

**CREATIVE DISPLACEMENT AND CORPOREAL DEFIANCE:
FEMINIST CANADIAN MODERNISM
IN MARGARET LAURENCE'S MANAWAKA NOVELS**

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By

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ABSTRACT

This project describes a feminist Canadian literary modernism in order to draw attention to revisions that need to take place in the conception of a misleadingly unqualified modernism. I begin, therefore, with an Introduction that characterizes aspects of mainstream male literary modernism and then argue for a revisionary modernism that includes feminist Canadian modernism. This feminist Canadian modernism embodies both a historically specific modernism and a modernist impulse, which is defined by its use of modernist techniques and by its concern with modernist politics of social change. I use Margaret Laurence's Manawaka novels to situate feminist Canadian modernist narratives in the context of a modern Canada defined by its past as a British colony and its present as a cultural and economic colony of the United States. I argue that a feminist Canadian modernism emerges with the second wave feminist movement.

The chapters that analyze the novels are arranged in the chronological order of the novels' publications so that it is apparent how an emerging feminism develops more fully in each novel and how that feminism helps define a feminist Canadian literary modernism. The first chapter, "Reconciling Pain and Pleasure in *The Stone Angel*," analyzes how Hagar Shipley displaces patriarchal models by reconciling her complicity in these models with her resistance to their power. The second chapter, "Bearing Voices, Broken Bones, & the Discourse of Hysteria," considers *A Jest of God* as a novel that is concerned with modernism's divided subject and the discourses that define this subject. The third chapter, "Poetic Redress: Her Body, Her House in *The Fire-Dwellers*," examines *The Fire-Dwellers* as a modernist novel that analyzes how the

sentimental and the private sphere are marginalized in mainstream male modernist narratives. The final chapter, "Floating Pique: 'Harbinger of My Death, Continuer of Life,'" considers the complex relationship between Pique and Morag in *The Diviners* as a relationship that reorders time and space and enables the present to be strategically recreated without destroying the past. Jointly and separately, these novels creatively displace male modernist narratives through corporeal defiance.

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This dissertation is dedicated to Oz Filippin.

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“For masterpieces are not single and solitary births; they are the outcome of many years of thinking in common, of thinking by the body of the people, so that the experience of the mass is behind the single voice.”

—Virginia Woolf

“Evolution when blocked and suppressed becomes revolution.”

—Nellie McClung

“Lost histories . . . perhaps we must invent them in order to rediscover them.”

—Margaret Laurence

“In a sense, we haven’t got an identity until somebody tells our story. The fiction makes us real.”

—Robert Kroetsch

PREFACE

9:00 P.M. May 11, 1992. Blue Note Café. Main Street across from the forks of the Red and Assiniboine rivers, a site that is just behind the train station in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.

I sit in the Blue Note, an after-hours coffee house that is famous in Winnipeg as the centre of the city's music scene. The Crash Test Dummies played here at least once a month before they were *The Crash Test Dummies*. Neil Young has come here to sing after more than one of his concerts. If the owner knows that you are a regular, then you can get wine after 2:00 A.M., even though liquor cannot legally be sold after this time. Ask for red or white tea, and your wine comes in a teacup. It is closed down by the liquor inspectors on a regular basis. Before the Blue Note left Main Street for good, I went there for a poetry reading one night during my first year as a graduate student studying Canadian literature. I sat with my teacher Robert Kroetsch and classmate and poet Nicole Markotic. Patrick Friesen read from the small stage on the other side of the red vinyl booths. I could barely see Friesen through a smoky haze, but his voice was clear—an intimate whisper and a raspy touch: "Is the dream loud enough? Can you feel it on your skin?" My skin still tingles at the touch of his voice, as imagination and reality meet in my body.

I sit across from Kroetsch and Markotic, alone on my side of the booth. My back is to the window. I watch Kroetsch gaze out the window, eyes lost, fingers clenched. He leans over to Nicole, unfurls his fingers, and points out the window behind me: "Look. A train—the vision of an urban landscape." A symbol of the prairies. Like

Friesen's whisper, Kroetsch's observation was simple and profound. It still lives in my skin.

Kroetsch will likely tell you a different story.

Markotic will tell it in another way.

Friesen may not have even known we were there.

An event in the past is neither a single story nor a single history.

I cannot look at a train without thinking of Kroetsch, Markotic, Friesen, and the prairie. When I read about a train, I understand the hold it has on prairie people. The train in Margaret Laurence's *Manawaka* novels haunts the people of Manawaka, at times a spectre of hope, at other times a shadow of destruction. Always a sound leading away from and towards home. Always a contradiction.

Before the invention of the train, rivers and their banks—and other bodies of water—were utilized as transportation routes, trade posts, and dwelling areas, and later, were used to order and settle the land. Gerald Friesen in his history text *The Canadian Prairies* discusses how Cree peoples traveled interior river systems; Anishinaube peoples inhabited land from the Manitoba Interlake to Hudson and James Bays and Lake Superior; Assiniboines lived in the Rainy River corridor from Lake Superior to Lake Winnipeg; and Chipewyans lived along the Churchill watershed (23-25). In Manitoba after European contact, fur trade posts were established on Hudson Bay, on Lakes Winnipeg and Manitoba, and on the Churchill, Assiniboine, and Qu'Appelle Rivers.

In the first half of the nineteenth century, activity around the water systems in Manitoba served colonialism and capitalism, as the Red River settlement was established and as the Montreal and London fur companies engaged in often violent competition. In addition, a 'new nation' was being formed as children were born from

unions between fur traders and Native peoples. This new Métis nation was established from the children of British men of the Hudson Bay Company and Native women and the children of the Montreal trade whose parents were primarily French and Anishinaube. The Hudson Bay Company families were located on the shores of Hudson Bay while the Montreal trade families lived originally from Lake Michigan to the Red River, later relocating in the Red-Assiniboine area (Friesen 68-69).

The forks of the Red and Assiniboine rivers became a site of conflict when Scotsman Thomas Douglas, Lord Selkirk, established the forks as a destination site for his new emigration plan, which was designed to help the economic situation of his people, who were suffering in the Scottish Highlands. The Irish and Highland Scots arrived in three parties between 1811 and 1814. However, the immigrant farmers were not equipped for their new lives and would not have survived without the help of the Métis peoples living in the area (Friesen 70-75). The subsequent history of the Red River settlement is pivotal to the history of the Canadian West. This history has been told and retold in various forms. In *The Diviners*, for example, Christie Logan tells the tale of Piper Gunn leading the third party of Selkirk settlers south to York Factory and Jules Tonnerre tells the tale of Rider Tonnerre battling at Seven Oaks.

These early patterns of settlement relied on water routes until the establishment of railways, a process that began in the 1870s. Indeed when Manitoba entered Confederation in 1870, it was a Métis agricultural settlement. Gerald Friesen discusses how drastically the racial and ethnic diversity of Manitoba's population changed: "By the time it [Manitoba] elected its first and only metis [*sic*] premier, in 1878, however, it was rapidly completing the transition to a British-Ontarian community, a transition that was completed during the 1880s" (195). In 1870, when Colonel Garnet Wolseley led

400 British regulars and 800 Ontario and Québec militiamen to Upper Fort Garry in the Red River Expedition, the Métis peoples were harassed and “made to feel strangers in their own land” (Friesen 195). In 1881, when the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) decided to send its main line through Winnipeg and establish its yards and shops there, Winnipeg saw itself as the “transportation intersection of the west” (Friesen 206). The effects of the railway on the city cannot be overestimated: Winnipeg’s population tripled in the sixteen months that followed the CPR decision. The 1870 census stated that Manitoba’s population of 12,000 was divided as follows: half were French-speaking Métis, one-third were English-speaking Métis, and less than one-sixth were European or Canadian. By 1886, the population was over 109,000 and only seven percent of the people were Métis (Friesen 201-202). Winnipeg, established at the forks of the Red and Assiniboine rivers, became western Canada’s first metropolis. The site at the forks had been transformed from a riverway fur-trading post to a railway agricultural centre. As Friesen summarizes, the site

had been a focus of the fur trade at least since the days of La Vérendrye in the eighteenth century; Lord Selkirk’s colonization experiment made it the heart of the growing Red River settlement in the first half of the nineteenth century. Upper Fort Garry, situated at the Forks, was Riel’s bastion in 1869-70, and this site became the administrative capital of the west with the arrival of Wolseley’s troops and Lieutenant-Governor Archibald. The construction of a number of government and business offices on the road known as Main Street . . . ensured that the administrative and financial centre of the west remained in this vicinity. But the selection of a rail route across the prairies, and particularly of the Red River crossing, were the crucial determinants of the site of the prairie’s metropolis. (205)

Given the history contained in this prairie landscape, that the river and the railway should order and reorder Laurence’s Manawaka novels is not surprising.

I call attention to the river and train because I argue that each is a symbol of modernist transformation, with the train being a more common modernist image. Two

concerns that I believe are central to literary modernism are representations of time-space compression and the contradiction between the eternal and the ephemeral. David Harvey in *The Condition of Postmodernity* discusses the concept of time-space compression as a signal of the

processes that so revolutionize the objective qualities of space and time that we are forced to alter, sometimes in quite radical ways, how we represent the world to ourselves. [I use] the word 'compression' because a strong case can be made that the history of capitalism has been characterized by speed-up in the pace of life, while so overcoming spatial barriers that the world sometimes seems to collapse inwards upon us. (240)

The image of the train represents, not exclusively but among other things, time-space compression in Canada. Canada compressed with the building of the railroads.

Railways allowed people and products to move more quickly from one end of the nation to another. The landscape was demarcated according to where the railway was built, and time was ordered according to the arrival and departure of the trains. Towns were created along the railway lines, which replaced the waterways as places of settlement. The Manawaka novels revise this time-space compression and return to the river as a paradigmatic place that is a middle ground, a neutral territory that is neither the town nor the farm. With this revision, time is no longer configured linearly or chronologically and space is expanded instead of compressed. Water, and the river in particular, is a metaphor for transformation and possibility.¹

¹ Other articles that note the importance of water and nature in Laurence's fiction include "Quest for the Peaceable Kingdom: Urban/Rural Codes in Roy, Laurence, and Atwood" by Sherrill E. Grace and "Laurence's Fiction: A Revisioning of Feminine Archetypes" by Stephanie A. Demetrakopoulos. Grace's article focuses primarily on the transformative possibilities that are available when nature is valued. Within this discussion, Grace talks about Stacey's escape to the "shore of saltwater . . . where she will try to heal her wounds sufficiently to keep functioning" (199). Grace's article confirms my argument about Laurence's use of water, although my argument diverges from her discussion because she speaks more generally about nature and not specifically

This is a dissertation about a Canadian literary modernism that had one of its beginnings as an observation by “Mr. Canadian Postmodern” about the train as a vision of the urban landscape. What Robert Kroetsch gave no indication of seeing was the river flowing behind the train. In this dissertation, I revise Kroetsch’s observation, putting his words to work in order to bring attention to the river, which has a history reaching even farther back than the train. Those waters contain the paddles of the Cree peoples, the reflections of Anishinaube and Assiniboine dwellings, the hopes of the fur traders, the tears of the settlers, the generosity of the Métis, the determination of Riel, the progress of the trains, and, as Pique hears, the voices of her ancestors. If part of the task of revising modernism is to seek out and counterpose alternatives to dominant traditions, then this project posits a feminist Canadian modernism that acknowledges the linearity of the train track without losing sight of the winding river.

about water. Although Demetrakopoulos’s article is largely irrelevant to my discussion because it concentrates on archetypal imagery in *The Fire-Dwellers* and *A Jest of God*, Demetrakopoulos also recognizes the importance of water in Laurence’s fiction when she states, “Like all Laurence’s women, she [Stacey] goes to a body of water to connect with her own deepest self” (48).

1. INTRODUCTION

The idea for my dissertation began to take shape when I was in a graduate course about Canadian modernism. When I started doing research, I discovered that, even though I was right in the middle of a course about Canadian modernist literature, there was very little literary criticism that acknowledged Canadian modernism. Indeed, an oft-quoted statement made by Robert Kroetsch about the formation of a Canadian literary tradition claims that “Canadian literature evolved directly from Victorian into Postmodern” (“A Canadian Issue” 1). This project writes into that gap and claims that there is a modernist movement in Canada that is closely associated with women’s fiction writing. My central argument proposes a modernism in Canada linked to a rise in both nationalism and feminism. This feminist Canadian modernism embodies both a historically specific modernism and a modernist impulse, which is defined by its use of modernist techniques and by its concern with modernist politics of social change. I consider the place and time of this strand of Canadian modernism in terms of Canada’s struggle to define a national identity, which is distinct and separate from American and British characters, in the context of which Canadian identity was, and arguably still is, defined. The fullest dimensions of this nationalist struggle are voiced most strongly by women writers who construct feminist and nationalist myths that provide women, and other Canadians, with versions of themselves so that they might recognize and, therefore, strategize methods of individual and collective empowerment. This feminist-modernist aesthetic is based upon a rejection of dominant structures and is defined by

stylistic and ideological features that are similar to a female aesthetic in its counterhegemonic critique of culture. This study describes a feminist Canadian literary modernism in order to draw attention to revisions that need to take place in the conception of a misleadingly unqualified modernism. Modernism has been constructed as a male-centred phenomenon, and while much work has been done to call attention to women's modernist work, at this point a silently male-gendered, masculinist, modernism is the norm. Therefore, it is important to foreground the ways in which revised modernisms displace, or correctively supplement, mainstream male—or to use a playful term with a nevertheless serious intent, malestream—modernism.

When I use the terms *modernism*, *nationalism*, and *feminism*, I understand that they are contested terms that imply multiple meanings. However, I also find myself unwilling to let go of these terms simply because they are problematic and immense. Instead, I hope to open them as I seek to include a feminist Canadian modernism into a fairly closed Canadian literary history, which is based primarily on a patriarchal, white, middle-class model. I will attempt to show that Margaret Laurence's Manawaka novels serve as a model that represents a Canadian nationalism that is based on Canada's heterogeneity, but I also acknowledge that she is writing from an arguably privileged position of a white, middle-class woman born in the geographic, if not the power, centre of Canada. However, she does expand Canadian borders in her writing: her settings are not limited to Canada; her heroines sometimes see beyond whiteness and often belong to the working class; and the protagonist of her final novel loves a Métis man and gives birth to a Métis child. Laurence's novels primarily articulate a middle-class, Canadian prairie Scottish immigrant sensibility, but the novels also engage in meaningful ways

with hegemonic and nonhegemonic groups in order to problematize hierarchical structures based on race, ethnicity, class, gender, and sexuality.

1.1 Modernism

For approximately one hundred years many writers and critics have worked to define the nature of modernism. I am less concerned with applying aspects of conventional definitions of modernism to Margaret Laurence's Manawaka novels and more interested in looking at a particular instance in Canadian literary history, an instance when nationalist and feminist movements influenced a generation of women writers who wrote stories that represented a feminist nationalism using what could arguably be called a modernist aesthetic. In other words, Margaret Laurence's novels are representative of a Canadian feminist modernism that is interested in exemplifying an unstable social and political climate, a climate that influenced analogous modernist movements in other times and places, present in Canada in the late 1960s and early 1970s. I will, therefore, not engage in an extended summary of the nature of modernism but will identify certain characteristics and limitations of malestream modernisms as developed and reiterated by primarily male writers and critics.

Peter Nicholls, in his text *Modernisms: A Literary Guide*, enters the discussion about modernism by drawing attention to the plural form of his title in an attempt to demonstrate the problems inherent in a modernism that stands as a "sort of monolithic ideological formation." Nicholls argues that it is important to draw connections between politics and literary style and to look at the "complex inscription of ideologies in the modernist styles which frequently became their most powerful and ambiguous vehicle" (vii). In other words, he is interested in translating "politics into style" in order to reflect

the tension between the “social and the aesthetic” (vii). Nicholls’s mapping of this tension in literary modernisms demonstrates how a variety of modernist art movements—such as symbolism, dadaism, neo-classicism, futurism and surrealism, as well as other avant garde developments—influenced literary and visual arts. Although it is beyond the scope of my dissertation, it is important to note that the same movements influenced the visual and literary arts but also to note that writers and visual artists translated and applied these movements in distinct and often different ways. By looking at the intersection of style, authority, and gender, Nicholls exposes the falsity of the one-dimensional malestream modernism that to date still stands as the model for modernism. Nicholls reworking of modernism into a “conceptual map of the different modernist tendencies” (viii) is helpful because it puts politics in the place of periodicity, drawing attention to traces rather than to “clearly defined historical moments” (1). Nicholls’s mapping allows for discussion before and beyond the canonical modernism represented by Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, James Joyce, Wyndham Lewis, and D.H. Lawrence, for instance.

Regardless of the work being done by critics such as Nicholls, the term *modernism* is still commonly identified with art that was made around World War One and is still primarily conceptualized as a male phenomenon, both in terms of the writers of the time and of the more contemporary academic formulators, such as David Lodge who claims that the Great War created a “climate of opinion receptive to artistic revolution” (43). The opening statement of the preface to the 1991 reprint of Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane’s edited collection *Modernism: 1890-1930* claims that “Since this book first appeared in the mid-1970s, it has become a key textbook on international literary Modernism” (11). This “key textbook” has thirty-four chapters written by twenty contributors. Only one chapter is written by a woman. A quick glance through the Index

shows that the protomodern and modern writers who garner the most attention (more than a single line in the index) are Charles Baudelaire, Bertolt Brecht, André Breton, Anton Chekhov, Joseph Conrad, Hilda Doolittle, Fedor Dostoyevsky, T.S. Eliot, Ford Madox Ford, E.M. Forster, Sigmund Freud, André Gide, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Gerhart Hauptmann, Ernest Hemingway, Herman Hesse, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Henrik Ibsen, Henry James, James Joyce, Franz Kafka, Georg Kaiser, D.H. Lawrence, Wyndham Lewis, Garcia Lorca, Maurice Maeterlinck, Stéphane Mallarmé, Thomas Mann, Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, Vladimir Mayakovsky, Robert Musil, Vladimir Nabokov, Friedrich Nietzsche, Ezra Pound, Marcel Proust, Rainer Maria Rilke, Arthur Rimbaud, Jean-Paul Sartre, George Bernard Shaw, Gertrude Stein, Wallace Stevens, August Strindberg, Leo Tolstoy, Paul Valéry, Paul Verlaine, Oscar Wilde, William Carlos Williams, Virginia Woolf, W.B. Yeats, and Émile Zola. This list is an overwhelmingly familiar litany of mostly men's names that is also chanted in other mainstream books dealing with modernism.

