8] At the same time that they confirm the importance of Pique's role in _The Diviners_, however, these accounts also miss the real significance of that role--which is to serve as something more than a cultural symbol, a mirror or a catalyst. Pique, as daughter, is integral to Morag's identity as woman and as artist, just as Morag, as mother, is essential to Pique's identity as woman and artist.

In _Art and the Creative Unconscious_ Erich Neumann describes the artist's product as "the opus . . . its creator's 'child'; it is the product of his individual psychic transformation and wholeness, and at the same time a new objective entity which opens up something to mankind, that is, represents a form of creative revelation."[9] In the case of the

female artist, the word "child" must be taken in more than a symbolic sense. This does not mean that the female artist must literally become a mother, but it does mean that she must find the mother within herself to become a whole woman, and she must be a whole woman to be an artist.

In "Finding the Mother: The Individuation of Laurence's Heroines," Angelika Maeser posits that "It is in the pre-patriarchal form of the Absolute, the Great Mother, that these women discover the Ground of Being, their own inner spiritual and creative depth."[10] I would further suggest that this process is in the end a religious one in which the woman as artist finds herself to be not only the "Great Mother" but also the Goddess, the voice of the feminine-maternal life principle within. In a more poetic vein, Robert Graves, in The White Goddess, says that "A woman who concerns herself with poetry should, I believe, either be a silent Muse and inspire the poets . . . or she should be the Muse in a complete sense . . . and should write . . . with antique authority. She should be the visible moon: impartial, loving, serene, wise."[11]

To write with "antique authority" is not an easy task, however, as E. Whitmont suggests in describing the problems the female artist faces:

> One might speculate upon the possibility that there may be no archetypal pattern available in western Christian culture--that is to say no archetypal pattern that has been accepted by this culture--that would enable certain types of women to find their true individuality in terms of their femininity. The basic rejection and denigration of feminine values as compared to masculine values is the heritage of our historically patriarchal culture. This has resulted in a situation in which the feminine individuation problem has become a pioneering task that is perhaps meant to usher in a new period of culture.[12]

The female artist has the task of recreating values that have all but

disappeared from our cultural patterns. These values now exist largely in the unconscious. Evidence of this loss is found in the lack of artistic renderings of the mother-daughter configuration in western culture. Instead, the recurrent configuration found in art is that of the Virgin Mother and her divine son, a pietà figure that twentieth century males find increasingly unsatisfactory as a depiction of the mother archetype.[13] For the woman, any version of the mother-child relationship, no matter how aesthetically pleasing, that is a depiction of an exclusively mother-son relationship is a denial of woman's basic "ground of being," the mother-daughter relationship. To find depictions of the mother-daughter relationship we must examine the existing documents pertaining to the Eleusinian Mysteries, an examination which is complicated, however, by reason of the fact that the literary forms in which these stories exist are the products of the patriarchal period of Greek culture when the Olympian deities had already replaced the chthonic deities. Thus it is now only in the stone sculptures at Thebes, Eleusis and Pharsalus that one finds the matriarchal expression of the mother-daughter relationship (a situation, incidentially, which throws an interesting light on Laurence's use of the stone angel).

In view of the fact that the modern female artist is faced with discovering her own sense of the feminine, it is appropriate that Laurence chooses an artist-figure of the Morag-type rather than the Vanessa-type to undergo this quest. Vanessa is too much an insider in the patriarchy to feel the profound sense of loss that is necessary to send a woman on such a quest into the unconscious.[14] Morag, on the other hand, knows on a very personal level from her earliest childhood that she has lost almost her total inheritance, in particular her

mother. Both her parents are dead and she grows up under the uncertain protection of foster parents who are themselves outcasts. Morag, so to speak, has the correct mythic credentials to be a quester. She is similar to the outcast hero-type that Rank describes in The Myth of the Birth of the Hero.[15] But 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.