The Modern Tradition: Backgrounds of Modern Literature edited by Richard Ellmann and Charles Feidelson and published in 1965 looks more broadly at modernism, incorporating the romantic era into the modern tradition. However, regardless of their expansive scope, the gendered aspect of their study remains narrow:

their items range in kind and time, from Vico to Sartre, from Goethe and Wordsworth to Camus and Robbe-Grillet, from Blake to Picasso. Nevertheless, when they begin to focus upon the period of high intensity, they too give their closest attention to what is roughly the first quarter of the twentieth century, to Yeats and Joyce and Eliot and Lawrence and to their Continental coevals, Proust, Valéry and Gide, Mann, Rilke and Kafka. (Bradbury and McFarlane 32)

Bradbury and McFarlane are citing Ellmann and Feidelson in order to make an argument about period (and this extension of period is a move that I favour because it calls attention to the ways in which modernism was influenced by earlier writers and movements), but it

is revealing that throughout Bradbury and McFarlane's discussion of "The Name and Nature of Modernism" the ways in which modernism is gendered is not a focus. Indeed, they claim that Modernism "is the one art that responds to the scenerio of our chaos. . . . It is the literature of technology. . . . [T]o the Expressionist or the Surrealist for instance, it is the anti-art which decomposes old frames of reference and carries the anarchy of men's evolving desire, the expressive form of human evolution in energetic release" (27). To place such emphasis on technology and chaos and on "men's evolving desire" is to equate man with human, which amongst other gendered failings also neglects the ways in which women were contributing to and reconstituting modernist art as writers, editors, and readers. Both influential, early academic formulations of modernism and identifications of who the key modernist figures were did not account for how feminism effected important, deliberate, and radical ruptures from traditional bases of Western art and culture.

David Lodge's *The Modes of Modern Writing: Metaphor, Metonymy, and the Typology of Modern Literature* is a key text that represents the critical impulse to develop a singular model of modernism, a "single way of talking about novels, a critical methodology, a poetics or aesthetics of fiction, which can embrace descriptively all the varieties of this kind [modern and modernist] writing" (52). This impulse has contributed to the marginalization of women's modernist literatures because of its primary focus on male-authored texts, with Virginia Woolf and Gertrude Stein being the obvious exceptions, as the model for a modernist aesthetic. However, Lodge's definition of modernist fiction is also helpful in order to demonstrate how the form of Laurence's fiction does fit a conventional model of modernism even while her content challenges the periodicity and place generally assigned to modernism.

Lodge posits two kinds of modern fiction: modern and modernist. Modern literature is still connected to the modern age of realism while modernist literature is linked to a “cosmopolitan movement in all the arts” (45). It is worth quoting at length Lodge’s definition of modernist fiction:

Modernist fiction . . . is experimental or innovatory in form, displaying marked deviations from preexisting modes of discourse, literary and non-literary. Modernist fiction is concerned with consciousness, and also with the subconscious and unconscious workings of the human mind. Hence the structure of external ‘objective’ events essential to traditional narrative art is diminished in scope and scale, or presented very selectively and obliquely, or is almost completely dissolved, in order to make room for introspection, analysis, reflection and reverie. A modernist novel has no real ‘beginning’, since it plunges us into a flowing stream of experience with which we gradually familiarize ourselves by a process of inference and association; and its ending is usually ‘open’ or ambiguous, leaving the reader in doubt as to the final destiny of the characters. . . . Modernist fiction eschews the straight chronological ordering of its material, and the use of a reliable, omniscient and intrusive narrator. It employs, instead, either a single, limited point of view, or a method of multiple points of view, all more or less limited and fallible: and it tends towards a fluid or complex handling of time, involving much cross-reference backwards and forwards across the chronological span of the action. (45-6)

Lodge’s portrait will connect my discussion of Laurence’s novels to a conventional understanding of the characteristics of modernist fiction.

In addition to being attentive to the stylistic characteristics of modernist fiction, it is also important to understand the ways in which modernism has been configured by periodicity and place, especially because a Canadian modernist movement is rarely if ever remarked on in texts dealing with international modernism. None of the studies that I have already discussed in this section mentions a Canadian modernist movement. Partly, this exclusion exists because the time period with which the critics are primarily working is 1890-1930, with 1930 being the year when “Modernism, like much else of the world it was born in, came to a kind of end” (Bradbury and McFarlane 12). There is a gap here; modernism did not end, but rather came to a “kind of end.” All the world is

not on the same developmental timeline. If modernism is an art of “outrage” and “displacement” that occurs in a time of political and cultural disorder (11), then the 1960s in Canada was an ideal setting for such an occurrence.

Linda Hutcheon claims that the 1960s are generally accepted as years characterized by a flowering of Canadian fiction due to nationalist sentiment, government support for publishers and artists, and a general feeling that Canada had finally ceased to be what Earle Birney calls a ‘highschool land / deadset in adolescence’ (qtd. in Hutcheon 1). This metaphor for Canada’s growth supports a position that Canadian identity in the imperial family was one of subordinate adolescent rather than mature adult. The 1960s, however, brought a change in Canadian identity that saw Canada resisting imperial and colonial standards and creating an alternative tradition for itself. Margaret Laurence’s *Manawaka* novels are part of this Canadian literature of change, resistance, re-vision, and re-creation.¹

This project is also a ‘writing back’ to imperial and cultural centres that construct a modernism which focuses on a London, Paris, New York triangle. Raymond Williams in his chapter “When Was Modernism?” from his text *The Politics of Modernism: Against the New Conformists* theorizes the problematics of a “Modernism” that was constructed as a singular entity “in an act of pure ideology, whose first, unconscious irony is that, absurdly, it stops history dead” (34-5). He urges resistance to an ideological victory based upon metropolitan dominance, which is also connected to new imperialism. Rather than Modernism being an anti-bourgeois, universally unifying

¹ See articles by Woodcock (1978), Martin (1994), Grace (1978), Hehner (1977), Brydon (1993), Siddall (1995), ten Kortenaar (1996), Greene (1990), and Ricou (1980-81), for studies on how Laurence’s *Manawaka* novels resist and subvert traditionally accepted myths and histories about Canadian culture and nationhood.

condition, Williams sees Modernism as becoming complicit in the hegemony. His strategy of subverting this Modernism that is based upon “a now dominant and misleading ideology” (31) is to reconsider and rewrite lost histories:

If we are to break out of the non-historical fixity of *post*-modernism, then we must search out and counterpose an alternative tradition taken from the neglected works left in the wide margin of the century, a tradition which may address itself not to this by now exploitable because quite inhuman rewriting of the past but, for all our sakes, to a modern *future* in which community may be imagined again. (35)

By strategically recreating a community that combines past and present into new histories, Williams reconfigures modernism in such a way as to make a space for the inscription of a feminist Canadian literary modernism, which critiques imperial centres and destabilizes patriarchal ideologies.

Adrienne Rich in the introduction to “When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision” makes visible the connection between politics and literature: “The dynamic between a political vision and the demand for a fresh vision of literature is clear: without a growing feminist movement, the first inroads of feminist scholarship could not have been made” (34). If, as Williams claims, modernism stops history dead, then Rich’s notion of women’s re-vision as a way to awaken the dead is fundamental. In the body of her essay, Rich reworks the word *revision* and makes it an act of survival: “Re-vision—the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction—is for women more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of survival” (35). She claims that this action of re-visioning is connected to self-knowledge and resistance and that this awakening of the dead is part of a collective reality. Indeed, Rich’s process for re-visioning generally summarizes this dissertation’s methodology:

A radical critique of literature, feminist in its impulse, would take the work first of all as a clue to how we live, how we have been living, how we have been led to imagine ourselves, how our language has trapped as well as liberated us, how the very act of naming has been till now a male prerogative, and how we can begin to see and name—and therefore live—afresh. A change in the concept of sexual identity is essential if we are not going to see the old political order reassert itself in every new revolution. We need to know the writing of the past, and know it differently than we have ever known it; not to pass on a tradition but to break its hold over us. (35)

The importance of providing a revisionary modernism, which includes feminist Canadian modernist narratives, is made clear when the connection is made between Williams's entreaty to reconsider lost histories and Rich's insistence on feminist re-visioning as an act of survival for women. Rich's theory provides a feminist slant to Williams's strategy. By looking back at aspects of Canadian history and at a formulation of mainstream modernism based on a theory of creative destruction, this dissertation re-visions modernism using the Manawaka novels as examples of feminist modernist narratives.

At this point, it might be helpful to briefly summarize the ways in which I will be using the terms *modernism* and *postmodernism* and to demonstrate how Canadian and feminist critics characterize these movements and how they have considered Laurence's novels to be part of a modernist impulse. Modernism is comprised of cultural movements that use the techniques outlined by David Lodge and which, as Linda Hutcheon in *The Canadian Postmodern* claims, have much in common with postmodern techniques, such as fragmentation and parody. However, modernism is concerned with a search for revolutionary reconstruction (order in chaos), whereas postmodernism is concerned with an urge to question and disturb, "to make both problematic and provisional any such desire for order or truth through the powers of the human imagination" (2). Robert Kroetsch claims that the Canadian writer "must uninvent the word. He [*sic*] must destroy the homonymous

American and English languages that keep him [sic] from hearing his own tongue. But to uninvent the word . . . is to uninvent the world” (“A Canadian Issue” 1). This statement touches upon the crucial difference between Canadian modernism and postmodernism: modernism uninvents and then recreates the word and the world while postmodernism leaves the word and the world suspended.

Rachel Blau DuPlessis’s discussion of postmodernism, modernism, and women’s writing also helps clarify political divisions between postmodernism and modernism. A postmodern aesthetic and a female aesthetic both have traits that include inwardness, a continuous present, a foregrounding of consciousness, a concern for process, and a decentred universe. However, postmodernism “soon becomes politically quietist” while feminism and modernism remain politically active (*Pink Guitar* 17). Postmodernism’s political quietude stems from its being a critique without a construct. It unsettles and disturbs without suggesting strategies for social change. Indeed, perhaps what is unsettling and disturbing about postmodernism *is* its quietude. Feminism and modernism, however, seek to offer a critique of the status quo and then construct alternative possibilities. While some critics, like Pound and Harvey, see modernism as breaking from, without acknowledging, its history, I believe that modernism does not simply rupture from its past. Instead, modernism and feminism incorporate their histories into their futures. By acknowledging that the writing of history is a political strategy and by pursuing this political history, modernism and feminism lessen the chances of repeating mistakes made in the past. This type of political resistance is seen throughout the *Manawaka* novels as modernist struggles to structure and restructure individual and communal experiences result in the elaboration of new forms of knowledge.

While Margaret Laurence's Manawaka novels are not generally defined as modernist novels, several critics compare in varying degrees—from a passing comment to an elaborate comparison—Laurence, her protagonists, and/or her narratives to more generally accepted modernist writers, their protagonists, and/or their narratives. For example, Nancy Bailey in her article "Margaret Laurence, Carl Jung and the Manawaka Women" claims that "Laurence gives new meaning to Rilke's definition of love as two solitudes that 'protect, and touch, and greet each other'" (307). For Bailey, Laurence's novels expand Rilke's modernist definition to include love of the self, especially a woman's love for her self as she moves from an isolated to a supportive self. In addition, Bailey ends her article by setting Laurence's world against "Fitzgerald's American mythic world" (321). Indeed, F. Scott Fitzgerald ends his modernist classic *The Great Gatsby* with an image of futility that signifies an endless return to the past, an image which one might read as a movement both against and with the water's flow: "So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past" (182). As Bailey concludes, Laurence's novels, and especially *The Diviners*, look to the past in order to move into the future, while Fitzgerald's novel does not offer such a hopeful image of a regenerative future. Laurence's river flows both ways; Fitzgerald's Long Island Sound, "the most domesticated body of salt water in the Western hemisphere" (Fitzgerald 5), is contained and containing, a body of water that, despite human effort to move forward, restricts movement to one direction. For Bailey to use Rilke and Fitzgerald as the bookends of her article is to name Laurence's novels as modernist works of fiction and is to offer alternatives within modernism so that modernism includes women's subjectivity and a regenerative society.

Other writers who liken Laurence to traditional modernists include Leona M. Gom who—in her article “Laurence and the Use of Memory”—compares Laurence to Ford Madox Ford (48), Hagar to Proust’s Marcel (49), and Morag to Woolf’s Lily Briscoe (58). Gayle Greene opens and closes her comparative article “Margaret Laurence’s *Diviners* and Shakespeare’s *Tempest*: The Uses of the Past” with a quotation from T.S. Eliot: “This is the use of memory: / For liberation—” (165), and she compares Laurence to Woolf in her claim that “In this sense that what matters is process, Laurence more resembles Virginia Woolf than Shakespeare” (175). While each of these examples only gestures towards establishing Laurence as a modernist writer, when read together they can be seen as an indication of a methodology that collectively constructs a readership which looks to generally accepted modernist works as a means of acknowledging the ways in which Laurence is connected to a larger genealogy of modernism.

With the exception of the article by Greene, all of the above-cited works were published between 1976 and 1978, within four years of the publication of *The Diviners* and, obviously, the conclusion of the Manawaka cycle (although this conclusion would not have been absolutely certain at the time). It is apparent that immediately following the conclusion of the cycle, critics were interested in firmly establishing Laurence in Canada’s literary canon. Furthermore, by comparing aspects of the Manawaka cycle to various established modernist writers and texts, critics not only sought to place Laurence in the Canadian canon, they also sought to put Canadian literature on the international map. For example, Sherrill Grace, in her article “A Portrait of the Artist as Laurence Hero,” likens Morag Gunn to Stephen Dedalus in James Joyce’s *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* because they are both artists who “forge . . . the uncreated conscience

of [their] race” (Joyce 185). In this comparison, Grace states that Laurence, like Joyce, creates a hero who “reflects the national matrix from which the novel springs” (65). By looking to Joyce, Grace establishes Laurence as a writer who is concerned with issues of nation, and although Grace categorizes Laurence as a realist writer, I read Grace’s article as part of a critical movement that sets up the Manawaka novels as a modernist cycle.²

The most sustained comparison, which firmly establishes the Manawaka novels as a modernist cycle, is David Blewett’s article “The Unity of the Manawaka Cycle.”

His central argument is

that the Manawaka cycle [significantly he, like I, excludes *A Bird in the House* from his discussion] is unified not only by the centripetal pull of the home town itself, but by the development over the four novels of a vision of the human condition which is not fully rendered until the cycle is complete. This development imparts to the cycle a rhythm of reconciliation in which the *fragmentariness* of ordinary life, explored in the separate works, is seen against, and so continually absorbed into, a sense of design and purpose in the *universe*. (31, emphasis mine)

Blewett explores this modernist dynamic between the fragmentary and the universal in “an elaborate parallel with Eliot’s symbolism of the four elements in *The Wasteland* [*sic*]” (31).

While each of these critics connects an aspect of the Manawaka cycle to a more generally accepted modernist writer and/or text, none of these critics names Laurence or her fiction as modernist. Therefore, my discussion must expand the commonly-accepted definition of modernism in order to include the work of Margaret Laurence in the context of a modern Canada defined by its relation both to its past as a British colony and its present as an economic and cultural colony of the United States. One of the most

² Barbara Hehner in “River of Now and Then: Margaret Laurence’s Narratives” also compares Laurence to Joyce, in passing, when she states, “Mercifully, she did not follow Joyce in returning her protagonist to the crib” (49).

important characteristics of the aesthetic movement of modernism, for the purposes of this project, is the sense of tension that exists between the transitional and the eternal. Modernism embraces both the eternal and the fleeting and represents a concern with how to live amidst contradiction and conflict.

One of the ways in which modernism seeks to deal with an overwhelming sense of uncertainty is to break from preceding literary movements and historical conditions in order to create a new art that represents a modern condition. David Harvey, in his influential text *The Condition of Postmodernity*, discusses this break as a dynamic of destruction through the image of “creative destruction” and claims that this image is important to modernism because it calls attention to the dilemma which surrounds the destruction of the old and the simultaneous creation of the new (16). I suggest reconfiguring this image of creative destruction into one of strategic re-creation. With this reconfiguration comes a regenerative process—a process that finds the protagonist not separate from but connected to the land which surrounds him or her—instead of a tragic ending of futility. This reconfiguration also contains a gendered dynamic because the figures often associated with creative destruction include the mythical Dionysus, the literary Faust, and the painter Picasso (16-17). There are few female figures—with the notable exceptions of Salomé and Medusa—in the Western tradition associated with creative destruction, so this version of modernism also needs to be revised.

Perhaps the phoenix would be a more suitable image for a modernism based on strategic re-creation. Indeed Canadian modernist A.J.M Smith in his article “Critical Improvisations on Margaret Avison’s *Winter Sun*” characterizes Avison’s poem “Intra-Political” as a poem with “hope in energy, humour, light. Fallen man [*sic*] can still dream of emerging from this pre-creation density into the light and space of a new

Genesis. Like the phoenix we carry the seed of a new birth within ourselves” (144).

This analysis posits hope and regeneration through the image of the phoenix, so that one can see a way in which alternative modernisms might revise an ending of hopelessness, such as is found in more generally accepted modernist narratives like *The Great Gatsby* or *Heart of Darkness*.

This modernist narrative of the hero who destroys his past and therein himself has its roots in Goethe’s *Faust* and extends into modernist texts such as *The Great Gatsby* and *Heart of Darkness*. Jay Gatsby changes his name and leaves behind his parents, “shiftless and unsuccessful farm people” whom “his imagination had never really accepted . . . as his parents at all. . . . So he invented just the sort of Jay Gatsby that a seventeen-year-old boy would be likely to invent, and to this conception he was faithful to the end” (99). Gatsby’s act of creative destruction leads to his own alienation and death. Similarly, in *Heart of Darkness*, Kurtz alienates himself from his past and his culture, an action which leads him to commit horrific acts of destruction in the land and among the peoples surrounding him and, in the end, leads to his own death.

Reconfiguring this image of creative destruction is central to my argument. Harvey agrees with Marshall Berman and Georg Lukacs in their naming of Goethe’s *Faust* as the literary archetype of this modernist dilemma. As an extension of Harvey’s discussion, I will use the image of Faust as an archetype of the modern hero throughout my dissertation.³

³ André Dabezies’s entry on Faust in the *Companion to Literary Myths, Heroes and Archetypes* outlines the various stages of development of the story of Faust, from a historical character to a legend. The first written record of the story of Faust, which transformed the man into the legend, was written by an anonymous author in 1587. This version, as well as Christopher Marlowe’s famous 1590 version, ends with Faust’s death. However, versions of the story written between 1760 and 1780 by the

Marshall Berman, in his *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air*, explores this tragedy of development through Goethe's Faust, who refuses his past and therefore destroys part of himself. Berman states, "It appears that the very process of development, even as it transforms a wasteland into a thriving physical and social space, recreates the wasteland inside the developer himself" (68). Faust is a hero who is dedicated to change, and his whole identity resides in his ability to creatively destroy both the world that surrounds him and the world that is within him. When Faust is confronted by his past, he is so overwhelmed that he attempts to destroy it. The crux of Faust's dilemma is that without the past he could not transform it, but when confronted by the vitality of his past, he is moved to destroy it and himself.

Laurence's heroines, unlike Goethe's Faust, incorporate their pasts into their presents and are, therefore, able to imagine transformed futures that do not include immediate destruction of themselves or their society. Berman speaks of the necessity of Faust's bond to his past and how the rejection of his past leads to a tragic end:

Without that vital bond with his past—the primary source of spontaneous energy and delight in life—he could never have developed the inner strength to transform the present and future. But now that he has staked his whole identity on the will

forerunners of the Romantic movement, construct Faust as the bold individual rebel hero, converted and saved at the end. Later, the German Romantics returned to versions whereby Faust is damned. By the end of 1918, the character of Faust is broadened into an image of the 'Faustian man' whose "strength and greatness are derived from his passion for infinite space and his will to power. . . . There are very few critics who have claimed that Goethe's Faust is not 'Faustian', and confusion between [*sic*] the character created by Goethe, Faust the symbol of German nationalism and the 'Faustian man' is very widespread. The success of this ambiguous stereotype is due to the fact that in 1918 it conjured up the idealized image of a mythical hero standing erect amidst catastrophe" (436). The figure of Faust as an image of fatal nationalism does not work for a feminist Canadian modernism that emerges with a hopeful nationalism. The Faustian archetype of the alienated individual hero must, therefore, give way to a more regenerative and hopeful image.

to change, and on his power to fulfill that will, his bond with his past terrifies him.
(69)

Instead of being terrified by the past and breaking with it, Laurence's heroines seek ways to incorporate their prairie pasts into their modern presents. Instead of Faust's wasteland being recreated inside the developer, the heroines in Laurence's Manawaka novels imagine their prairie pasts into a regenerative place that is part of their bodies. Their inner geography contains the regenerative prairie, and each heroine is connected to other people through this communal past. With this connection to the past, these heroines are able to acknowledge the complexity of their identities rather than being limited to a homogenous identity that cannot incorporate both the fleeting and the immutable.

One way to acknowledge a complex and diverse identity is to represent such an identity in art. The role of the artist is of primary importance within modernism, especially in post-Nietzschean discourse, thinking, art, and culture. As Harvey explains, when Nietzsche ranked "aesthetics above science, rationality, and politics . . . the exploration of aesthetic experience . . . became a powerful means to establish a new mythology as to what the eternal and immutable might be about in the midst of all the ephemerality, fragmentation, and patent chaos of modern life" (18). If aesthetics become a way to represent and transform the modern experience, then the artist is of paramount importance. The structure that casts the individual artist into the role of tragic hero is problematic because it perpetuates patriarchal ideologies that value the individual over the community. As can be seen in Goethe's Faust, malestream modernism reflects narcissistic individualism in its narratives. Instead, the modern artist needs to represent the world in which s/he exists without erasing the people and places

that exist inside and outside the artist. The artist cannot stand alone as individual hero without effectively destroying the community that has helped form the artist.

The artist is central to this reconfiguration because it is the artist who reimagines alternatives that offer a critique of the status quo. It is fitting, therefore, that Morag, the final Manawaka protagonist, is a writer.⁴ As Harvey explains, the modernist writer, according to Baudelaire, is “someone who can concentrate his or her vision on ordinary subjects of city life, understand their fleeting qualities, and yet extract from the passing moment all the suggestions of eternity it contains” (20). While Baudelaire suggests that modernism is an urban phenomenon with ordinary city subjects as the focus of the artist’s eye, Laurence does not privilege urban peoples over rural peoples as appropriate subjects. This is not to say that the city is not of importance in the Manawaka novels, for the city figures in each of the novels and is especially visible and animate in *The Fire-Dwellers*. Furthermore, while modernism may have begun as an urban phenomenon, it has been transported and reconfigured in ways that may include all subjects regardless of location. One need only recall modernist narratives such as *The Double Hook* or *Heart of Darkness* to see the ways in which artists transport modernist concerns into rural or remote landscapes. What is of primary importance to my argument is the notion that the central challenge to the modernist writer is to create an aesthetic that reflects both the transitory and the eternal, the timely and the timeless, the local and the mythic. The writer is able to imagine and represent the spatialization of time through language and form, by experimenting with simultaneity and contradiction,

⁴ See Sherrill Grace’s “A Portrait of the Artist as Laurence Hero” and Christian Bök’s “Sibyls: Echoes of French Feminism in *The Diviners* and *Lady Oracle*” for further analyses on the importance of the writer as a creator, re-creator, and revolutionary.

and by exploring the regions of memory and forgetting. In this way, modernism, while a response to historically specific phenomena, also embodies all the experiences leading up to that moment.

It is important to note that while the figure of the artist is central to modernism, Laurence's differently gendered artist also differs in other substantial ways from artist figures such as James Joyce's Stephen Dedalus in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* or Ernest Hemingway's Jake Barnes in *The Sun Also Rises*. Morag Gunn is a writer who recognizes the importance of the past as a way to move forward. She also realizes that she needs to return home in order to imagine a hopeful future for herself and for her community and then to transform that imagining into writing. These differences, within the version of modernism for which I argue, become evident when comparing Morag Gunn to Stephen Dedalus and Jake Barnes, both of whom sacrifice their pasts—which may be both time and place—or perhaps more accurately, their past selves.

Stephen Dedalus writes in his diary that “The past is consumed in the present and the present is living only because it brings forth the future” (184). He connects the past to the future through the present, but the past disappears—or is consumed—in order for the future to arrive. In addition, he is a writer who accepts his mother's philosophy that he “may learn in [his] own life and away from home and friends what the heart is and what it feels” (185). Unlike Morag, Stephen anticipates a life of self-imposed exile, breaking from—or in effect destroying—his past. And so the novel ends with Stephen leaving Ireland “to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience and to forge in the smithy of [his] soul the uncreated conscience of [his] race” (185). Here again is an image of the isolated individual hero who must leave his community in order to shape

his own greatness as the soul of his people. Stephen is not interested in the regeneration of his community; his primary interest is molding his own individual self.

In *The Sun Also Rises*, Jake Barnes is an American writer living in Paris. Like Stephen Dedalus will do, Jake Barnes has left his homeland in order to find success on foreign soil. However, while Stephen anticipates greatness in his alienation, *The Sun Also Rises* exposes ways in which alienation breeds hopelessness and despair rather than greatness and artistic success. As a friend reminds Jake Barnes,

You know what's the trouble with you? You're an expatriate. One of the worst type. Haven't you heard that? Nobody that ever left their own country ever wrote anything worth printing. . . . You've lost touch with the soil. . . . You don't work. One group claims that women support you. Another group claims you're impotent. (115)

Indeed, Jake Barnes does discover “what the heart is and feels,” to borrow from Joyce, but his discovery is a discovery of hopelessness and despair. His heart does not lead him into a regenerative future. Instead, his present is more reminiscent of Fitzgerald's image of beating ceaselessly against the current and nonetheless being carried into the past.

1.2 Canadian Modernism

Previous discussions of Canadian modernism by Canadian critics offer many definitions and dismissals of both period and aesthetic. Louis Dudek and Michael Gnarowski, for example, consider Canadian modernism in terms of the 1920s McGill poets. Brian Trehearne also examines the impact of this 1920s male movement, but expands his study to include the influence of earlier schools of aestheticism on the development of Canadian modernism. In “Losing the Line: The Field of Our Modernism,” Dennis Duffy argues that processional models do not work as a paradigm for Canadian literary development. He proposes instead a “process marked by localism

and sportive variance” (168). Frank Davey and Linda Hutcheon discuss modernism primarily as the predecessor to postmodernism, while Robert Kroetsch claims that Canadian literature moved directly from the Victorian period into postmodernism.

Only Barbara Godard in her essay “Ex-centriques, Eccentric, Avant-Garde: Women and Modernism in the Literatures of Canada” has articulated a Canadian modernism that includes women’s fiction—and especially poetic prose—up to and including the 1960s. Godard, responding to Warren Tallman’s article “Wonder Merchants: *Modernist Poetry in Vancouver During the 1960’s*,” claims that it is important to recognize the contribution of women writers before 1960. Godard, like Raymond Williams, insists on the need for an alternative modernist tradition, which decentres existing traditions. She cites three moments of importance that illuminate women’s contribution to Canadian modernism. The first moment occurs in the 1940s with the publication and subsequent censorship of Elizabeth Smart’s *By Grand Central Station I Sat Down and Wept* and Therese Tardif’s *Désespoir de vieille fille*. The second moment occurs in the 1950s with the publication of Sheila Watson’s *The Double Hook* and Gabrielle Roy’s *Alexandre Chenevert*. Finally, in the 1960s and early 1970s, Audrey Thomas and Nicole Brossard published works that are part of the genealogy of Canadian modernism (63). Godard sees Thomas and Brossard as located on the “intersection of feminist writing and Canadian Post-Modernism” (67), but nonetheless includes both writers as part of the genealogy of Canadian Modernism as outlined by Warren Tallman.

While Godard mentions Margaret Laurence’s work, she does not discuss it within her genealogy of modernism because she is more interested in reclaiming texts that substitute “the flux of surrealist images for linear narrative” and that have been censored, misread, and/or largely ignored (63). She comments that Laurence’s texts have been read

“in terms of a national concern with empires and communications” (60), but she disregards Laurence’s use of language innovations. My work expands Godard’s beginnings and elaborates on the feminist ideologies that contributed to a feminist Canadian modernism as seen in Margaret Laurence’s Manawaka novels.

A present state of being that is exposed and vulnerable as it strives to disrupt and recreate is a crisis which unites modernist and feminist aesthetics in a Canadian nationalist context. Modernist and feminist aesthetics identify the importance of change as a disruptive and recreative process that offers a subject position which is both vulnerable and creative. As Barbara Godard states, “the dislocation connected with woman’s experience . . . can be read as a paradigm of our national uncertainty about our collective experience in this decentring new world” (60). The dislocation and subsequent desire to create a collective experience also resists a centre that privileges the individual over the communal. This is one aspect of a feminist Canadian modernism that challenges traditional modernist formulations.

1.3 Nationalism

If this project suggests ways of reconsidering modernism in a Canadian context, then it is also important to unpack the category *nation*. Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities* provides a definition of nationalism that helps formulate ways of understanding the construct called Canada. Anderson defines nation as

an imagined political community—and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. . . . *limited* because even the largest of them . . . has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations. . . . *sovereign* because the concept was born in an age in which Enlightenment and Revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely-ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm. . . . *community*, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. (7)

I speak of Canada as a geo-political, socio-economic entity in which exists the imagined construct, the Canadian. This Canadian, rather than being a specific individual or group of individuals, is an imagined construct that exists within the imagined political community called Canada.

Julia Kristeva in “Women’s Time” also theorizes the nation. She claims that after World War II, the nation is an illusion that is “preserved only for ideological or strictly political purposes” (188). Nation becomes symbolic, a denominator, according to Kristeva, where “cultural and religious memory forged by the interweaving of history and geography” (188) unite the peoples of a nation. To consider nations such as Africa, Asia, Europe, and/or Canada is to see places where the idea of national geography as constant, common, and unifying is problematic. It is especially important, then, to understand how histories change depending on the storyteller. Manawaka is the geographical constant that unites all four novels, and it symbolizes the way in which outer geography maps inner geography. The Manawaka novels invent and rediscover lost histories of Canada that are contained in both geographies of the land and of the body. This myth-making is part of a Canadian modernist movement that is intricately connected to a feminist Canadian movement in the late 1960s and the 1970s.

In the context of this dissertation, perhaps the most important critic of the idea of nation is Virginia Woolf. Woolf, indisputably a modernist, criticizes the idea of nation for a woman in *Three Guineas*, which was published in 1938. Woolf argues that it is not possible to have a singular idea of society because the idea of nation is created by men at the expense of women. Instead, she suggests that women form their own society called the Outsiders’ Society: “Let us then draw rapidly in outline the kind of society which the

daughters of educated men might found and join outside your society but in cooperation with its ends” (309). Woolf claims that if women were to join the society of men, women’s identity would merge with men’s, which would result in an erasure of difference that is crucial for social change. According to Woolf, cooperation between men and women is necessary but not at the expense of women’s difference. It is important to name woman as outsider in order to call attention to difference that serves as critique.

This critique does not end without imagining alternatives. Instead of narrowly defining the term *country*, Woolf expands the idea of a woman’s country to include the world. In *Three Guineas*, she writes an imagined response to a man who tries to “rouse her patriotic emotion” (311) by telling her that he is fighting to protect “our country”:

““Our country,”” she will say, ‘throughout the greater part of its history has treated me as a slave; it has denied me education or any share in its possessions. ‘Our’ country still ceases to be mine if I marry a foreigner. ‘Our’ country denies me the means of protecting myself . . . the outsider will say, ‘in fact, as a woman, I have no country. As a woman I want no country. As a woman my country is the whole world.’ (313)

Woolf ends this response by saying that if some emotion causes the outsider woman to feel love for England, then the outsider “will give to England first what she desires of peace and freedom for the whole world” (313). In this section, Woolf succinctly summarizes how the nation as an apparatus has failed women and then offers a shockingly contemporary strategy to “think globally and act locally.” Like Nietzsche, she too places the artist above the politician as a figure of change: “Let us then leave it to the poets to tell us what the dream is” (366). The poets and the writers are the figures who imagine a future that unites people even and especially through difference.

A formulation of Canada's identity does not need to erase individuality, but rather it can call attention to the multiplicity of ways in which Canadians identify themselves, and, therefore, to the near impossibility of saying "Canadian" without qualifying the term. I want to again emphasize multiplicity within a single term. Using theory elaborated by feminists—such as Hélène Cixous, Julia Kristeva, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak—I question and affirm the ways in which woman, time, place, history, and nation are configured within a feminist Canadian modernism. Spivak says, "divide the name of woman so that we see ourselves as naming, not merely named" (139). My study acknowledges Spivak's directive and subsequently engages in a process of naming and renaming a Canadian modernism that is connected to female subjectivity.

1.4 Feminism

My conception of a feminist aesthetic—and the connection between a feminist and modernist aesthetic—is based largely upon Rachel Blau DuPlessis's "For the Etruscans," which she originally presented as a paper at a conference in 1979 and revised and collected in her 1990 *The Pink Guitar: Writing as Feminist Practice*. DuPlessis defines a female aesthetic, which I consider feminist, as "the production of formal, epistemological, and thematic strategies by members of the group Woman, strategies born in struggle with much of already existing culture, and overdetermined by two elements of sexual difference—by women's psychosocial experiences of gender asymmetry and by women's historical status in an (ambiguously) nonhegemonic group" (5). A feminist aesthetic links strategies of resistance and subversion with historical oppression, with history existing in both past and present. It also stresses both unity (the

group Woman) and diversity (members within this group). Moreover, DuPlessis argues that this aesthetic is not essentialist. She stresses creation over discovery, variety and contradiction over uniformity (10-11).

DuPlessis connects literature by women with

nonhegemonic modernism in its subversive critique of culture. . . . In women's writing, as in modernist, there is a didactic element, related to the project of cultural transformation, of establishing values. In women's writing, as in modernist, there is an encyclopedic impulse, in which the writer invents a new and total culture. (17)

The description *total* here seems unfortunate because this "new and total culture" has traditionally been associated with a patriarchal culture, but a nonhegemonic modernism—such as a feminist Canadian modernism—envisions an alternative society that is not based upon a dualistic philosophy. As seen in Margaret Laurence's Manawaka novels, multiplicity, contradiction, non-linearity, and simultaneity create a both/and vision that resists either/or duality. Linear Western patriarchal history is displaced and recreated as new stories are imagined and shared. These new histories construct an alternative value system in which women's desire is connected to transformative resistance. Women's fiction in Canada, and the characters created within these stories, offer possibilities for ways of understanding the identities of both nation and individual.

DuPlessis theorizes the complex relationship women have with hegemonic groups. DuPlessis, like Woolf, offers the model of the insider-outsider as a way of dissolving binary paradigms:

the woman finds she is irreconcilable things: an outsider by her gender position, by her relation to power; maybe an insider by her social position, her class. . . . how then could she neglect to invent a form which produces this incessant, critical, splitting motion . . . that incorporate[s] contradiction and nonlinear movement into the heart of the text. (8)

It is important to include race, sexuality, and ethnicity in DuPlessis's insider-outsider paradigm, for white women are rarely without power when race is the category being examined. When dynamics are explored between a white woman and a Métis man, for example, it is not always clear that a woman is the outsider. Indeed, both a white woman and a Métis man may be outsiders, as is seen in the Manawaka cycle of novels.

A cycle challenges linear movement that insists on borders, beginnings, and endings. Margaret Laurence's cyclical Manawaka novels, therefore, serve as an ideal kaleidoscope through which to view the changing patterns that occur as Canadian women writers redefine and recreate a Canadian modernist literary tradition. Many of the characters of Laurence's Manawaka novels embody insider-outsider social status that enables them to transgress, even reimagine, divisions which others see as fixed. To imagine change is the first step toward creating new, alternative social structures as called for in a counterhegemonic revisionary modernism.

If modernism is an art that encompasses how people experience space and time and self and other, then the process of naming one's self in a particular space—in this case, Canadian woman—must also consider how time functions in that space. Kristeva claims that “female subjectivity [is] linked both to cyclical time (repetition) and to monumental time (eternity)” (187). Female subjectivity and modernism are both concerned with timelessness insofar as events remain constant and change—like a river—through memory and imagination and writing. This apparent contradiction that is contained in an event which is both ephemeral and eternal can be clarified if one thinks about a subject's relationship to her past. For example, when forty-year-old Stacey MacAindra in *The Fire-Dwellers* remembers herself at a dance when she was eighteen

years old, the event is fixed in a particular time and place but that same event changes when Stacey remembers and retells the story of the dance. Over time and through memory, events are both fleeting and eternal as the subject revisits and revises her past.

Understanding time as both repetitive and eternal is one way of reconceptualizing and troping time. A second way of theorizing time is to conceive of it in terms of recurrent change that comes in waves, as, for example, in so-called first and second wave feminisms. Alison Prentice in *Canadian Women: A History* cites 1966 as the “beginning of the public process of change . . . when Francophone and Anglophone women’s organizations [in Canada] began to regroup and reorganize in a way they had not done for over a generation” (343). Prentice claims that the “late 1960s and the 1970s witnessed in Canada, as elsewhere in the modern world, a resurgence of feminist activity” (343). With this second wave of feminism, Canada caught up, in one important respect, to the rest of the modern world.