These adventures are especially concerned with relationships and are set in the context of Morag's experience of herself as a daughter, a wife, a friend, a lover, but especially as a mother. When Pique goes west at the beginning of the novel the narrator observes, "Something about Pique's going, apart from the actual departure itself, was unresolved in Morag's mind" (p. 5). Each going out and coming home of Pique leads Morag to take an intellectual and emotional journey into the past which becomes a descent into her personal unconscious and eventually into the collective unconscious. Though on the immediate level, Morag is concerned with her historical ancestors, ultimately her search is for her archetypal roots.

I propose to trace this quest through an examination of the tripartite character of the five sections of The Diviners. Much as the trinity of Father, Son and Holy Ghost informs Christian myth, the Mother, Daughter and Creative Spirit triad of the kind which Robert Graves describes in The White Goddess, operates in The Diviners: "Moira, Ilithyia and Callone--Death, Birth and Beauty--formed a triad of Goddesses who presided over all acts of generation whatsoever: physical,

spiritual or intellectual" (pp. 11-12).

The tripartite integration principle as used by Laurence consists in each case of some action of Pique's, usually physical movement, which Laurence shows as integral to some mental journey of Morag's, which in turn is shown to be integrated with some creative endeavor that leads to greater spiritual wholeness. By naming the order, Daughter-Mother-Creative Spirit, I do not mean to suggest, however, that there is a cause-effect relationship. The order could easily be listed in reverse. There can be no cause-effect relationship unless the configuration is anchored in time, and Laurence deliberately destroys the sense of linear progression by such devices as narrating the past in the present tense and the present in the past tense. This is a story outside historical time where only cyclical repetition matters.

Mircea Eliade describes the changed concept of time when the human psyche moves out of historical concepts into cyclicality as one in which "Everything begins over again at its commencement every instant. The past is but a prefiguration of the future. No event is irreversible and no transformation is final . . . . Time but makes possible the appearance and existence of things. It has no final influence upon their existence, since it is itself constantly regenerated."[16] Laurence expresses the same idea when her narrator says "Look ahead into the past, and back into the future until the silence" (p. 453). Thus the structural and thematic relationship of Mother-Daughter-Creative Spirit must be viewed not as a linear one but rather as an integrated cycle with no beginning, no end.

As Pique journeys westward in Part One of The Diviners, "River of Now and Then," Morag journeys through her snap-shots back into her

earliest childhood where the creative spirit within her exercised itself by creating the "spruce-tree family" (p. 11). Her first fictional world, of Peony, Rosa and Cowboy Joke, is an ideal world which reflects the pre-lapsarian paradise of the child. Appropriately, it is an oral tale, written stories being associated with a lapsarian world. In her memory-world Morag once again lives the experience of the end of paradise as "she hears the metallic clank of the farm gate being shut. Closed." (p. 16). At this moment the middle-aged Morag begins to weep. This is the first moment of the emotional re-experience of her entire life. The tears begin the internalization of her experience. Her memory moments, the "movies," serve to allow her to re-experience again and again certain emotional connections, thus fulfilling the basic function of ritual, to make more whole the individual's experience, and to recreate the original divine model or archetype in the human psyche. The dominant emotional tone to be internalized through the ritual of re-telling in this section of The Diviners is one of loss--the loss of the daughter, the loss of the parents, the loss of the childhood paradise. At the same time we are aware that the daughter's journey is in answer to a similar sense of loss--an urgent need felt by Pique as a loss of identity. She compares herself in the note she leaves her mother to Ophelia, the Shakespearian heroine who has the greatest problem in finding an identity of her own. Pique is joking, of course, when she says that she is "drowned and gone floating down the river, crowned with algae and dead minnows" (p. 3) but jokes are not only jokes in Laurence's work and Pique's image connotes the return to the primal element, water, symbolic of the unconscious.

While the daughter undertakes the physical ritual of the round-trip quest, the mother undertakes the psychological equivalent. While the

dominant tone of the first section is one of loss, the tone of the second section "The Nuisance Grounds," is one of denigration and shame. Morag, after the primary fall occasioned by the death of her parents, experiences what it is like to live in the least favored level of the patriarchy. The Nuisance Grounds is an appropriate symbolic setting because, like Christie reading the garbage, Morag must sort through the end products of the patriarchal experience to begin the creative rediscovery of her own mythology.