1.5 Feminism and Nationalism in Canada

The 1960s were energetically changing and challenging times for Canadian feminism and Canadian nationalism, and a union between the two was reflected in the fiction that Canada produced. According to Benedict Anderson, fiction plays a crucial part in creating national identity: “fiction seeps quietly and continuously into reality, creating that remarkable confidence of community in anonymity which is the hallmark of modern nations” (36). Indeed, according to Prentice et al., feminism and nationalism became closely related and inevitably intertwined:

[B]y the 1960s, issues related to women’s lives and experiences were explicitly woven into [women’s literature]. To speak of ‘Can Lit’ was to speak primarily of women writers and of women’s experience. . . . With the evolution of Canada into

an ethnically diverse society in the post-war era, and the heightened awareness of the need to preserve and promote more than anglophone culture, thousands of women contributed to the cultural mosaic that was becoming a cornerstone of the Canadian identity. (340)

While “old patterns and rituals that had formerly dominated the lives of women disappeared in the post-war era” (Prentice et al. 341), this disappearance was neither sudden, nor always welcomed. This uneasy position of being on the crest of an emerging second wave feminism and a nascent multicultural nationalism characterizes a feminist Canadian modernism.

The first publicly recognized success of the second wave of Canadian feminism was the establishment of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women. Officially established in 1967, the Commission evolved out of the 1966 Committee on Equality for women. While the Pearson government initially ignored the Committee’s request for a Royal Commission, Laura Sabia, who led the effort, advised the Prime Minister that she would march two million women to Ottawa unless a Royal Commission was formed to look into the status of women. The government took the women seriously this time and formed the Commission not only to investigate the status of women in Canada but also to recommend strategies for providing women equal opportunities with men (Prentice et al. 346-48).

The Commission and its recommendations were and are crucial to a transformation of Canadian society. Although “[t]here were no minority, native, leftist, or even young women in the group” (Prentice et al. 348), the Commission traveled across the country stopping in fourteen cities and in every province for public hearings where many different voices of Canadian women were heard. In 1970, the Commission made 167 recommendations concerning women’s health, education, and family law.

The report was revolutionary because it gave the second wave of feminism an agenda for social change (Prentice et al. 349). In the early 1970s women's groups formed specifically to address the Commission's recommendations. In this way, large groups of women mobilized, and they were unified in their commitment to social change while diverse in their concerns and approaches to effecting change.

One aspect of the success of the Commission was that both the Commission and its success were *publicly* recognized. The process of women publicly organizing and mobilizing was an important step in making visible to society the issues women faced and women's refusal to accept the status quo. Public demonstrations and marches became part of this process of making visible, both in the streets and in the media: "The media were fascinated by the more or less outrageous street demonstrations, often about such seemingly novel issues as abortion and sexuality. Its members were happy to be described in the inflammatory language of 'revolution'" (Prentice et al. 352).

In the late 1960s and the 1970s—the time in which *A Jest of God*, *The Fire-Dwellers*, and *The Diviners* were published—many women engaged in the difficult process of reassessing their places and reinventing their potential in an oppressive patriarchal society. Women's consciousness-raising occurred in formal and informal, private and public, groups and moments. Women began to realize that their oppression and subordination were not "the result of bad luck or incompetence, but shared by others" (Prentice et al. 391). This realization was often connected to an understanding of how limiting gendered social roles were and how necessary it was to transform these roles. These roles were often connected to the perception, representation, and practices of women's sexuality. Modernist liberatory strategies of revolution and re-creation, therefore, need to address issues of language and body, of coming to voice and of

embracing sexuality. Each of the protagonists in the Manawaka novels addresses at least one of these issues in a moment or repeated action that expresses simultaneously the ephemeral and the eternal in that moment. Each transformative moment is an expression of protest against a dominant ideology.

During the same time period that women protested and called attention to their subordinate status in patriarchal Canadian society, federal and provincial governments addressed issues surrounding racial and ethnic identity. In 1963, the Pearson Liberals set up the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism to

inquire into and report upon the existing state of bilingualism and biculturalism in Canada and to recommend what steps should be taken to develop the Canadian Confederation on the basis of an equal partnership between the two founding races, taking into account the contribution made by the other ethnic groups to the cultural enrichment of Canada and the measures that should be taken to safeguard that contribution. (qtd. in Bumsted 330)

This mandate to develop an “equal partnership between the two founding races” was met with opposition in the west, especially on the prairies. Many people living on the prairies neither accepted this notion of French-English Canadian dual nationality (Friesen 451), nor believed that a government located in the east would understand local prairie issues surrounding the land and its peoples. This myth of Canada as a nation founded on two races is limiting and exclusionary, especially to First Nations peoples.

By 1969, what quickly came to be called the B and B Commission had another mandate on which it reported in *The Cultural Contribution of Other Ethnic Groups*. This mandate led to the 1971 federal policy of multiculturalism, which proclaimed a desire to maintain the diverse cultural heritage of Canada. Significantly, this policy did not include the diverse cultural heritages of First Nations peoples, including Métis peoples. This desire to celebrate an exclusionary multiculturalism was also manifested

at the provincial and civic levels. For example, in 1970 Winnipeg's first Folklorama festival took place. This multicultural festival was part of Manitoba's Centennial celebrations, and it quickly became a major tourist attraction while "ethnic culture in general became another way to promote Canada abroad" (Bumsted 395). Canada was being marketed as a multicultural nation, a mosaic that was built in contra-distinction to the United States's melting-pot. The Canadian government was creating the nation as an economic apparatus rather than as a community whose wealth was its diversity.

While, obviously, the desire to establish a national literature is not unique to the 1960s, an articulation of this desire resurfaced with a vengeance, especially in English Canada, and was part of the nationalist climate that developed around the Centennial Year, 1967. The 1960s, in particular, saw a huge amount of new literature being produced in Canada. In 1965, the first volume of the three-volume *Literary History of Canada* was published by the University of Toronto Press, and by 1970 almost all Canadian universities offered undergraduate programs in Canadian literature (Bumsted 397-404). During this time, academics, popular reviewers, and the reading public established a critical canon of Canadian literature, which emphasized the interpretation and construction of Canadian identity. While I am not trying to equate Canadian literary nationalism with modernism, I am trying to call attention to the ways in which this form of nationalism contributed—in tandem with other movements, such as feminism—to a feminist literary movement that was modernist in impulse, if not in intent. Margaret Laurence's *Manawaka* cycle, published between 1964 and 1974, was a major contribution to the Canadian literary landscape as well as to the creation of Canadian identity in opposition to the exclusionary politics of the Canadian government.

This dissertation's central argument is grounded in the notion that it was a North American feminist movement that brought Canada to equal footing with the rest of the Western world. Women's writing in Canada is connected to this feminist revolution in that it creates an aesthetic that represents and helps shape this period, which is a rupture from the traditions that precede it. Margaret Laurence's Manawaka novels incorporate and engage with this rupture. The dividing line that Kristeva and Prentice posit also divides the Manawaka cycle's four novels. *The Stone Angel* and *A Jest of God* were published in 1964 and 1966 respectively, while *The Fire-Dwellers* and *The Diviners* were published in 1969 and 1974.

Perhaps the most useful context in which to consider the divide between the earlier and later Manawaka novels is to consider that Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* was first published in 1963 and that the term *sexism* was first used in 1968.⁵ While *The Feminine Mystique* is problematic because it offers a view of women's lives that is a white liberal American feminist view that does not apply well if at all to either Canadian experience or to the experience of racialized or working-class women, the text does provide a useful way of identifying the separation between the early and the later protagonists because it provides insight into their ability to analyze and articulate their oppression.⁶ Indeed, *The Fire-Dwellers* is arguably a direct response to and engagement with the issues with which Friedan deals. While Hagar, in *The Stone Angel*, and Rachel,

⁵ The *Oxford English Dictionary* cites two 1968 sources as the way in which the word *sexism* was brought into the English language: 1968 C. Bird in *Vital Speeches* (U.S.) 15 November 90 Sexism is judging people by their sex where sex doesn't matter. 1968 S. Vanauken *Freedom for Movement Girls—Now 7* The parallels between *sexism* and *racism* are sharp and clear. Each embodies false assumption in a myth.

⁶ Constance Rooke makes a passing reference to this point in her article "A Feminist Reading of *The Stone Angel*" when she says, "Hagar cannot herself articulate (because historically she does not know) the feminist view of her case" (27).

in *A Jest of God*, struggle within patriarchal structures that are primarily implemented within the family and through work, Stacey is the first protagonist to see how the media informs and shapes public views. Laurence uses Stacey, in *The Fire-Dwellers*, and Morag, in *The Diviners*, to show how women benefit from the questions Friedan asks and the problems she identifies. The coining of the word *sexism* in 1968 gave women a way to name Friedan's "problem that has no name." Consequently, Laurence has Stacey and Morag begin to identify and analyze their oppression, while Hagar and Rachel do not yet have the language to name their problem.

The first chapter of *The Feminine Mystique* is called "The Problem That Has No Name." In this chapter, Friedan acknowledges the isolation that middle-class white women in the United States in the 1950s and 1960s were feeling. The fifteen years that followed World War II were years of frustration for these women as they were covertly and overtly moved out of paying jobs and back into the unpaid labour of the home. Books and articles, tradition and psychology told women that "they could desire no greater destiny than to glory in their own femininity" (Friedan 11). The suburban housewife was isolated in her despair—unaware that this despair was shared by so many other women—while her image was being heralded as the "dream image of the young American women [*sic*] and the envy . . . of women all over the world" (13). By 1962, the plight of the suburban housewife was debated and analyzed in newspapers and books, on television shows and education panels. Even so, many people did not know that this problem was real and those who did, did not know how to define it, except to describe the unbearable and exhausting details of an unsatisfying daily routine (21).

Friedan claims that part of the despair that many women felt was the despair that arises out of an inability to imagine a future and to claim an identity for oneself: "The

feminine mystique permits, even encourages women to ignore the question of their identity” (64). Women no longer have a private sense of their identity and the public image being promoted and admired is precisely the image that is unsatisfying and restricting: “women no longer know who they are. . . . They are sorely in need of a new image to help them find their identity. . . . They look for the image they will no longer take from their mothers” (64-5). To connect this analysis back to the Laurence novels, the reader sees Rachel trying on various roles while resisting the voice that claims she will be like her mother. In contrast, Stacey puts on the masks of mother and wife and does not find either of these masks satisfying, although she at times finds them safe. Stacey reaches back in memory and constructs an identity from her past because she cannot imagine a future identity.

Part of the double bind of this situation is that while women did not want to be like their mothers, they also did not see alternatives around them that looked any more satisfying. As Friedan says,

We did not want to be like them, and yet what other model did we have? The only other kind of women I knew, growing up, were the old-maid high-school teachers; the librarian; the one woman doctor in our town, who cut her hair like a man; and a few of my college professors. None of these women lived in the warm center of life as I had known it at home. Many had not married or had children. I dreaded being like them, even the ones who taught me truly to respect my own mind and use it, to feel that I had a part in the world. I never knew a woman, when I was growing up, who used her mind, played her own part in the world, and also loved and had children. (67-68)

In this excerpt is the fear of Rachel and the despair of Stacey. It takes *The Diviners* to finally create a protagonist in Morag Gunn who does offer an alternative model for a woman’s identity. This is not to say that Morag arrives at this identity with ease, but she does finally, tentatively, arrive.

This layered dissertation acknowledges a feminist Canadian literary modernism that emerges in tandem with the second wave North American feminist movement in the 1960s and 1970s; it analyzes this modernism through the novels of Margaret Laurence's Manawaka novels, and it reads female subjectivity within the Manawaka novels as defiant, revolutionary, and re-creative. Context and text fuse to create a cycle of novels that reorders time and space and contributes to the making of Canada's identity. In addition, this project follows a model that encourages a definition of modernism which centres upon women writers and women's issues.

1.6 Models of Gendered Modernisms

There are several studies that have contributed to the creation of alternative traditions of modernism based upon women's issues, and their importance cannot be overestimated. These ground-breaking models have in various ways informed and inspired my own re-visioning of literary modernism. One of the only full-length studies of a women's modernism written by two feminist Canadians interestingly still does not identify a Canadian modernism or deal with Canadian women writers. Instead Bridget Elliott and Jo-Ann Wallace's 1994 text, *Women Artists and Writers: Modernist (im)positionings*, classifies feminist period studies of modernism into three stages (13) and then offers its own feminist configuration based on both materialist and formalist practices (14-15). The first stage that Elliott and Wallace identify is one that emphasizes community and is a recuperative project.

Shari Benstock's *Women of the Left Bank: Paris, 1900-1940* is arguably the most influential of these studies. It uses feminist criticism and deconstruction to plot differences between genders and within gender. Benstock focuses exclusively on

French and American expatriate women who were born between 1862 (Edith Wharton) and 1903 (Anais Nin) and who were living in Paris. The expatriate subjects of her study are important as precursors to Canadian female modernists, but her theories on the politics and conditions of modernism are of even more consequence.

Benstock's study "considers the issue of gender as an important (and all too often disregarded) element in defining the aesthetics and politics, the theory and practice, of what we now call Modernism" (4). She looks at how the patriarchal culture and politics of Western society affect women's writing, and also at how women's writing resists patriarchal ideologies. Part of this resistance consists of creating or rewriting a modernism that will reflect women's experiences. Benstock sees a gendered division within modernist politics: men are reactionary and women are progressive (31). Instead of the monolithic, capital "M" modernism that reflects a patriarchal world, Benstock posits a practice of modernism that is more fluid, one that incorporates "contradictory impulses under a single -ism" (32). This fluid, contradictory practice is elaborated by women such as Djuna Barnes, Natalie Barney, Gertrude Stein, and Virginia Woolf who

argued an aesthetics of the individual and irrational (and perhaps even the eccentric) against Eliot's claims for tradition and logic. One discovers that expatriate women participate in the Modernist enterprise often seeking to subvert and invert its cultural and aesthetic premises. This women's art is based in difference, in the difference *within* gender and genre, manifest through the inversions and diversions of Modernist logic. (34)

Benstock's study stands as a useful paradigm for reconfigurations of women's modernisms based on alternative, revolutionary politics and aesthetics. As will be discussed in Chapter Two, an aesthetic of eccentricity is especially important when considering *A Jest of God*. A feminist Canadian modernism needs to incorporate such

re-visions into its formulations of an alternative tradition that imagines both national and individual identities.

Also influential in this first stage is Bonnie Kime Scott's *The Gender of Modernism: A Critical Anthology*, one of the first anthologies to acknowledge and redress the ways in which gender was excluded from traditional definitions of modernism. In her "Introduction," Scott claims that

Modernism as we were taught it at midcentury was perhaps halfway to truth. It was unconsciously gendered masculine. The inscriptions of mothers and women, and more broadly of sexuality and gender, were not adequately decoded, if detected at all. Though some of the aesthetic and political pronouncements of women writers had been offered in public, they had not circulated widely and were rarely collected for academic recirculation. Deliberate or not, this is an example of the politics of gender. (3)

Scott's anthology contains excerpts from primary texts of creative writers as diverse as Virginia Woolf, Jean Rhys, Gertrude Stein, and H.D. and also includes introductory critical essays by contemporary critics of modernism. Voices of women from past and present combine to redefine and make visible the words of women that influence modernist studies and feminist traditions today.

The second of Elliott and Wallace's stages is defined by texts that are synthetic and thematic. Instead of foregrounding the differences between modernist women writers, these texts discuss recurring themes. The first volume of Sandra M. Gilbert's and Susan Gubar's three-volume study *No Man's Land: The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century* is an important text that characterizes this stage of feminist period studies. Volume 1, *The War of the Words*, suggests that the "literary phenomenon ordinarily called 'modernism' is itself . . . for men as much as for women a product of the sexual battle . . . that was set in motion by the late nineteenth-century rise of feminism and the fall of Victorian concepts of 'femininity'" (xii). The study is

thematically linked in its exploration of how “both men and women engendered words and works” (xii).

The third stage cited by Elliott and Wallace is characterized by studies that discuss specific ways in which women’s modernism anticipates issues and problems within postmodernism. Many of these studies appeared in the first half of the 1990s and were written primarily by feminist critics from Britain and the United States. These critics began revising modernism in such large numbers that it is hardly possible to speak of modernism today without considering women’s issues. Texts that re-vision women’s modernism include *New Women, New Novels: Feminism and Early Modernism* by Ann Ardis; *Sentimental Modernism: Women Writers and the Revolution of the Word* by Suzanne Clark; *Rich and Strange: Gender, History, Modernism* by Marianne DeKoven; *Experimental Lives: Women and Literature, 1900-1945* by Mary Loeffelholz; *Bordering on the Body: The Racial Matrix of Modern Fiction and Culture* by Laura Doyle; *Difference in View: Women and Modernism* by Gabriele Griffin; *Engendering Modernity: Feminism, Social Theory, and Social Change* by Barbara L. Marshall; and *Rebel Women: Feminism, Modernism, and the Edwardian Novel* by Jane Elridge Miller. Each of these third-stage texts is an exploration—in DuPlessis’s sense of an exploration “not in service of reconciling self to world, but creating a new world for a new self” (19).

1.7 The Manawaka Novels

The Manawaka novels present one model in which to test various theories and definitions of the modern.⁷ Shelagh Wilkinson investigates the role of women's writing in Canada and claims that each protagonist tells her own story that "write[s] ourselves and our lives into being, and in the process . . . bring[s] into focus subjects such as our sexuality, our experience of aging, the politics of mothering—subjects previously

⁷ Although *A Bird in the House* is one of the five texts of the Manawaka cycle, I will not be dealing with this short story collection. It is not my intention to suggest that the short story collection is a lesser part of the cycle. In fact, at times I am convinced that *A Bird in the House* is the glue that holds the cycle together. I believe this, in part, because the short stories were written between 1963 and 1970: "The Sound of the Singing" was originally published in 1963; "To Set Our House in Order" and "A Bird in the House" were published in 1964; "The Mask of the Bear" was published in 1965; "The Loons" was published in 1966; "Horses of the Night" and "The Half-Husky" were originally published in 1967. Only "Jericho's Brick Battlements" was a newly published story when all of these stories were collected and published in 1970. All of these stories were written and published simultaneously with the Manawaka novels, with the exception of *The Diviners*, and the collection anticipates many of the concerns Laurence addresses in her final novel. However, my main interest is to look at works as like one another as possible. Comparing the genre of the short story collection to the genre of the novel would, I believe, take the dissertation in a direction that would undermine my central argument because I am interested in the genre of the novel as a modernist form.