Morag's stories are linked historically on a conscious level with Christie's tales of their common Scottish background.[17] But we can see an unconscious connection between the stories and the influence of Prin, Morag's foster-mother. Morag's first written story comes immediately after Prin calls her a "mooner." Morag's reaction is to redefine the word: "'A mooner.' that sounds 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 reader, of course, is aware that the moon is more than "another planet" but rather a symbol of the White Goddess, while Esther Harding has explained that moon symbolism is the essential element in defining feminine psychology (p. xv). Thus it does not seem fortuitous that being called a "mooner" should prompt Morag to write or that her first story should be about a strong maternal figure, "a beautiful woman name of Morag," who says, "I have the power and the second sight and the good eye and the strength of conviction." Morag wonders, "What means the Strength of Conviction?" (p. 52). Throughout her creative life, the definition of her womanhood and her artistry is to be tied for Morag to the redefinition or recreation of language and

like Prin, she constantly moves beyond the denotative and conventional meanings of words. Thus the silent, debased version of womanhood, with a paradoxical name, Prin-that-never-was-Princess, unwittingly stimulates the beginning of Morag's creative process and her search for her archetypal identity.

The story of Morag, Piper Gunn's woman, develops further (pp. 86-87) in answer to the female child's need to write herself out of the "garbage" world and find a feminine model for her own life. Her childhood experience of women in the patriarchal world is largely one of disappointment. Prin's enormous size brings out in Morag a terrible fear of the flesh that keeps them at a distance from one another.[18] She is ashamed of Prin as Prin is of herself. Women like Mrs. McVee, the minister's wife, although kindly, have such cliched ideas of artistic form that Morag is mortified after showing her poetry. Nor is the more approving figure of Miss Melrose enough to bring Morag out into the open as a writer because the teacher's attention is largely of an intellectual nature and takes little heed of the emotional and physical nature of the young girl. When Morag, desperate for female approval, is congratulated by Millie, the store clerk, on her "good taste," she is so overwhelmed that the narrator tells us: "Morag has never felt such warmth before. She loves Millie with all her heart and soul" (p. 112). Her experience of woman's real place in the patriarchal world is largely that of the victim as illustrated by such characters as Eva Winkler and Piquette Tonnerre.

At the same time that Morag experiences woman's debased position, she also has an intuitive experience of woman as powerful and beautiful in seeing a print of Botticelli's Venus: "Like a queen in the old old

poems, like Cuchulain's young queen, the woman beloved by all men" (p. 156). Morag's childhood experience is similar to Vanessa's in that it shows a powerful need to integrate the qualities of strength and beauty in a vision of womanhood. While the child Morag struggles with her need for a feminine definition of womanhood, the adult Morag hears how womanhood fares in the present day world when her daughter Pique phones home to report on the state of modern Manitoba. Pique's treatment at the hands of rural rednecks (pp. 106-07) reflects the fallen state of the feminine and is part of the common experience of mother and daughter. Just as in childhood Morag created Piper Gunn's woman to answer her need for the ideal feminine, now she creates her new saint in the form of her conversations with Catherine Parr Trail, answering her need to be in touch with a strong, purposeful vision of motherhood. Pique's need to phone home and tell her mother of the denigrating experience on the road indicates a similar desire to commune with a sympathetic maternal figure.

In the past Morag has chosen to associate herself with the male victims of this fallen world, principally Jules Tonnerre, Pique's father. Such figures offer a counterbalance to the memory of the garbage world. Nevertheless "The Nuisance Grounds" ends with an unmitigated mood of failure, death and loss: with the list of the dead from Dieppe, the failure of the Metis cause in Skinner's tales, the abortion of Eva's fertility and the death of Piquette.

Morag's response to a dying world is two-fold and contradictory. She seeks refuge at the center of middle-class patriarchy, in marriage to Brooke Skelton, while she continues to keep her creative skills alive, through her college writing, her friendship with the Gerson women and finally through the writing of her first novel, Spear of Innocence.

The mother's reliving through memory of this experience is integrated with Pique's experience of the end of her physical journey, her arrival at the west terminus of Canada, Vancouver. She writes to her mother that "This city [is] the end. They like to classify people here. Matthew Arnold clash by night right on with this place" (pp. 171-72). Pique's experience of disillusionment with her journey across Canada is integrated with Morag's memory of the disillusionment with marriage. Then when Pique returns to her mother she begins a period of rebellion similar to the remembered stage of Morag's marriage when she tended alternately to blame her husband and feel guilty for doing so. Pique turns on her mother with "Why did you have me . . . . For your own satisfaction, yes. You never thought of him, or of me" (p. 235). In a similar way Morag once turned on the amazed Brooke with Christie's "bloody Christly" curses (p. 256). Both women realize that blaming solves nothing and each senses that she is responsible for her own inner search. "I wish there was something I wanted to do. I feel there must be, but I haven't discovered it yet" (p. 239), Pique says as she, like her mother before her, realizes that she cannot deposit her life into the care of another.

Part Three is named appropriately "Halls of Sion," the title of Prin's favorite hymn. Morag and Pique, in this section of the novel, both come to the realization that the ideal world of woman safe in the arms of beneficient patriarchy does not exist. As the narrator says after Prin's funeral, "Those halls of Sion. The prince is ever in them. What had Morag expected, those years ago, marrying Brooke? Those selfsame halls?" (p. 253). This section of the book is dominated by a mood of disillusionment and acceptance of personal responsibility, the uneasy

assumption of freedom by both mother and daughter. In this regard Laurence shows each woman beginning to manifest the Creative Spirit, Pique as she begins to become a singer, and Morag as she relives the experience of writing her first novel and tackling the "difficulties of having a main character who is virtually inchoate" (p. 225). Like Lilac, the main character of the book, Pique and Morag at this stage are still virtually "inchoate," guided more by their instincts toward life than by any rational belief in the possibility of a better world. Acting in accordance with these positive feminine instincts, Pique begins her sojourn with her horse-loving boyfriend Dan Scranton and Morag relives the memory of leaving Brooke to conceive a child by Jules Tonnerre.

At the beginning of the "Rites of Passage," the pregnant Morag, having instinctively set herself apart from protection by conceiving a child by a man she knows cannot stay with her, decides that "If she is to have a home, she must create it" (p. 291). This begins a mood of growth and integration which is matched by Pique's growing desire not to be "split," and is enhanced by increased creativity for both women. Three integrating experiences occur for Morag in this section: 1) she comes to terms with her daughter as a sexual adult when she confesses her jealousy to Pique and Dan (p. 288); 2) she comprehends that this recognition of her daughter's adulthood is also a recognition of her own mortality as she wonders "Would Pique's life be better or worse than Morag's? 'Mine hasn't been so bad. Been? Time running out. Is that what is really going on, with me, now, with her? Pique harbinger of my death, continuer of life'" (p. 290); 3) she achieves a grander integration of her maturing self with the epiphanic experience of seeing "A Great Blue Heron. Once populous in this

part of the country. Now rarely seen . . . . Like a pterodactyl, like an angel, like something out of the world's dawn. The soaring and measured certainty of its flight. Ancient-seeming, unaware of the planet's rocketing changes. The sweeping serene wings of the thing, unknowing that it was speeding not only towards individual death but probably towards the death of its kind" (p. 357).

Clara Thomas calls this moment in Morag's life an occasion of "recognition and integration out of which she comes to her full consciousness of herself in time and place."[19] The occasion, however, signifies more than personal psychological integration for Morag. The heron, or crane, is a sacred bird symbolizing a special spiritual integration associated with language and poetry. In his chapter entitled "Palamedes and the Cranes," Robert Graves explains why the cranes are connected with the invention of language: "Cranes fly in V-formation and the characters of all early alphabets . . . were naturally angular" (p. 226). The bird is traditionally associated with poetic inspiration and especially with the Goddess, and in _A Bird in the House_ birds were associated with trancendence. The moment that the inveterate bird-watcher Morag sees the heron and watches it rise from the river, marks an artistic, spiritual and personal integration that realizes her full womanhood. The narrator says that "Her quest for islands had ended some time ago, and her need to make pilgrimages had led her back here" (p. 357). There is a strong sense that "back here" is not just back to Canada but back to a sense of the maternal spirit that like the Heron is "something out of the world's dawn."