However, I would argue, based primarily on genre, that this short story collection is perhaps the most modernist text of the cycle. For example, the linked short story collection contains a fragmented subject due to the very nature of the genre. However, as Peter Easingwood argues in "Semi-autobiographical Fiction and Revisionary Realism in *A Bird in the House*," "the volume actually achieves a form which comes somewhere between the compact dramatic expression of a series of short stories and the more extended narrative interest of a novel" (22). Indeed, the genre as well as the techniques used in individual stories incorporate characteristics of a modernist aesthetic. As Easingwood states, "The stories carefully avoid any attempt at a large narrative sweep. Instead they persistently foreground gaps in knowledge, inconsistent reports and breaks in narrative continuity" (20). Hence, while the collection as a whole contains elements of the novel form, the individual stories resist a unified narrative. While Easingwood calls the collection revisionary realism, I would argue that *A Bird in the House* is revisionary modernism. Furthermore, part of this dissertation's argument hinges on the historical context surrounding the publication of each text and how each protagonist is a construct of her time. Vanessa MacLeod appeared in publication over an eight year time period. *A Bird in the House* as a modernist text could use its own dissertation.

ignored” (Wilkinson 338). The novels of the Manawaka cycle illustrate the problems with the family as an androcentric institution. The androcentric family is, as Wilkinson claims, a universal default “which takes the masculine norm as its point of reference [and] annuls the specificity of women’s experience . . . Women writers give voice to that specificity while recognizing a commonality in the diversity, in the particulars, and in the ‘trivialities’ of women’s lives” (348). The Manawaka novels explore the lives of Hagar Shipley, Rachel Cameron, Stacey MacAindra, and Morag Gunn as they struggle to disrupt larger patriarchal authorities that are present in church and state, media and myth, and are internalized and externalized by the women themselves. The relationship between the individual and the nation leads to another way of structuring the future. This re-visionary structure begins to be defined in fiction resulting in a feminist Canadian literary modernism.

Each of the following chapters examines one of the Manawaka novels. The chapters are arranged chronologically, in order of publication, so that it is apparent how an emerging feminism develops more fully in each novel and how that feminism helps define a version of Canadian modernism. Chapter One looks at how Hagar Shipley in *The Stone Angel* works to define herself as a distinct individual. Hagar defines herself against the men in her life, although she is both complicit in and resistant to their authority. These influences are exerted both externally and internally. When Hagar finally realizes that she can stand alone, she also realizes that her identity is intricately bound to all the people and places she has touched. If the first step to change is imagination, then often the way an individual imagines herself is in opposition to another. Such is the case with Hagar, who reacts against patriarchal overdetermination.

Chapter Two looks at *A Jest of God* as a novel that is concerned with modernism's divided subject and the discourses that define this subject. This chapter specifically examines the discourse of hysteria and considers Rachel Cameron as a hysterical subject. Rachel's initial inability to name herself results in her being named by others. The outcome of this multiple naming is that Rachel uncomfortably occupies several subject positions simultaneously. However, Rachel is not without agency. Instead, her actions occur primarily in fantasy and then tentatively in reality. The moment when fantasy becomes reality is the first defining moment for Rachel because she transforms her inner landscape into her outer landscape and it verges on becoming a thriving physical space that resists Manawaka's exclusionary politics. The second moment of self-definition occurs at the end of the novel when Rachel embraces her eccentric subjectivity.

Chapter Three examines *The Fire-Dwellers* as perhaps the most obviously modernist novel in the Manawaka cycle. Traditional malestream modernism divides the private sphere from the public sphere and relegates women to the private and men to the public. This monolithic modernism also condemns the sentimental in modernism by claiming that the sentimental is not political. Stacey is the first Manawaka protagonist to see how the women's movement mobilizes and educates the public. This education makes it possible for Stacey to experiment with ways of subverting oppressive patriarchal structures. Stacey pushes against the border that separates private from public and works to reveal how the personal is political. She also analyzes the modern city and finds it lacking because it separates people from each other instead of creating community. In order to imagine alternatives, Stacey escapes the city to find the tools necessary to recreate the landscape from the inside out.

Chapter Four deals with *The Diviners* as a novel about belonging. As a modernist writer, Margaret Laurence reveals through Morag the contradictions inherent in modern Canadian society and the feelings of dispossession that accompany such contradictions. Arguably, the most important contradiction is that the more Morag seeks her individual identity and voice, the more she finds that her connection to others, and especially to Pique, enables her to voice her identity. She looks to the past in order to imagine the future and finds that her search for a single story has an impossible goal. The process of looking to the past is necessary, however, in order to touch and be touched by other stories. The present does not destroy—or de-story—the past but rather the past enables the present to be strategically recreated. Multiple individual and communal stories and histories flow into each other to create a harmonious present based on difference. Through Pique, the reader sees how the instability that is modernism's stability encourages movement and intervention.

Jointly and separately, these novels creatively displace male modernist narratives through corporeal defiance. The embodied landscapes of the novels and their protagonists defy patriarchal authority by privileging community, plurality, eccentricity, and multiple subjectivity. Annihilative narratives are displaced, but not replaced, by creative narratives. Fear of destruction and death is still prevalent throughout the Manawaka novels. The figure of the child and a fear of the child's death demonstrate how the novels incorporate modernist concerns about uncertainty and instability, contradiction and ambiguity, beauty and death. The figure of the child signifies the future, the past, hope, and despair. It is fitting that the final line of the last published Manawaka novel belongs to Pique: "The valley and the mountain hold my name" (490).

This is not an image of desperate destruction but an image of personified, located, and continuing interaction.

2. RECONCILING PAIN AND PLEASURE IN *THE STONE ANGEL*

The Stone Angel is Hagar Shipley's story about transformation and reconciliation. Hagar's modernist quest is based upon release rather than attainment, seeking rather than hiding, arriving rather than leaving. Hagar needs to let go of her pride and her fear in order to gain liberation and satisfaction. This chapter examines how Hagar Shipley transforms her life from tragedy into comedy by reconciling the losing of her men with the gaining of her freedom. Hagar's identity is intimately connected to the men in her life: father, husband, sons. The ghosts of the dead men in her life haunt Hagar throughout her narrative, even though the novel begins with the acknowledgment that the narrator of the story is the stubborn ghost of Hagar Shipley. This novel interrogates the intersections of time, history, and place as the spectral narrator transcends death through memory and storytelling. As Hagar tells her story, she moves into the foreground while establishing her story in the landscape and the social relations of which it has been the site. Fiction seeps into reality and anonymously unites people through an imagined community.

Shared space may function as a way of uniting people in a community. This space ranges in size from a neighbourhood to a town to a nation, and as Virginia Woolf claims, to a world. As the space grows larger, communication and transportation technology—such as telephones and computers, cars, trains, and airplanes—help maintain the sense of community. However, such modern technology is both potentially creative and destructive. For Hagar, the train is a symbol for leaving and then for loss.

She sees the train as her modern apparatus for reordering space and time, a way of hiding rather than seeking. Not until Hagar tries to hide from Marvin and Doris in the forest does she realize that she needs to examine her inner landscape rather than traverse the external landscape.

Hagar's initial leaving on the train takes place when she leaves her father to attend the young ladies' academy in Toronto. However, a more pivotal moment in the text occurs when Hagar leaves her husband and takes her young son John on the train:

the train stirred and shook itself like a drowsy dragon and began to move, regally slow, then faster until it was spinning down the shining tracks. We passed the shacks and shanties that clustered around the station, and the railway buildings and water tower painted their dried-blood red. Then we were away from Manawaka. It came as a shock to me, how small the town was, and how short a time it took to leave it, as we measure time.

Many a mile, manyamile, manyamile, said the iron clank of the train wheels . . . (142)

Hagar romanticizes the train, seeing it as a dragon and casting herself as the daring adventurer. However, the train quickly becomes a machine that compresses space and time as Manawaka shrinks and becomes a wounded landscape. Laurence indicates this change by compressing the words on the page as the landscape runs together outside Hagar's window: "*Many a mile, manyamile, manyamile.*" Space, time, and voice merge as the train's wheels sound against the land and speed across the miles. At this point, Hagar does not realize she carries the landscape's wounds within her, although her reflection about how people measure time indicates that she has measured time only in one of a possible number of ways. She leaves Manawaka physically, but the town has already fused with the contours of her body.

If the train is a symbol of leaving and loss, then water is a symbol of arriving and renewal, although, interestingly, Hagar sees both the railway buildings and the water

tower in Manawaka as “dried-blood red.” The modernist images of the train and water are both categorized as part of the wounded, but possibly healing, landscape. It is when Hagar leaves Manawaka that water becomes symbolic of arriving and renewal. When water is contained unnaturally in a tower, its regenerative possibilities are unrecognized. When Hagar leaves the city to run from Marvin and Doris, she goes to hide in a forested place by water. Marianne DeKoven in her *Rich and Strange: Gender, History, Modernism* uses the imagery of “sea-change” to speak of “deep, pervasive change, encompassing all levels of life as it is lived” (3).⁸ She equates this change with twentieth-century modernism and its irresolvable ambiguity: “It encompasses at once death, suffering . . . horror . . . and at the same time a redemptive transformation . . . with its connotations on the one hand of fascination, luxury, indulgence (“jouissance”), and on the other of excess, transgression, and the bizarre” (3). Like my notion of strategic recreation, the notion of sea-change “rewrites simple dualistic . . . valorization, where death and suffering are the entirely negative price paid for an entirely positive redemption and rebirth” (3-4). In Hagar’s most transformative moment, she performs a sea-change when she turns death into beauty by adorning and enlivening her hair with dead June bugs (216). In this moment, Hagar is connected to, not distant from, the land and its offerings. She takes what the land gives her and incorporates death and beauty into her body image.

Hagar’s most transformative moment does not occur, however, until two-thirds of the way through the novel. Therefore, the reader follows Hagar’s quest through most

⁸ Although the sea-change imagery may be overdetermined to the point that it can now be read as cliché, I still believe that this image is useful in this context, especially because it brings together a feminist modernism—via DeKoven—and a Canadian re-visioning of *The Tempest*—via Laurence.

of the novel before reconciliation and release are realized. *The Stone Angel* opens with Hagar Shipley reflecting on the stone angel that marks the grave of her mother. This angel serves as an image of enduring strength and double blindness, “not only stone but unendowed with even a pretense of sight. Whoever carved her had left the eyeballs blank. It seemed strange to me that she should stand above the town, harking us all to heaven without knowing who we were at all” (3). It is a modernist image in that it contains both death and beauty. It also alludes to the fleeting nature of human existence and the enduring strength of stone, of landscape. It proclaims a father’s dynasty built on the bones of a mother.

However, it is not this angel that causes Hagar to reflect upon her own existence. Instead, it is to sad Regina Weese’s “petty” angel and to the inscription on Regina’s grave that Hagar turns: “*Rest in peace. / From toil, surcease. / Regina Weese. / 1886*” (4). Regina Weese—who could be read as an image anticipating what Rachel’s fate could be—is the virginal Victorian angel in the house, who cares for her mother only to die from some “obscure and maidenly disorder” (4) and to be leered at throughout eternity by a pointing ecstatic cherub. The stoic, blind angel is set beside the ecstatically leering cherub, and the mother’s death in childbirth is set beside the devoted daughter’s demise as if these are the only two options available to women. Ironically, the ones who survive these dead women are the “ungrateful fox-voiced mother” (4), the patriarchal father, and his surviving daughter. How does a daughter resist the grave of her mother while refusing the identity of her father? How does she avoid becoming either the blind stone angel or the ecstatic leering cherub? Hagar struggles with these questions because she neither wants to perpetuate her father’s dynasty, nor be the mother who outlives her child, yet she is in danger of becoming both.

Manawaka, like Hagar, is divided. The Tonnerres live down by the Wachakwa River and, as Laurence makes most clear in *A Jest of God*, the Scottish and Irish people live on one side of the railway tracks while the Polish and Ukrainian people live on the other. The railways divide both landscape and people. For a mode of transportation that is supposed to represent economic progress, the railway in the Manawaka novels represents loss and separation more than a national dream to unite the country. For Hagar, the train is both the means of escape from claustrophobic, patriarchal small-town life and the instrument of familial destruction. If the national and moral progress of the country is represented in the economic growth of its individuals, then the successful merchant and town dweller, Jason Currie, is, in Hagar's eyes, the proper image of what it is to be Canadian.

Of course, Hagar's vision is near-sighted and in black and white. She perpetuates this divisive society when her classism conditions her vision so that she sees people who are not like her as inferior to her. Consider those she imagines will "help" her when she moves into the Shipley place: "I thought of Polacks and Galicians from the mountain, half-breeds from the river valley of the Wachakwa, or the daughters and spinster aunts of the poor, forgetting that Bram's own daughters had hired out whenever they could be spared, until they married very young and gained permanent employment" (51). This statement points to Hagar's understanding of marriage as an economically-based arrangement, at least in part. She speaks with some self-awareness of her earlier bigotry from her position half a century later, although her language still reflects an ignorance of her class privilege. Hagar categorizes people according to their race, ethnicity, or economic position; she does not see people as individuals until they are the daughters of her husband.

In Hagar's eyes, her father, Jason Currie, exemplifies an idea of Anglo-Saxon superiority. His Anglo-Saxon past combined with his Presbyterian work ethic and reserve serve as a troublesome model for Hagar's own identity. Hagar is a product of the doctrine of Anglo-Saxon superiority, even though she tries to resist following her father's model by marrying his antithesis, Bram Shipley. Bram, although also Anglo-Saxon, represents the lower-class rural dweller and worker, but what is even more pertinent in this instance is that he stands for all that Hagar—and her father—fear and loathe. He is “lazy as a pet pig” (46), “common as dirt” (47), and connected to excess in all that he does. However much Hagar despises Bram's character, she still desires him. He is lusty and dirty and uncontrollable. Looking back on her first dance with Bram, Hagar is fascinated by his body: “I reveled in his fingernails with crescents of ingrown earth that never met a file. I fancied I heard in his laughter the bravery of battalions. I thought he looked a bearded Indian, so brown and beaked a face. The black hair thrusting from his chin was rough as thistles. The next instant, though, I imagined him rigged out in a suit of gray soft as a dove's breast-feathers” (45). Bram engages Hagar's imagination, and she sees both the details of his body and the potential for him to be anything she wants.

Like the process of Hagar's own sea-change later in the novel, her vision of Bram is laden with ambiguity and potential transformation. Hagar transfigures Bram into a creature of the earth, a hero of battles, an Indigenous man of the prairie, and finally, an upper-class businessman. Each of these versions contains Hagar's greatest desire: a man who is both her father and not her father, a man who feeds her imagination, a hero who can take her back to the land. Hagar does not realize, however, that Bram's identity is as solid as the land, not something easily altered. Hagar's desire

for Bram implies her modernist and feminist impulses to restructure her world in opposition to the centre created by her father. Hagar's subsequent movement out of the town and onto the farm with Bram enables the reader to see that it is possible for Hagar to become a woman whose identity is based on more than her class and her Scots Presbyterian arrogance, even though she uses her background to try to reclaim some of her lost power and position. Hagar's strength, however, is that even though she is not in a position of power, she sacrifices neither her subjectivity nor her voice. She holds onto an image of herself as powerful, determined, and strong. She does not give up on the future. She is full of potential, occupying a middle ground between allegiance and longing. She is committed to her father's British imperial ideology, but she also longs for her own power that is different from his.

One of the first representations of a distinct Canadian identity is the image of the lone pioneer working on the land. *The Stone Angel* reveals two sides of this pioneer image: the businessman/merchant and the farmer; the town pioneer and the rural pioneer. These two types are represented by Jason Currie and Brampton Shipley, respectively. The novel emphasizes these two types by showing these two men as they affect Hagar's life. When Hagar buries Bram in the Currie plot with her mother and father, the reader understands that although these two representations differ from each other in many ways, they are also two versions of a story and two sides of a stone: "on the red marble namestone that stood beside the white statue I had his family name carved, so the stone said *Currie* on the one side and *Shipley* on the other" (184). Later, almost at the end of the novel, Hagar and her son Marvin go back to visit the plot and find a young caretaker at the cemetery. He shows them the grave: "This here's the Currie-Shipley stone. The two families was connected by marriage. Pioneering

families, the both of them, two of the earliest in the district” (306). While in life Jason Currie and Bram Shipley were so far apart that they did not even speak to each other, in death their names are connected by the hyphen that is Hagar. Future generations look upon the namestone and see unity. Over time and beneath a crumbling, altered statue of a white angel, the story of these two families is transformed from a story of disunity to one of unity.

The way in which Laurence plays with story time and narrative time reflects a modernist concern with the compression of time and space. In addition, this narratology comments on the way in which time manipulates story both in text and outside of text. The story time (or the narrative present) advances slowly as the narrative past is continually cycled back while simultaneously advancing in chronological order. The narrative past is a threaded needle that backstitches into the present, pulling the present inevitably forward, progressing in an undulating linearity. When the reader first meets Hagar, the year is approximately 1955 and Hagar is ninety years old. Time unfolds like a fan for her (90), as the novel does for the reader. Past and present touch each other when the fan is compressed, and when the fan is splayed, then the past and present lay open in the serrated, fragmented complexity of Hagar’s experiences. Ninety-year old Hagar remembers herself as twelve, twenty-four, forty, sixty, and then, unbelievably she sees the unchanging nature of herself as ninety.

Hagar Currie’s life begins at the same moment that her mother’s life ends, leaving Hagar alone with a house full of men: her father, Jason, and her brothers, Matt and Dan. Instead of taking her mother’s place, however, Hagar takes after her father in sensibility and stamina. It is her two brothers who are of weak constitution and who die as young men. Even when Dan is dying of pneumonia, Hagar refuses the role of mother

and is unable to put on her mother's cloak and hold Dan in her lap. To do so would be to make herself vulnerable and to acknowledge weakness and mortality. Instead, Matt is the one who becomes mother to his brother. Ironically, Hagar resembles her father and is passionate about the Scottish history her father teaches, even as she disrupts and disturbs his authority.

Jason Currie's individual and familial history embody the pioneer myth of the stoic, successful immigrant. Of Scottish Highland descent, and of a family whose motto is "Gainsay Who Dare," Jason Currie is the epitome of the hard-working, stern, controlling patriarchal father figure. He lives the family motto, challenging anyone to forbid him anything. He shapes himself into a bourgeois founding father of Manawaka and attempts to create his family in his image. After Dan dies, Matt stays behind to work in the store while Hagar is sent off to Toronto for two years to "the training ring, the young ladies' academy in Toronto" (42). When she returns in the image of an upper-class lady, Jason looks at her and sees her as a "credit" (43) to himself. He refuses Hagar the identity of an individual woman and instead sees her as another one of his successes. Like any other merchandise to be purchased and used, Hagar is a commodity for her father's advancement. Her value to him is that she will improve his image in the community: "'It was worth every penny for the two years,' he said. 'You're a credit to me. Everyone will be saying that by tomorrow'" (43). She will work in the store doing books and will serve as a hostess for his entertaining. What Jason Currie forgets is that Hagar resembles himself in her individual strength. Hagar dares to gainsay.