These three integrating experiences are backgrounded by Morag's memories of giving birth to Pique, and of experiencing the plight of the woman alone. Her memories of her friendship with Fan Brady show her

growth in womanhood, and her maturing sexual self is indicated in her relationships with Jules and with Dan McRaith. Morag's memory of her own search for wholeness is integrated with Pique's realization of her need not "to be split. I want to be together. But I'm not. I don't know where I belong" (p. 350). She attempts to heal this split through singing the songs her father taught her. Yet she cannot experience this heritage as yet without feeling anger at her mother (pp. 408-11).

As Pique's sense of creativity increases with the songs she sings, we become aware that the "Rites of Passage" for Morag have been marked by a great upwelling of the creative spirit in the form of her three novels, Prospero's Child, Jonah and Shadows of Eden.[20] Each novel marks part of Morag's continuing effort to understand and integrate the patriarchal past into her own developing feminine-maternal viewpoint. The first examines the dependence complex between men and women and the necessity not only for the woman to escape the need to depend but also for the man to recognize that "his real enemy is despair within, and he stands in need of grace" (p. 330). The second shows a daughter coming to terms with her shame regarding her father, just as Morag has learned to value Christie's inheritance. The final novel attempts to rescue the paternal historical heritage; in Morag's case this is the story of the Sutherlanders' immigration to Canada. This process ends with Morag's return to Canada and the experience of Christie's death. The acceptance of what is valuable in the patriarchal past is an important integrating factor in the feminine development, just as on a personal level the acceptance of positive male figures such as Christie, Jules and Dan McRaith is important to Morag's experience of herself as a woman.

For the daughter, Pique, this integration is aided by Jules's visit

that ends this section of the novel (pp. 423-32). She hears her father sing the songs of his family and speak the pain of his heritage. She watches her parents embrace and witnesses the exchange of the clan pin and knife.

Whereas the dominant experience of "Rites of Passage" has been one of painful but positive growth, the mood of "The Diviners" can be described only as one of transcendence, and a realization for the mother of the divinity within the self. Pique tells her mother, almost with the religious awe of a visitor to the ancient monuments of one's ancestors, of her visit to Manawaka, her experience of spending the night in her father's valley and visiting with Eva in the cemetery. This memory of Pique's is a special blessing for Morag. It gives the mother another moment of weeping as at the beginning when she responded to the intense sense of loss. Now the experience seems to mark the conclusion of the maternal experience and the beginning of the life experience again in the daughter. For the reader the effect is one of coming full circle. As Pique prepares to leave again, a leave-taking that is open and loving, unlike her middle-of-the-night runaway at the beginning, she sings her mother her <u>own</u> song. The daughter now sets out on a more positive search for her paternal heritage. In the same way that her mother sought integration through the pilgrimage to Scotland and the writing of her novels, Pique seeks it through her songs and the journey she is about to undertake. She has her father's knife and asks for her mother's plaid pin. Morag is not ready to give this final gift but Pique receives a greater one, although she is not yet in a position to realize this. She receives her mother's blessing. The moment is presented in a context of humor and word play that is typical of Morag's

and Pique's relationship. Morag says of the plaid pin:

> "Not right now, Pique. It's some kind of talisman to me. You can have it, though, when I'm through with it."
> "Meaning what?"
> "When I'm gathered to my ancestors."
> Pique grinned.
> "That's a new one in euphemism."
> "It's not euphemism," Morag said, "and it's not new, either."
> "Well, I didn't really think you'd want to part with it," Pique said, "But I thought I'd ask. It's okay. I hope I don't get it for a long time, then."
> She shivered slightly, and her eyes darkened.
> "Ma--" she added, "you'll take care, eh? You'll be okay?"
> "Of course. I _am_ okay."
> And in a profound sense, this was true.
> Pique put one thin brown arm around Morag's shoulders.
> "So long, then."
> "So long. Go with God. Pique."
> "Ma, you have some pretty funny expressions."
> "Now, then, don't I just?" (p. 450)

Despite the understated quality of the writing with which Laurence presents this scene we have here the full integration of the tripartite configuration. Words, and the expression of self that words offer, have always been the embodiment of the Creative Spirit in Morag's life. As she said at the beginning of the novel, "I used to think words could do anything. Magic. Sorcery. Even miracle. But no, only occasionally" (p. 5). One senses that this is one of these "miracle" occasions. For the old-fashioned words--the "euphemisms" as Pique calls the phrases "gathered to my ancestors" and "Go with God"--have taken on fuller and deeper meaning for Morag through her life experience. We sense that Morag has a much larger concept of "ancestor" than at the beginning of this book and that her God is one that incorporates a sense of herself

as the maternal principle, one that can now truly offer a mother's blessing to her child knowing that the gesture contains more than the personal mother's blessing.

For the reader this feeling of the sacred nature of this last section is intensified by the realization that the book that Morag has been writing, the book that recreates so many words, is in its last section recreating the word "diviners." In the moment of blessing, Morag has reached her full apotheosis as she realizes the transcendent female experience of acknowledging the goddess within. Thus she allows herself with the maternal blessing to release her daughter into the fullness of life.

The daughter, without knowing it, has assumed the maternal position by saying "You'll take care, eh? You'll be okay?" and by putting her arm around her mother. The full significance of the moment is still outside Pique's vision, and so she treats the exchange with humor Stylistically this is appropriate to the nature of the mother-daughter relationship in its understated, only partially conscious nature. It is also appropriate to Laurence's vision. In both A Bird in the House and The Diviners Laurence presents these parting scenes between mothers and daughters as ones that are experienced on a conscious level more by the mother than the daughter. For the daughter the experience is largely an unconscious one which begins, with the maternal blessing, a new cycle of growth. Integration is completed for the mother by the blessing, and the feminine-maternal cycle begins again in her daughter.

As the Holy Ghost is the spiritually integrating factor that makes the Father and Son separate but One, "God in three persons," so the Creative Spirit that Morag and Pique experience through their writing and

singing joins the separate beings of mother and daughter into One. Importantly, both have in the past told stories and sung songs of their paternal heritage, Morag in her books, Pique through singing her father's songs. Now they have created stories about themselves, about being woman and emerging from a patriarchal past. Pique, in singing her first song aloud to her mother says, "The valley and the mountain hold my name" (p. 441). For Morag the opus is The Diviners where in the last words she sets down "her title" and thus claims her own divinity.

Laurence has structured her novel to show a movement toward personal, artistic and spiritual wholeness that has involved a journey from loss, through shame, acceptance and growth, to transcendence. As such The Diviners is concerned with the archetypal human quest. The experience of Morag, however, also has a specifically feminine component: the birth and growth of the daughter serves as the integrating factor.

Morag's story, though a constant evocation of the Demeter-Kore prototype, is thus also reminiscent of the myth of Psyche, which Erich Neumann describes as the paradigm of the "The Psychic Development of the Feminine." Balancing at all times between what Neumann describes as "the progressive character of the self and the regressive character of the Great Mother,"[21] Psyche epitomizes the central problem of feminine psychology: woman's need to reconcile her natural desire for consciousness—figured by Psyche's wish to see her Eros in the light of her lamp--and the demands made on her by being a female body--the overpowering urge of the life force, the Great Mother. Psyche resolves the dilemma by her ability to take the male path to consciousness and yet to surrender her gains to the greater demands of her feminine nature. The surrender, that is seen by patriarchal culture as the woman's willingness

to surrender sexually to the male, is in the matriarchal tradition a surrender of self to the life principle, the Great Mother. And accordingly Psyche's reward is not only the reunion with her Eros but the birth of a girl-child, Pleasure.