Both as a child and as a young woman, Hagar repeatedly challenges her father's authority. When he hits her because she has "no regard for [his] reputation" (9), she refuses to cry. She also refuses to be silent, and she ultimately refuses to be his

commodity. As an adult, she stands against him in her desire to become a teacher. Her father rails against such blatant misuse of his property, and Hagar briefly relents because she feels as though she owes him her labour for his expenditure on her training. After two years, she performs an ultimate act of disruption of his authority, and this time her desire and will are stronger than his; she marries Brampton Shipley. Her father disowns her for her act of defiance, and Hagar moves from one patriarchal pioneer figure to another.

If Jason Currie represents the stern, controlling, rational, town Protestant, then Bram Shipley is the laughing, relaxed, excessive, rural infidel. Jason is of the mind; Bram is of the body. Hagar exists in the middle of this opposition, between these two figures. If we recall Marianne DeKoven's definition of twentieth-century modernism as embodying both death and its indulgent, excessive, transgressive transformation, we can read Hagar's movement from Jason to Bram as a movement from a death-like existence to an existence of indulgence. Of course, this division is not so clear-cut. Hagar's life with Bram is rife with ambiguities. She takes pleasure but without expression. She prides herself on being aligned with the town, yet she lives on the farm. She believes in manners and propriety, but she marries a man who believes in no rules but his own. She despises her father's arrogance while she enacts his bigotry. She is for a time an approximation of a Victorian angel in the house of her father, but this Victorian stone angel is altered by time and memory. She is both the statue and the woman standing beside the Currie and Shipley names. Her world and her landscape have changed, however. What is said of the statue is also true of her: "The earth had heaved . . . around her, and she stood askew and tilted. . . . Someday she'll topple entirely, and no one will bother to set her upright again" (305). Hagar sees herself in the stone angel that stands

amongst the dead, and she projects her desire always to be upright, both literally alive and figuratively moral. However, she also sees that one can be both upright and askew, ordered and disordered, and she embodies such modernist combinations as she moves through life.

There is also a parallel between Hagar's life and a world gone awry. When Hagar's first son is seventeen years old, Canada sends soldiers overseas to fight in the Great War, and Marvin joins the Army. He lives through the fighting, but he never returns to Manawaka (129). Like many Canadians, Marvin moves from the country to the city in part because of the rising wages in urban industries. Another factor in Marvin's leaving, however, was that the rural trope that was so crucial to Canada's identity was changing: "the 'solitary figure in the distant furrow, that stooped form tending the hearth of the isolated home—symbols and types of our national necessities, our national virtues and our national strength' were being forgotten in the rush to the cities" (Martin Burrell, *Canada, House of Commons Debate* qtd. in Brown and Cook 196). Both Jason Currie and Bram Shipley reveal the falsity of the rural myth. Neither of these men is the noble lone pioneer working in the field, although it is this mythical hero that ignites Hagar's imagination. Hagar's imaginings and Hagar's realities, however, hardly coincide. During the inter-war period, for example, Hagar tries to make her life anew, a life in which she leaves behind her identity as wife as she previously shed her role as daughter. Both of these leavings are unsuccessful, and her final transformation can only take place when she realizes that she needs to reconcile these roles with the men she can never leave. When Hagar arrives at the realization that she cannot leave her father or her husband behind, that the past and the present touch, then

she can reconcile her losses and recreate her identity to incorporate both suffering and celebration.

This struggle for identity, which is both connected to and separate from the nuclear family, is also a struggle Canada faced as it tried to reinvent its identity. At the outbreak of World War I, Canada constructed itself through its role in a global family. Canada imagined itself as a united country whose identity was constructed in terms of an other; Canada was intimately connected by ethnic, intellectual, cultural, and economic ties to both Britain and France, and the nationalistic language of the time was linked to imperialism in its nostalgia and sentimentality for the mother country. Sir Wilfred Laurier, although no longer Prime Minister, still saw Canada as a “daughter of old England” (Brown and Cook 251) that would stand by its mother country during the war. The new Prime Minister, Robert Borden, disagreed with Laurier because Borden could not conceive of Canada as a subordinate or a colonial participant. Borden believed that Canada’s participation was that of a more mature daughter, a daughter who was coming into her own. She may still be linked to the imperial family, but her position is that of an independent individual, not a dependent daughter.

Henri Bourassa, leader of the opposition in Quebec, represented yet another viewpoint because he saw a conflict between what English and French Canada desired for their national futures. Initially, Bourassa believed that Canada should participate in the war because of its complex ties to Britain and France, which contributed to Canada’s desire to see “those two mother countries victorious” (Brown and Cook 251-2). By 1918, however, Bourassa believed that Canada’s politics were beginning to divide the country along cultural lines. This division, claimed Bourassa, was a tragedy because it

meant that Canada was no longer at peace with itself. In the 3 January 1918 issue of *Le Devoir*, Henri Bourassa discussed the division between English and French Canada:

It is not the first time in the history of Canada that English and French Canadians have found themselves deeply divided over some great national issue. So long as English Canadians remain more British than Canadian, these differences are bound to happen every time there is a conflict between the demands of British Imperialism and the resistance of Canadian Nationalism. The present war was bound to produce antagonism along these lines. The only way to have alleviated danger would have been to have maintained the participation of Canada within reasonable bounds, and especially to make it exclusively national. Unfortunately, under the spell of the intense propaganda of Imperialism, carried on for the last twenty years, our rulers have chosen to turn Canada's intervention in the war into an Imperial contribution. They have also lost all sense of national requirements, and, from the start have decided to bankrupt Canada to help the Mother Country. On both grounds this was bound to raise the instinctive opposition of French Canadians, who, looking upon Canada as their only Motherland, are not prepared to make heavier sacrifices for other countries, British or foreign, than the people of those countries would be disposed to make for us; nor were they willing to accept the Gospel of Imperial solidarity as sufficient justification to govern Canada and sap her vitality in a war for which she had no responsibility whatever. (qtd. in Brown and Cook 274)

Bourassa did not recognize that imperialism and nationalism are not always at odds.

Many Anglo-Canadians saw Britain as the root of their national identity. They could not imagine cutting off ties to the imperial family in order to build a separate and distinct national identity. Like Jason Currie and Bram Shipley, sometimes what appears to be an opposite is actually another version of the same.

While Laurier, Borden, and Bourassa represented three different viewpoints on the same situation, all three men displayed similar ways of thinking; they all based their philosophies on binaries, on bi-national assumptions, which were supported by the constitution. Their Canada was divided between English and French. They failed to see variations in Canada's identity. They failed to see that English Canada, or Canada outside of Quebec, was not purely British. They failed to acknowledge that Canada is not only English or French. They failed to recognize differences in class, in colour, in

language, in culture. And these failings were not only their own. Many Canadians, and especially those who occupied the positions of upper-class French or British, were blind to the other faces of Canada. Hagar also has this blindness. Hagar, however, recognizes her sightlessness and verbalizes both what she sees and that from which she turns. In this turning away, she makes visible to the reader both the middle ground and the variations that exist between binaries.

Hagar's own turning point, when she begins to see herself and her blindness, happens on a trip into Manawaka one Saturday. She goes into town with her second son, John, to try to sell eggs, so she can have some money of her own. It is the 1920s now and people are prosperous, people who are not her, that is. One of the houses to which she goes is the house of her childhood acquaintance, Lottie. Lottie's daughter, Arlene, answers the door and announces Hagar as the "egg woman." Arlene has been "dolloed up" by her mother: "Her yellow and carefully ringleted hair was topped with a blue satin bow, and her white crepe de Chine dress was held with a pale blue sash" (132). Hagar glances past Arlene into a warm kitchen as she stands outside the back door on a bitter January morning with eggs in her hands. She leaves the bank manager's doorstep and begins to try and elevate herself by speaking deprecatingly about Telford Simmons: "Such a homely boy he used to be . . . and none too clever, either. He's got there more by good luck than good management, if you ask me" (132-33). When John tells her to shut up, she realizes that she has lost sight of herself and needs to look closely at who she has become.

Hagar's looking takes place in a public washroom. She tells John to let her off there, and she looks at herself critically. There in private, in a public space she wonders "how a person could change so much and never see it. So gradually it happens." She

looks and sees a person clothed in men's apparel, with an altered body, and a face that does not belong to her. She looks and believes that the mirror lies to her:

I was wearing, I saw, a man's black overcoat that Marvin had left. It was too big for John and impossibly small for Bram. It still had a lot of wear left in it, so I'd taken it. The coat bunched and pulled up in front, for I'd put weight on my hips, and my stomach had never gone flat again after John was born. Twined around my neck was a knitted scarf, hairy and navy blue, that Bram's daughter Gladys had given me one Christmas. On my head a brown tam was pulled down to keep my ears warm. My hair was gray and straight. I always cut it myself. The face—a brown and leathery face that wasn't mine. Only the eyes were mine, staring as though to pierce the lying glass and get beneath to some truer image, infinitely distant. (133)

Hagar takes herself apart with her eyes, the only parts that she believes belong to her.

Everything she sees is fragmented and needs to be explained, and her sentence structure reflects this astonishment. This modernist understanding of being a fragmented self is necessary to Hagar's subsequent transformation. She observes and reflects, observes and explains. She seeks a unified sense of self, but is unable to reconcile what she sees in the mirror with what she has constructed in her imagination. She is separated from her self by a glass but also by years of fashioning her self in her imagination. She has spent so much time separating herself from her body, or having defined it in relation to the men in her life, that when she confronts the object which is her body, it is other to her. Her body has been commodity to her father, pleasure to her husband, and life to her sons, but it has not been something she feels that she controls or defines.

After leaving the public Rest Room, she becomes acutely aware of her surroundings, both the textures and the sounds of the landscape. People bustle around her, cars punch by her, and she enters her father's store, where her father no longer physically exists, in order to buy some clothes that would "render [her] decent" (134). She must return to her father's space in order to remake herself, yet when she returns it

is the voice of her husband that she must confront. Through the rest of the noise she hears Bram asking for stale doughnuts, but the clerk understands Bram's request as a request for lemon extract to sell to Charlie Bean. The clerk says to the manager, "They get three times the price for it, from the Indians, for drinking" (135). Whether or not the clerk is accurate in his assessment does not matter to Hagar. She sees her life magnified before her, and it is a life that she knows she must leave.

Part of Hagar's resistance to patriarchal authority is achieved by securing her own economic independence. Hagar stays with her father to repay her debt, and she sells eggs in order to be somewhat financially independent of Bram. Ironically but credibly, after Hagar leaves one man, she secures her independence by working as a homemaker for another man: Bram when she leaves her father, Mr. Oatley when she leaves Bram. Hagar's employment in domestic service represents the substantial rise in the female paid labour force in Canada between 1921 and 1931. According to John Herd Thompson, more than half of the total increase was in the service sector, with domestic service being the "work of last resort" (150). Hagar is not adverse to taking the last resort in order to make her escapes. One of Hagar's final ironies is that her escape from her son Marvin is accomplished with financial assistance from the male-dominated state; it is with her pension cheque that Hagar is able to obtain enough money to ride the bus away from her impending enclosure in Silverthreads, a seniors' home (140).

When Hagar leaves Bram and moves to the west coast, she leaves in order to escape her role as wife. She hopes to reinvent herself as a single mother who is economically independent. Her leaving has both geographical and emotional dimensions. She leaves behind the prairie, and she leaves behind her husband. In some

ways, however, she does not leave the role of wife. By day she cleans another man's house, and by night she longs for Bram's body:

I never thought of Bram in the days any more, but I'd waken, sometimes, out of a half sleep and turn to him and find he wasn't beside me, and then I'd be filled with such a bitter emptiness it seemed the whole of night must be within me and not around or outside at all. There were times when I'd have returned to him, just for that. But in the morning I'd be myself once more, put on my black uniform with its white lace collar, go down and serve Mr. Oatley's breakfast with calm deliberation, hand him his morning paper with hands so steady that he couldn't have known I'd been away at all. (160)

This passage is a powerful example of how an individual's body contains traces of the people it has touched. Through gesture and memory, an individual re-returns to the body of a lover. Hagar's leavings prompt simultaneously a series of returns and arrivals, which begin the process of reconciliation to her past. Hagar needs to acknowledge that her identity contains both destruction and regeneration, loss and gain, hiding and seeking. Hagar returns to the service of a man as she gains economic independence. She leaves the prairie, yet returns to it in the night in her longing for Bram's body. She hides from the emptiness of her life with Bram only to find that the emptiness is contained within her body. In this moment of feeling as though "the whole of night must be within me and not around or outside at all," Hagar begins to understand that the people and places which she has touched—and which have touched her—form and transform her identity as she transforms those same people and places.

If Hagar does not think of Bram during the days, it is in part because her service to Mr. Oatley is a similar form of identity to that which she had with Bram. She keeps his house; she keeps him fed; she keeps him nurtured. In return for her service, she gets a room, a garden, and money to costume her outside to suit her inside: "I spent my first few months' salary entirely on clothes, a delphinium-blue costume for myself, hat,

gloves, shoes, the lot” (156). She clothes herself as a city lady, although the colour she chooses reflects prairie skies and prairie gardens. She strategizes against the image that lied to her before. This time she wants her surface to reflect her depth, and so she constructs an identity that she believes is not contingent upon her economic position. Even as Hagar reinvents herself, she is informed by her past as her image recalls the “bottle-green costume and feathered hat” (43) in which she stood to confront her father years before when she returned from Toronto (42). Then, as now, she stood on the brink of possibility, of unlimited imaginings. This space, like that other one, however, becomes a “period of waiting and of marking time” (160). It is a liminal space, a threshold time. Although Hagar may not recognize it as such, this middle ground is the place upon which she stands for most of her life and for which she depends for most of her identity.

This “existing between” is a dynamic that can be applied both to her personal life and to the life of her country. Canada is between wars and between prosperous times. Canada’s previous security in its future is made insecure by the fact that over sixty thousand Canadians died defending “unity, progress, and the new national pride” (Brown and Cook 338). A model of order is replaced by a sense of disorder. This modernist condition affects Hagar in ways that she cannot begin to comprehend or even imagine, for she does not realize that she is occupying a threshold of space and time between life and death, both for herself and for her men. While all living is a space between birth and death, this moment in Hagar’s life is at the edge of death. This time is in between her leaving her men and her men leaving her, although she denies her own leavings: “Every last one of them has gone away and left me. I never left them. It was the other way around, I swear it” (164). Regardless of where Hagar stands and what she

sees, these times are made up of moments of disintegration, both familial and economical. Although Hagar works hard to save enough money so that her son John is able to go to college, her savings are not enough. Investing as everyone did, she loses her money when the stock market crashes. While Hagar keeps her job with Mr. Oatley, John discovers that jobs are hard to find and hard to keep. Suddenly, the move to the city and to the coast is not as fruitful as it once was, and John begins his leavings.

While others move to the coast to try to save fuel and food money, John decides to ride the rods back to Manawaka and the Shipley place because he knows it is one place where he will be able to work. To Hagar's dismay, John participates in this widespread movement of people back to the land. All her life Hagar has seen the growth of the urban population, a growth of which she approves. To see her son reverse this urbanizing process is to see Bram as a success and herself as a failure. Hagar tries to dissuade John from leaving for she cannot bear the thought that her favourite son will be away from her and with Bram:

“You’ve forgotten what he’s like,” I said. “You’ll not stay. You’ll soon see, once you get there.”

“I haven’t forgotten,” John said.

“Why go, then? There’s nothing for you there.”

“You never know,” he said. “I might get on famously. Maybe it’s just the place for me.”

His laughter was incomprehensible to me. (167)

Hagar's incomprehension is also a blindness to the way that she conflates a person with a place and a situation. She sees the Shipley place as nothingness and Bram as someone who offers only nothingness. What she does not see is that John is attracted by emptiness because it corresponds to his sense of self; emptiness provides John with a way to define himself. In an empty space, John's body becomes more defined. In a space that is crowded—or full of Hagar—John is lost. In many ways, he, like Bram, is

of the body, finding identity through pleasure and excess. And this type of corporeal existence is, of course, incomprehensible to Hagar until much, much later.

Hagar's own corporeal existence is not grounded in pleasure but in expansion. She shuts out the decomposition that surrounds her by making herself more formidable, more tangible, more present. When her possessions dwindle, she creates herself literally as a woman of corporeal substance. As she grows more stout, the rest of her world is in the process of deteriorating. Hagar measures the two years since John's departure by infrequent and bare letters from John. Mr. Oatley is wispy, the prairie shrivels, the Shipley place becomes skeletal, and Bram is a shrunken, withered spectre. Hagar, however, had "not grown slimmer. [She] was too padded on the hips and bust, but the dress was becoming, a green cotton with pearl buttons down the front, a dress [she'd] bought in the autumn sales last fall" (170). In the face of deterioration and drought, she still fancies herself a chatelaine, and she still measures her value in terms of her fashionable costume. When she visits the Shipley place, John, with a bow and a flourish, welcomes Hagar to what is, through her marital relation, her "castle" (171). Hagar is home.

If Hagar has tried to resist the deterioration that surrounds her by making herself more tangible, then the Shipley place is evidence of how individual resistance is limited, at times, to the borders of one's body. Nature is the great equalizer, as is apparent in Hagar's observations:

The Shipley farm, I soon found, was in good company at last. However much or little they'd worked, the upright men and the slouches, it amounted to the same thing now. That must have been the worst, almost, to men like Henry Pearl or Alden Cates, who'd worked like horses all their lives, to see their places looking the same as Bram's, who'd been so hey-day, go-day, God-send-Sunday. (168)

Instead of sympathizing with the horrific damage that Bram has suffered, Hagar considers the anguish of battered pride that others must be feeling. The upright men and women, like herself, pride themselves on an ethic of work that maintains a hierarchy within the community. Those who work hard are the upright, more valued citizens. Those who enjoy leisure and do not follow the same stringent work ethic are viewed as less valuable and lower in the hierarchy. To see the natural and economic environments leveling both the land and the people is unacceptable and incomprehensible in Hagar's world view.

Hagar refuses to accept that the land's deterioration is something that cannot be corrected. It is inconceivable to her that a person cannot disrupt this force, and John questions her about this: "What would you have done? . . . Hired a rainmaker? Got the ministers to pray or the Indians from the mountain to dance for clouds?" (170). Of course that is not what Hagar would have done because that would have meant relying on others for assistance, and she reveals this inanity by expressing her disbelief and stubborn superiority over Bram: "I don't believe it has to be this bad," I said. "It gives him an excuse never to lift a finger" (170). Ironically, however, just when Bram has an excuse to justify his character, which he would never do, he is unable to function in this leveled community.

In this community, John has found his "life's work" (171) making homebrew out of potato peelings, while Bram sits in the front room collecting dust like all the other unused objects in the room: "Dust grew like mold over every single thing—the golden oak armchair in which Jason Currie had once sat and drilled me in the multiplication tables, the glassed-in china cabinet, the carved settee from the Currie house. My father's British India rug was still on the floor, but it had been so spilled upon and the dirt

tracked over it that now the blue and russet vines and flowers were barely discernible” (171). Bram sits among the fragments of Hagar’s former life in blatant disregard for the imperialist superiority that is embodied in the figure of Jason Currie, cultivated by his daughter, and apparent in some of the belongings which surround him.

Similarly, ninety-year old Hagar sits among her belongings, but unlike Bram, Hagar clings desperately to the “things” (57) that surround her, both outside her body and inside the “junkyard of [her] memory” (213). As she loses control of her body and her memory, she needs to control her dress and her possessions. When Marvin and Doris want to put Hagar in Silverthreads, Hagar is obsessed about losing her house and all her belongings. To her, these objects are not simply refuse to be discarded or abandoned. These objects are what define her identity and what link her to her past and to the people that are part of that past. Hagar feels that when these possessions are removed, she herself will cease to exist.

After Bram’s death, Hagar stays for a while at the farm, then returns to the coast, coming back to Manawaka the following summer. That summer, John performs the last of his own leavings, and Hagar transforms into stone: “The night my son died I was transformed to stone and never wept at all” (243). Hagar believes that this transformation allows her to be elementally close to John for he lies beneath the “double-named stone where the marble angel crookedly stood” (243). If she is stone, then she is substantial and solid and immovable. And this is what she desires. It is after John’s death that she starts to accumulate possessions and due to another death, Mr. Oatley’s, she is able to purchase a house of her own to store her valuables: “the walnut corner cupboard, the oak buffet, the armchair and sofa, the few pieces of china that were

left” (244). These are things that were stored in the front room of the Shipley place, the place that no longer holds any people.

Loss and regeneration tumble over each other, and Hagar’s own life and Canada’s life both follow this pattern. One year after the death of Hagar’s men, the prairie drought ends, as does the depression. However, life and death are part of a cycle and so after prosperity death returns: “A few years later, the war came. The price of wheat went up, and farmers who hadn’t had a cent bought combines now, and new cars, and installed electricity. A lot of Manawaka boys were killed. . . . He [John] might have been killed or saved. Who’s to know? Or do such things depend on what goes on outside?” (244). Hagar relives and remembers this pain almost twenty years later, and she begins to reflect upon the effects of the outside world on the inner life of individuals. It is after this long passage of time that her stone facade begins to crumble and Hagar begins working on her insides by gaining insight. Finally, Hagar asks questions about whether a world can make sense even if its only order is its disorder. This modernist sensibility allows Hagar to approach her most profound transformation.

Back on the coast again, away from the prairie, Hagar returns to her prairie repeatedly in her memory. For the most part, however, she does not share these experiences and memories with anyone. It is only at ninety, hiding from Silverthreads and seeking her freedom, that Hagar speaks and weeps and does not regret her actions. For one of the first times, Hagar is not displeased by her seemingly uncontrollable body. Hagar leaves Marvin and Doris in an attempt to construct another house that she can call her own, and her body does not fail her. She returns to an old fish cannery that she remembers visiting with Marvin and Doris. She makes her home from “A place of remnants and oddities . . . more like the sea-chest of some old and giant sailor than

merely a cannery no one has used in years” (215). This place suits her fragmented life, which is made up of its own remnants and oddities. It is here that she begins to embrace her oddities and her freedom and to release her haughty pride.

This release is a loss and a re-creation. She loses control when she meets a stranger in the cannery and shares a jug of wine with him. She loses control of her speech; she loses control of her stomach; she loses her hold on time. In return, she gains peace; she achieves insight; she verbalizes her imagination. And she decorates her hair with June bugs:

I have everything I need. An overturned box is my table, and another is my chair. I spread my supper and eat. When I've done, the light still holds and in one shell lying on the floor at my feet I see that half a dozen June bugs have been caught. I prod them with a fingernail. They're not alive. Death hasn't tarnished them, however. Their backs are green and luminous, with a sharp metallic line down the center, and their bellies shimmer with pure copper. If I've unearthed jewels, the least I can do is wear them. Why not, since no one's here to inform me I'm a fool? I take off my hat—it's hardly suitable for here, anyway, a prim domestic hat sprouting cultivated flowers. Then with considerable care I arrange the jade and copper pieces in my hair. I glance into my purse mirror. The effect is pleasing. They liven my gray, transform me. I sit quite still and straight, my hands spread languidly on my knees, queen of moth-millers, empress of earwigs. (216)

In this moment she is transformed again. She is no longer stone. Instead, she “plays house” like the small children on the beach, like John and Arlene, like herself and Bram. But this time she does it alone, a free woman, and there is no one to stifle her imagination or her verve. She is still the chatelaine, the queen, the empress, but her castle is truly her own for a while. Here she turns death into beauty and life, as the June bugs adorn and liven her hair. She casts away her domestic decoration and makes herself anew in order to suit her surroundings. In this place she no longer hears the “terrible laughter of God.” Instead, she hears the “vapid chuckling of the sea” (234) and

knows that her anger at God for not granting her sight has dissipated into an understanding of her own insight.

Hagar has created a new image for herself. It is an image that is made up of that which is both inside her body and outside. She creates a place for herself and finds that this place needs both what is inside and what is outside:

Sickeningly, I recall, and look around me. He's gone. My memory, unhappily clear as spring water now, bubbles up coldly. It could not have been I, Hagar Shipley, always fastidious if nothing else, who drank with a perfect stranger and sank into sleep huddled beside him. I won't believe it. But it was so. And to be frank, now that I give it a second thought, it doesn't seem so dreadful. Things never look the same from the outside as they do from inside. (249)

For Hagar to gain insight she also must gain what might be called oversight, or an awareness that she is part of a larger community. If insight is related to inner self-awareness, then oversight is the ability to look at one's outer self and see how it relates to other people and places. She does not exist in a vacuum where no one affects her, where no one and nothing is allowed into her inner space. Her incomprehension makes her more whole. When her life was formed by a series of rigid morals and rules, when it was ordered and manageable, it was a delicate mirage, an empty eggshell of an identity. Like Lottie's cracked eggshells in the dump or the eggs that brought Hagar a modicum of independence from Bram, her life is both delicate and hardy, full of both beauty and horror. This moment is a fleeting moment, but it contains aspects of the eternal as Hagar transcends the immediacy of place and time by remembering the tragic loss of her son and by transforming that loss into the creation of community.

The reader and Hagar reach similar insights simultaneously, and the information that the reader has been sifting is defined by Hagar even as she understands herself as unchangeable. The reader sees how much Hagar has changed by her recounting the

experience of one liberating moment in a fish cannery and by her final epiphany achieved when the clergyman's voice is transformed from fumbling speech into firm song:

*"All people that on earth do dwell,
Sing to the Lord with joyful voice.
Him serve with mirth, His praise forth tell;
Come ye before Him and rejoice. [sic]*

I would have wished it. 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, 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 too whom? When did I ever speak the heart's truth?

Pride was my wilderness, and the demon that led me there was fear. I was alone, never anything else, and never free, for I carried my chains within me, and they spread out from me and shackled all I touched. Oh, my two, my dead. Dead by your own hands or by mine? Nothing can take away those years. (291-92)

Hagar uses geographical metaphors in this highly poetic passage to define the wilderness wasteland that is inside her body. While Hagar physically conquers the wilderness wasteland in the forest (190-91), she still needs to destroy the wasteland that is inside her. Instead of becoming a tragic hero who recreates the wasteland inside himself thus destroying himself, Hagar redefines her heroism by transfiguring herself.

Even though Hagar thinks herself "unchangeable, unregenerate" (293), she transfigures herself in life and in death. She agonizes over words spoken and not spoken, over time lost and yet relentless. Hagar's spectral self is "rampant with memory" (5), and this remembering is both generative and changeable. As DeKoven states, "death and transfiguration are both, simultaneously, with irreducible self-contradiction, terrible and wonderful" (4). Arguably, the tragicomedy *The Tempest*—the

text from which DeKoven takes the title of her study—offers a metaphor that helps explain the powerful possibilities of change in an improperly ordered society. In *The Tempest*, the leaders of Milan must leave their home and travel through water and to the water's edge in order to transform their identities. Indeed, their leaving and subsequent immersion—and near drowning—is metaphoric and literal, for Prospero immerses them in grief, guilt, and pain as well as water in order to transform their identities. This movement away from home and then back home enables the regeneration of society and individuals. Similarly, Hagar's central transformative moment occurs by the sea and away from her home. In this space, Hagar performs a sea-change that allows for her subsequent reconciliation with her past, in a way that parallels the punishment and subsequent forgiveness that occurs in *The Tempest*.

Hagar's desire for transformation manifests itself through language and silence: "I'm choked with it now, the incommunicable years, everything that happened and was spoken or not spoken" (296). Hagar's life is full of adversity that is offset with love and adventure and freedom and, at long last, insight. Her life would be more tragic without these gifts, without recognizing them as gifts, but Hagar does recognize them, and she holds them without assistance, with stubbornness, and with defeat that is simultaneously a victory and a joke: "I lie here and try to recall something truly free that I've done in ninety years. I can think of only two acts that might be so, both recent. One was a joke—yet a joke only as all victories are, the paraphernalia being unequal to the event's reach. The other was a lie—yet not a lie, for it was spoken at least and at last with what may perhaps be a kind of love" (307). The ambiguity of this passage, the refusal to assign referents to the signifiers *joke* and *lie* while Hagar "lie[s] here," acknowledges the unreliability of story, while highlighting the necessity of the telling. This ambiguity, this

refusal to assign absolute meaning or truth to an experience, recalls Hagar's first time having sex. She says, "Pleasure or pain were one to me, meaningless" (52). This modernist conflation of pleasure and pain, and the meaninglessness assigned to both, demonstrates how Laurence reveals the insecurity of the world by revealing the insecurity of the word.

3. BEARING VOICES, BROKEN BONES, & THE DISCOURSE OF HYSTERIA

“I do not know how many bones need be broken before I can walk. And I do not know, either, how many need not have been broken at all” (*Jest* 208).

Laurence’s exploration of how people survive in an insecure modern world continues in *A Jest of God*, a novel concerned with modernism’s divided subject and with how female subjectivity relates to healing a body damaged by hegemonic discourses and the practices those discourses advocate if not perpetuate. Rachel’s wounds are internal and therefore seemingly invisible, but she uses the metaphor of broken bones to provide an image that is more easily understood and more readily valued by mainstream society. By characterizing her damaged mental condition as a physical wound, Rachel makes the invisible visible and thereby resists being identified as pathological or perverse. This strategy of making the invisible visible characterizes many of Rachel’s actions within the novel.

While *The Stone Angel* uses the train as a sign that signifies leaving and loss, the train tracks are a sign of division in *A Jest of God*:

Nothing is old here [on River Street in Manawaka], but it looks old. The timber houses age fast, and even the brick looks worn down after fifty years of blizzard winters and blistering summers. They’re put to shame by the new bungalows like a bakery’s pastel cakes, identical, fresh, tasteless. This is known as a good part of town. Not like the other side of the tracks, where the shacks are and where the weeds are let grow knee-high and not dutifully mown, and where a few bootleggers drive new Chevrolets on the strength of home-made red biddy. No—

that's as it used to be when I was a kid, and I would go with Stacey sometimes, because she was never afraid. I don't know what it's like now. Half my children live at that end of town. I never go there, and know it only from hearsay, distorted local legend, or the occasional glimpse from a child's words. (17)

In this passage from Chapter One, the reader becomes aware of Rachel's own position as a reader. Rachel sees the tracks as clearly dividing Manawaka into two sections: the good part of town and the other side of the tracks. She does not name the other side as the bad part of town, but it is understood that this other side is indeed other to Rachel. While the train tracks divide the town into good and bad, Rachel does not see this division as absolute. The good part of town encompasses the old, which only looks old, and the new, which puts the old to shame. However, again this division is not to be readily believed. The new bungalows are homogenous and tasteless and—when placed beside the other side's shacks and this side's historical old houses—uninteresting. Indeed, the other side of the tracks encompasses the new as well, for the bootleggers drive new Chevrolets. The unknown other side is represented as mysterious, tantalizing, and inaccessible except through language. At this point, Rachel feels that she cannot experience the unknown other, even though she is in daily contact with her children—her students—who live there.

Rachel Cameron, perhaps more than any other Manawaka protagonist, struggles against patriarchal ideologies that specify rigid social roles for women. As space in Manawaka is categorized, so are its inhabitants. As a young, unmarried woman without her own biological children, Rachel has neither the privileged status of mother nor the security of being part of a couple. She is victimized by a myth of normalcy, which women are expected to enact within strict specifications dictated by patriarchal

structures.⁹ She bumps among the roles of teacher, daughter, hostess, sister, mother, virgin, lover, friend, fool, and eccentric. She is comfortable in none of these roles and is in constant agitation within herself. She struggles with words as she struggles within her skin. She struggles with authority and domination, especially in the roles of teacher, virgin, and lover. Only near the end of the novel does she accept flux as part of her reality. The fear that Rachel expresses at the beginning of the novel—"God forbid that I should turn into an eccentric" (8)—becomes, at the end of the novel, acceptance and anticipation of this most marginal, least static role: "I may become, in time, slightly more eccentric all the time. . . . I will ask myself if I am going mad, but if I do, I won't know it" (209). Rachel no longer fears becoming an eccentric. Rather, she looks forward to the liberation that being an eccentric brings.

In her article "Ex-centric, Eccentric, Avant-Garde: Women and Modernism in the Literatures of Canada," Barbara Godard uses a model of eccentricity as a metaphor for the marginalization of women: "Ex-centric . . . they are transgressing literary codes in a manner approximating madness—hence eccentric" (57). This strategy of women using their decentred, or eccentric, position as a place from which to resist and destabilize the centre is useful when thinking about *A Jest of God* because this strategy addresses the ways in which women deal with their sense of alienation from a seemingly unified centre. This seemingly unified centre may occur both outside and inside the subject. Rachel feels alienated from herself as well as from Manawaka. She does not feel as though she belongs in mainstream Manawaka society—such as the Parthenon

⁹ See Judy Kearns's article "Rachel and Social Determinism: A Feminist Reading of *A Jest of God*" for an early feminist reading dealing with "women's internalization of masculine values and definitions" (101)

Cafe—or in the more marginalized institutions in Manawaka—such as the Tabernacle of the Risen and Reborn. Indeed, she does not even feel as though she belongs in her body. In her eyes, her body is gawky—too skinny and too uncontrollable. Rachel's words, thoughts, and actions are at odds with how Rachel believes she should speak, think, and behave. The way in which she survives is to finally embrace her decentred position and to leave the place in which she feels oppressed.

Rachel's alienation, nihilism, and fragmentation mark her as a modern subject and also contribute to her categorization as a hysterical subject. In this chapter, I argue that the modernist discourse of hysteria constructs Rachel as a divided subject. However, this discourse does not succeed in casting Rachel into the singular role of victim. Her body as a material object resists victimization and enacts various dramatic moments to shrug off the role of victim and slip into the role of hero. Unlike the Freudian diagnosis of hysteria, which categorizes the subject as invalid and in valid, this hysterical subjectivity is enabling for Rachel as it validates her division as a speaking, desiring subject.

The argument in this chapter is twofold. First, I argue that mainstream modernist discourses, such as the discourse of hysteria, are destructive because they perpetuate the notions that difference is conceived of as a lack, that the other is dangerous, and that a woman's experience as a divided subject is pathological. Second, I argue that the body is a site of resistance that displaces patriarchal discourse. In other words, it is crucial to recognize that the patriarchal naming of hysteria as pathological is in opposition to how the female body resists such naming by producing its own language that speaks back. While Rachel does not name herself as a hysteric, her speaking body exhibits characteristics of hysteria, which she sees as signs of her eccentricity.

It may be useful to make explicit that hysteria involves the presentation of bodily symptoms without an organic cause or to use the terminology with which I began this chapter, hysterical symptoms are visible while the cause is invisible. Rachel P. Maines in the first chapter of her book *The Technology of Orgasm: "Hysteria," the Vibrator, and Women's Sexual Satisfaction* discusses disease paradigms and argues that many of the classic symptoms of hysteria—such as amnesia, sleepwalking, hallucinations, nervousness, anxiety, irritability, erotic fantasy, sensations of heaviness in the abdomen, and lower pelvic edema—are symptoms of chronic arousal. A reader may recognize that Rachel displays nearly all of these symptoms. It is perhaps also important to note that the term *hysteria* can be used more generally to designate unexplained panic. It is no surprise, given the socio-cultural climate in which Rachel lives, that panic is a response to a feeling of instability.

Central to the argument of this dissertation is the idea that Canada in the 1960s and early 1970s was a country that was experiencing a crisis of identity based upon its desire to leave behind traditions and institutions that linked its identity to another country—either Great Britain or the United States—and to create a new identity based on its own distinct characteristics. In other words, the condition of Canada in the 1960s and early 1970s was a modern condition. This was an unstable time when new policies were being implemented in order to assist in the creation of a unified national identity. Paramount to this new identity was a growing awareness of women's rights. Women writers in Canada worked to represent this time of instability and hopefulness. A gynocentric Canadian literary modernism emerged from this climate of change. *A Jest of God* is a product of this modern condition, and Rachel Cameron's hysterical subjectivity is symptomatic of a divisive, unsettled national atmosphere. Rachel

straddles the old and the new as an emerging second wave feminism and an emerging multicultural nationalism characterize a gynocentric Canadian modernism.

Published in 1966, and set in approximately the same time period, *A Jest of God* is about a woman in process, a woman emerging from stifling social, cultural, and political restrictions that favoured prosperous, Anglo-Celtic men. The novel is also, therefore, about the society, the culture, and the politics that are formative of a Canadian woman's identity. Alison Prentice in her chapter "Prelude to Revolution" reflects upon the changes in the lives of Canadian women between 1945 and 1970. She discusses the "shifts in the life cycle" and the "greater degree of freedom [young women] enjoyed" (319). Thirty-four year-old Rachel is a product of this changing time as she yearns for and finally reaches for her freedom.

Rachel's liberation occurs on several levels. When she subverts the mother-daughter relationship she has with her mother, she discards the role of hostess and redefines the roles of mother and daughter. When she challenges her own sexual inhibitions, she sheds the role of virgin and struggles into the even more difficult role of lover. These movements follow some of the major demographic patterns of the late 1960s and early 1970s in Canada. From 1966 to 1971, Canadian households increased by 17 percent, and there was a 92 percent increase in heads of household who were single, never-married persons. While the reasons for these increases are unclear, changing sexual practices may have been contributing factors. The fastidious 1950s gave way to the less-critical 1960s, as pre-marital sex became more widespread (Prentice et al. 319-20).