In his postscript Neumann points out that the tale of Psyche contains material excluded by the dominant culture--the patriarchal culture. Like the Psyche story, The Diviners reaches for this "excluded" material. In a book that is so much about the rescue of lost causes, from the Metis to the Sutherlanders, the central search is for the "lost" maternal heritage. Morag, like Psyche, must travel the "hard road of conscious adaptation"[22] in creating her art, but she must be willing to risk all, the work, the self, in her search for the mother within herself. The daughter is the result of balancing two demands. Paradoxically, although creating the daughter requires a surrender of self it also recreates the self for the woman. Through her daughter Pique, Morag creates, both in her art and her life, the future. In creating the future she recreates her personal past and recovers her lost maternal inheritance.

Notes; Chapter III

[1] Maurice Beebe, Ivory Towers and Sacred Founts: The Artist as Hero in Fiction from Goethe to Joyce (New York, 1964), p. 3.

[2] Clara Thomas, The Manawaka World of Margaret Laurence (Toronto, 1976), p. 115.

[3] Margaret Laurence, A Bird in the House (Toronto, 1974), p. 203. All further references will be to this edition and will be cited in the text.

[4] Sherrill Grace, "Crossing Jordan: Time and Memory in the Fiction of Margaret Laurence," World Literature Written in English, 16 (Nov. 1977), 338-39.

[5] Grace, "Crossing Jordan," pp. 333-34.

[6] Joseph L. Henderson, "Ancient Myths and Modern Man," in Jung's Man and His Symbols (New York, 1964), p. 151.

[7] Robert Gibbs, Introduction to A Bird in the House, p.[v]

[8] See David Williams, "The Indian Our Ancestor: Three Modes of Vision in Recent Canadian Fiction." The Dalhousie Review, 58 (Summer 1978), 309-28; Hebner, "River of now and then," p. 151; and Clara Thomas, "The Wild Garden and the Manawaka World," Modern Fiction Studies, 22 (Autumn 1976), 402-03.

[9] Erich Neumann, Art and the Creative Unconscious (New York, 1959), p. 166.

[10] Maeser, "Finding the Mother," p. 151.

[11] Robert Graves, The White Goddess (London, 1952), p. 445.

[12] E. Whitmont, The Symbolic Quest (New York, 1969), p. 214.

[13] For an analysis of twentieth century discontent with the pietà image in men as diverse as D. H. Lawrence and Laszlo Toth see John J.

Teunissen and Evelyn J. Hinz, "The Attack on the Pieta: An Archetypal Analysis," _The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism_, 1 (Fall 1974), 43-50.

[14] For a discussion of the differences of attitude between the middle-class Vanessa and the lower-class Morag see Marian Engels, "Steps to the Mythic: _The Diviners_ and _A Bird in the House_," _Journal of Canadian Studies_, 13 (Fall 1978), 72-74.

[15] Otto Rank, _The Myth of the Birth of the Hero_ (New York, 1959), pp. 65-67.

[16] Eliade, _The Myth of the Eternal Return_, pp. 89-90.

[17] For an analysis of the conflation of paternal historical heritages see Clara Thomas, "The Chariot of Ossian: Myth and Manitoba in _The Diviners_," _Journal of Canadian Studies_, 13 (Fall 1978), 55-63.

[18] For a brief analysis of the "flesh as putrefaction" images in Laurence's earlier work see Frank Pesando, "In a Nameless Land: The Use of Apocalyptic Mythology in the Writings of Margaret Laurence," _Journal of Canadian Fiction_, 2 (Winter 1975), 53-57.

[19] Thomas, "The Wild Garden," p. 405.

[20] For a detailed analysis of the relationship of Morag's fictional work to her life see Ildiko de Papp Carrington, "'Tales in the Telling': _The Diviners_ as Fiction about Fiction," _Essays on Canadian Writing_, 9 (Winter 1977-1978), 154-69.

[21] Erich Neumann, _Amor and Psyche: The Psychic Development of the Feminine_ (New York, 1956), p. 131.

[22] Harding, _Woman's Mysteries_, p. 11.

CONCLUSION

That this thesis began with a focus on the Demeter-Kore motif and has ended with the myth of Psyche is not arbitrary or accidental. The difference between the two myths reflects a progression that is central to the understanding of Margaret Laurence's work and one that is also integral to our growing understanding of feminine psychology. Neumann states that the myth of Psyche "represents a development whose content is precisely the liberation of the individual from the primordial mythical world, the freeing of the psyche" (Amor and Psyche, p. 153). Laurence's early Manawaka books explore the lives of women like Hagar and Rachel, whose deprivation of positive maternal influences echoes the plight of the abducted Kore. In Stacey's story we begin to feel a nascent mother and daughter relationship which grows from the acceptance of the daughter's adulthood by the mother and the ability of the two women to see themselves as "we." In the kuntslerromans true quests for individuation begin, and emerging out of the Demeter-Kore complex is the Psyche mode. Thus Laurence provides a developmental view of feminine psychology in which the mother-daughter "heuresis" represents an intermediary stage between the unconsciousness of the maternal component and the articulation of feminine values. And herein lies the significance of Laurence's work today.

It is this middle stage of development that is largely ignored by our culture. We see the importance of growing consciousness in the development of women and the centrality of sexual initiation, without

realizing the significance of maternal acceptance, the mother-daughter "heuresis" in the development of woman. Only if the woman achieves the "heuresis" of maternal acceptance and love, however, can she achieve the sexual wholeness which is symbolized by the divine marriage and the completion of self that is figured by the birth of the girl-child in the Psyche story.

Not only does Laurence dramatize this progression in terms of her choice of protagonists, but also she adapts her style to the respective phases of development. From the time-oriented memory flashbacks and fairly singular voice of Hagar, Laurence moves through the double voice of Rachel, who has an inner Rachel commenting on the outer woman, to the multi-layered voices of Stacey, who suffers almost a surfeit of consciousness without any conscious integration of self. Organically reflecting the culmination of the individuation process, in turn, is the epic quality of _The Diviners_. The wide ranging breakdown of time, the many-voiced narrative, the symbolic characters, the complex of themes, the interweaving search of parent and child all lead to the expression of a world-view, a feminine world-view.

After finishing _The Fire-Dwellers_, Laurence observed:

> Over ten years, trying to sum up the changes, I suppose I have become more involved with novels of character and with trying to feel how it would be to be that particular person . . . . I have moved . . . closer to an expression of my own idiom and way of thought . . . .
>
> At the moment, I have the same feeling as I did when I knew I had finished writing about Africa . . . . A change of direction would appear to be indicated. I have a halfway hunch where I want to go, but I don't know how to get there or what will be there if I do. Maybe I'll strike it lucky and find the right compass, or maybe I won't.[1]

I would suggest that the change in direction was made necessary by Laurence's increasingly complex sense of the feminine, and that by trusting to her instincts in this way, she herself comes to epitomize what Neumann has described as the distinguishing feature of feminine psychology: "[when] the ego relinquishes its leading role and is guided by the totality of the feminine principle" (Amor and Psyche, p. 153).

There is in Canadian literature today a preponderance of women writing about women, among whom Margaret Laurence is both the pioneer as well as the writer of greatest stature in many ways. In the light of this thesis, one way of accounting for this situation is in terms of the archetypal quality of her fiction--in the extent to which it articulates responses which have their origin in the collective unconscious. Laurence expresses what for many has been inexpressible: the growing need to reconnect with ancient feminine principles. These values, some of them implicit but neglected in our patriarchal inheritance, some of them long lost in pre-history, are increasingly emergent in modern life. This is especially true in modern Canadian life, where a people that specialize in the compromise and comprehensiveness of a non-heroic but mosaically diverse culture are particularly suited to the rediscovery of lost causes, including the "lost cause" of the feminine world-view. Thus for men and women of all types in our culture Laurence speaks not so much from personal and topical experience but with "antique authority."

Notes: Conclusion

[1] Margaret Laurence, "Ten Years Sentences," p. 21.

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