Women laboured (and I use that word intentionally) to overcome the limiting ways that women's bodies were authorized to function. The production of women's

bodies was no longer seen as chiefly involving reproduction. This awareness of women's sexuality, and the containment and repression of that sexuality, did not become acknowledged until the 1970s: "In the 1970s women became aware that 'sexual liberation' had been less than satisfactory: the established patterns of male initiative and domination in sexual matters were difficult to counter" (Prentice et al. 393). Women fought (and still fight) to have their pleasure acknowledged as something in and for itself. Rachel struggles with the idea that her desire is normal, but she is not able to freely name and embody her desire and her pleasure. Rachel's hysteria results from this inability. Her hysteria, however, is not pathological. Instead, it is related to the impossibility of naming her desire in the singular, or at all. Language does not succeed in encapsulating Rachel's desire because her desire keeps shifting. It is at once a desire for sexual pleasure, for death, for children, for acceptance. Her body speaks all of these desires.

Coral Ann Howells in her article "Weaving Fabrications: Women's Narratives in *A Jest of God* and *The Fire-Dwellers*" claims that Rachel's "consciousness is dominated by gaps in comprehension and by the untranslatability of language, where words become signifiers whose meaning is always deferred. In her mind words separate themselves from meaning or at best exist in unstable relationships, so that language becomes the agent not of human communication and self-expression but of alienation" (97). Howells posits Rachel's incomprehension and alienation as characteristics of a hysteric, and I agree with this analysis. However, I also think it is important to recognize that these characteristics are apparent in a modern condition. In addition, such feelings of incomprehension and alienation are dominant in women who feel as though language is phallogentric and therefore cannot represent women's experiences.

Furthermore, Howells claims that although “It would seem that the ostensible cause of Rachel’s hysteria is sexual . . . such a reading would be an over-simplification. . . . It is a fear of death which is the true subtext of her narrative” (98). Such a dismissal of the sexual and a naming of death as the “true” subtext undermine Howells’s previous claim about the “untranslatability of language” and the deferral of meaning of the signifier *desire*. Indeed, Rachel’s desire and fear are located in both the sexual and her fear of death. The malestream modernist fear of annihilation and the necessity of creative destruction are present in Rachel’s condition, yet she reconfigures this fear by a gynocentric strategy of re-creation as she uses her body to signify her desire in ways that verbal language cannot.

When Rachel does use verbal language, she often modifies an already existing text to fit her own experiences and desires. For example, *A Jest of God* opens with a child’s chant that demonstrates how Rachel uses her imagination to transform herself from a “thin giant” (7) into a queen. Rachel puts her own name into the chant in order to identify with the generic woman of the child’s chant. This opening anticipates some of the novel’s central issues, including the movement from child to adult, the division between memory and forgetting, the transformation of invisible desires into visible landscapes, and the sound of a woman’s longing:

The wind blows low, the wind blows high
The snow comes falling from the sky,
Rachel Cameron says she’ll die

For the want of the golden city.
She is handsome, she is pretty,
She is the queen of the golden city—. (7)

Rachel’s longing for a “golden city” translates, at the end of this rhyme, into a vision of a realization of her dream. Encompassing the lows and highs and the coldness of her

present life, this rhyme acknowledges complexity, fluidity, contradiction, desire, and nihilism. Indeed, this whole rhyme illustrates a hysterical divided and desiring subjectivity as Rachel equates death with desire. Even as she is the androgynous queen of the golden city, she dies from wanting it.

Sexuality is one of the primary issues of power with which Rachel struggles throughout the novel. The summer of the novel is the summer that Rachel—to use the popular conceptualization—loses her virginity. I draw attention to this notion of loss because the loss of her virginity is simultaneously a gain. As she sheds the role of virgin, she steps tentatively into the role of lover. While she has experienced pleasure through masturbation, she is as uncomfortable with her self-pleasuring as she is with her desire for a lover. During masturbation she creates an imaginary lover in an imaginary space. Indeed, her *jouissance* represents moments when she lives only for herself within and in control of her body. During her masturbatory moments, she briefly achieves both psychic and somatic release. However, when her orgasm is over, Rachel demonstrates her hysterical subjectivity—which Lacan defines as the division within a speaking, desiring subject—by questioning whether her desire and pleasure signify that she is imbalanced or laughable (25). Through orgasm, her body speaks back to and resists the patriarchal discourse that Rachel has internalized and that claims a woman should not experience sexual pleasure.

In order to understand more fully the implications of Rachel's resistance, it is important to outline how divided subjectivity first manifests itself in a condition psychoanalysts call hysteria. To speak of Rachel as a hysterical subject necessitates exploring psychoanalysis as a feminist and modernist discourse. Marcia Ian in *Remembering the Phallic Mother: Psychoanalysis, Modernism and the Fetish* opens her

chapter "Language as the Real: Psychoanalytic Modernism" by quoting Fredric Jameson: "In 'pure' psychoanalytic criticism, indeed, the social phenomenon with which the private materials of case history, of individual fantasy or childhood experience, must initially be confronted is simply language itself" (167). Rachel confronts language repeatedly throughout the novel, and received language is intimately associated with how she judges herself. Her social sense of self is constructed as she criticizes her body and her language as though seeing and hearing herself through society's eyes and ears.

Rachel encounters her history every time she meets a former student, every time she walks down a familiar street, every time she gets the same hairstyle, every time she puts on old clothing. And every time she faces her history, she reflects on the gap between what she does and what she wishes she had done. Rachel sees people, place, and past reading her and finding her lacking. This idea of lack is central to how an other is constructed and subsequently devalued. In psychoanalytic discourse, for example, the female is defined as lacking a penis and is therefore seen as a faulty man. In colonial discourse, a racialized other is constructed in contrast to a white model and is found to be lacking. An order based on a default paradigm is perpetuated when the oppressed Other internalizes hegemonic discourses and uses these discourses to define her identity. Resistance occurs when the subject acknowledges the existence of these discourses and works to liberate herself. Rachel surfaces as a speaking, desiring subject when she confronts her internalized hegemonic voice and challenges her lack of autonomous voice. Before she is able to more fully realize herself as a speaking subject, however, her body speaks for her.

To place psychoanalytic criticism in a modernist context is to recognize the importance of language as part of both an aesthetic practice and a cultural reality.

Marcia Ian claims that

psychoanalysis is the quintessential modernist discourse. To say this is to argue that psychoanalysis exemplified the coherency model of aesthetic high modernism; that it participated in the simultaneous erasure or “bracketing” of both individual and world in favor of its own symbolic process; and that it both reflected and generated a cultural trend by construing consciousness as an epiphenomenon of instinct. At the same time, however, and almost in spite of itself, psychoanalysis wove together the two views of language. . . namely the social and the personal, by theorizing culture as the symbolic enactment of psychical realities. (168)

Ian’s claim is useful for formulating a revisionary modernism because it points to psychoanalysis in modernism as both a discourse of coherency and a discourse of bifurcation. The high modernist discourse of psychoanalysis brackets or erases (to use Ian’s words) the specificities of the individual and the world while simultaneously foregrounding both personal and social language. If psychoanalysis encloses and removes both the individual and the world in order to highlight language, then a closer look at hysteria—the disorder with which psychoanalysis emerged—might illuminate how language and voice are crucial to individual and communal identity. Indeed, hysteria brings the female body back into modernist psychoanalytic discourse. Bringing the subject back into psychoanalysis creates a re-visioning that makes psychoanalysis fruitful for the construction of a feminist Canadian modernism because it highlights the importance of language and body to both the individual and the community.

While the connection between the individual—as studied in psychology—and the community—as studied in sociology—may not be immediately obvious, I think the two are inseparable, and this inseparability is apparent in Ian’s argument about psychoanalysis as the quintessential modernist discourse. However, psychoanalysis, in

its efforts to subsume individual psycho-sexual development under the Oedipus/Electra model, obscures the realities of female individuals, either exacerbating rather than easing pathological effects or creating pathology where none existed before. The fear of a disordered society is made clear by the ways in which women's seemingly uncontrollable bodies are controlled. For example, the high modernist discourse of psychoanalysis attempts to control women's bodies and women's experiences by naming hysteria a disorder, a pathology, a perversion. Women's enclosure and removal from society results in a normal (default) society that is composed of men and their experiences.

Psychoanalysis calls attention to the impossibility of a life of the self that is separate from a life of the community. Cultural and psychical realities inform each other so that a culture is reflected in an individual as an individual reflects her culture. Rachel is in a psychical and physical modernist struggle to maintain a balance between subject and object. She struggles to assert her individuality in a society that emphasizes specific, limited roles for women that erase desire and posit duty. As Rachel looks at her body and listens to her voice, she laments the space between desire and fulfillment, between imagination and substantiation, between memory and event. She criticizes her body and her language, her actions and her speech. At times insightful and at times unaware, Rachel attempts to embrace her individual subjectivity while doing her best to be a valuable member of Manawaka society.

Individual and communal subjectivity also relate to nationhood. Psychical and cultural realities are interrelated in the formation of Canada's identity. The myth of Canada as a bilingual, bicultural community arises from imperial and colonial ideologies that implant Anglo-Saxon superiority into the body of Canada. Canada's bifurcated

subjectivity is related to internal, national strife between English and French Canada as well as external, colonial pressure from Great Britain and neo-colonial pressure from the United States. The simultaneous cultural and psychical erasure of First Nations and other non-Anglo-Saxon peoples perpetuates such split subjectivity. Diverse aspects of identity become possible for Canada only when English/French dualism is deconstructed and re-visioned. While the Manawaka novels do not overtly address English/French dynamics, they do explore power relations between English, Scottish, Slavic, and Métis peoples. For example, in *A Jest of God*, the reader sees both bifurcation and coherence within Manawaka when Rachel Cameron and Nick Kazlik—people from different ethnic backgrounds and different sides of the railway tracks—cross over into each other's space and move between and beyond divisions, which are both spatial and temporal, historical and topical, individual and communal, psychical and cultural.

Rachel Cameron is the only one of the four Manawaka novel protagonists who stays in Manawaka throughout the entire novel devoted to her story. Although she has gone away to Winnipeg to attend university, she does not finish her degree because she comes back when her father dies in order to live with and care for her mother. Rachel's escape from and subsequent return to Manawaka (and her mother) imbue in her a sense of failure and unsatisfied desire. Rachel's struggle throughout the novel is to recognize her doubled nature and to claim a space for herself that is enriched by her potential and her voice. To fail at the restricted roles assigned to her is to succeed in creating a liberated self by making these roles more capacious and flexible.

Rachel's doubleness is further revealed in the structure of the Manawaka cycle. *A Jest of God* is sister novel to *The Fire-Dwellers*: literally and figuratively. That is, Rachel Cameron and Stacey MacAindra are sisters, and both novels are set in

approximately the same time period and occupy the middle space of the cycle. Rachel and Stacey express complementary sides of the same experience, in a way that is similar to Jason Currie and Bram Shipley. Rachel and Stacey, like Jason and Bram, share a history and a future, even though their presents are disparate. Stacey's quiet revolution is to resolve the difference between memory and present. Rachel's revolution of silence is a struggle to come to voice, to have the voice in her head come out of her mouth. There is hope for this desired result because at the end of the novel she is not stagnant; she moves to the coast, facing her mother with her body, with action. Rachel's hysterical subjectivity, her restlessness and dissatisfaction, result in a positive movement towards identifying problems within the familial and societal structures in which she lives.

Ellie Ragland-Sullivan defines and demonstrates the development of the hysterical subject in *Feminism and Psychoanalysis: A Critical Dictionary*. She begins with the notion that psychoanalysis emerges with Freud's treatment of hysteria. Hysteria, or the "wandering womb," was thought by Jean Martin Charcot to be neurological rather than psychical. As previously stated, symptoms of hysteria include anaesthesia, hyperaesthesia, convulsions, and excitability. In 1905, Freud connected hysteria with sexuality and later with biological homosexual tendencies. More relevant to this discussion is how in 1968, Jacques Lacan translates Freud's findings into issues of identity and language, rather than biology. The hysteric's sexual uncertainty "links sexuality and identity: her discourse reveals the fundamental impossibility of reducing identity to gender in the first place" (Ragland-Sullivan 163). Questions of identity arise when gendered stereotypes inhibit women from exploring the complexity of their identity. Rachel struggles in confusion as she tries to determine how her desire fits into

her life. Primarily, she is repulsed by her body and its desires; she has no access to pleasures that are validated for females in society.

Monique David-Ménard in *Hysteria From Freud to Lacan* questions the hysteric's disgust with her body and relates this disgust to the notion that a woman's body and her pleasure are not represented in society. She calls attention to the hysteric's divided subjectivity and the production of the hysterogenic body as a replacement for the lack of an erotogenic one. The psychic body contains both sexuality and language as it stands in for the lack of pleasure received through mouth and lips. Through the language of *jouissance*, the hysteric constructs a pleasuring body that resists stasis and negation (89, 99). The erotogenic places on the body—the mouth and lips—are doubled on the woman's body. Her speech and her masturbatory moments offer the possibility of both pleasure and subversion.

This language becomes crucial to Rachel's existence especially when the simultaneous implications of the meaning of *jouissance* are explored. The lack of representation of women's pleasure extends beyond the physical. Betsy Wing translates *jouissance* in Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément's *The Newly Born Woman* as total sexual ecstasy and more. Orgasm and enjoyment are also implied in the word, but it goes even further to include

some of the sense of access and participation in connection with rights and property. . . . It is, therefore, a word with *simultaneously* sexual, political, and economic overtones. At the simplest level of meaning—metaphorical—woman's capacity for multiple orgasms indicates that she has the potential to attain something more than Total, something extra—abundance and waste (a cultural throwaway), Real and unrepresentable. (165)

It is the acceptance of *jouissance* as both Real and unrepresentable with which Rachel struggles, though of course this language is not available to her. Rachel's challenge is to move beyond the containment of social roles and into the liberation of eccentricity.

While David-Ménard explores the transformative possibilities of *jouissance*, Ragland-Sullivan also considers a Lacanian perspective that sees the cause of the hysteric's dilemma as an inability to identify with her mother. Instead, the hysteric identifies with her father and is, therefore, not able to find a model of signification for her desire (163). In some ways, Rachel's quest is to find her father—and therein see herself—because it is her mother who primarily perpetuates feminine cultural stereotypes that Rachel resists, albeit often unsuccessfully. Rachel's absent father succeeds in escaping Manawaka by retreating into the world of the dead. As the town undertaker, he lives on the margins, a man outside the mainstream of society who “possibly felt at ease with them, the unspeaking ones, and out of place in our house” (20). Like Rachel, her father struggles to find his place in a world where death, like desire, is unmentionable (21).

The notion of desire as unmentionable, unspeakable, and unrepresentable identifies a lack in culture and in knowledge. Ragland-Sullivan summarizes and connects Lacan's and Cixous and Clément's notions of the subversive elements of the hysterical subject. If hysteria connects language and suffering, then hysteria in patriarchal culture locates a flaw in culture. In other words, if patriarchal culture defines hysteria as a neurosis, it is because the unrepresentable—and the hysteric's solution to this problem of unrepresentability, of challenging cultural norms—is unacceptable to the status quo. The hysteric, therefore, becomes a subversive figure, and rather than being neurotic, Lacan argues that “hysteria is the condition of the division of any speaking,

desiring subject.” Furthermore, Cixous and Clément see the hysteric as a “threshold figure for women’s liberation and as a form of resistance to patriarchy” (Ragland-Sullivan 164-65). Rachel Cameron as a hysteric unsettles society and offers a revisionary model for the individual. She challenges not only the structure of the world but also the way in which a subject participates in that structure.

Part of the hysteric’s struggle is the struggle to come to voice. Even before speech, however, is the suffering the hysteric endures in her psychological processes. The process of finding voice encompasses the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real. Betsy Wing in the Glossary to *The Newly Born Woman* summarizes the Lacanian use of these three terms as follows: “Lacan’s Imaginary, the order of perception and hallucination, is fantasy-full but never fanciful. The Symbolic, the order of discursive and symbolic action, demystifies the symbol, which can no longer pretend to represent an adequate ‘truth.’ And the Real is not simply ‘reality’ but the designation of what is absolutely unrepresentable” (Cixous and Clément 164). Throughout *A Jest of God*, Rachel Cameron chastises herself for her perception, for her speech, and for her ways of being in the world. For example, when Rachel moves from the fantasy of masturbation to the action, she still resists her desire and feels as though she needs to justify her need for pleasure and for escape.

The gaps between how Rachel wants to exist in the world, how she perceives others want her to be, and how she misreads her self extend into her daily life as well as her nightly fantasies. When the novel first opens, she sees in herself the potential to become a marginal figure and resists this possibility:

Stupid thought. Morbid. I mustn’t give houseroom in my skull to that sort of thing. It’s dangerous to let yourself. I know that. . . . Whenever I find myself thinking in a brooding way, I must simply turn it off and think of something else.

God forbid I should turn into an eccentric. This isn't just imagination. I've seen it happen. Not only teachers, of course, and not only women who haven't been married. Widows can become extremely odd as well, but at least they have the excuse of grief. (8)

Rachel believes that within the roles of teacher, single woman, and widow are traces of the eccentric. Instead of seeing eccentricity as liberating, Rachel, at this point in the novel, sees eccentricity as dangerous to the eccentric. She sees her inner self as a place, a space where she can move and live, a landscape on which to build. However, dangerous and brooding thoughts are not acceptable housemates. She sees her thoughts as something she can "simply turn . . . off" in order to become something else. She does not see that this turning off of her self is more dangerous than eccentricity because it keeps her contained within rigid stereotypes which could in time potentially produce a fully-realized neurosis. Furthermore, she draws the distinction between imagination and sight, privileging visual perception over the imaginary: she believes what she sees. She has seen the transformation of perfectly normal women into odd and unusual specimens. Until Rachel is able to imagine other possibilities for herself, she will neither destabilize the symbols that repress her nor move into the collective space of unthinkable knowledge and identity that includes the Real.

This collective, simultaneous space that the knowledgeable subject inhabits encompasses past, present, and future and is encompassed in the Real. Betsy Wing defines and analyzes the Real. The Real is

what is, what has been, and what will become, and though itself, it is nonnarrative and nonrepresentational, like history, it can be thought only when it is textualized. One must participate in this unthinkable Real because it cannot lack our participation. Also, like history, it can be experienced as the site of resistance to individual desire. . . .when the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real intersect in the subject, it is possible for one to 'know.' (Cixous and Clément 167).

If part of Rachel's struggle as a subject is to embrace her doubled nature and to voice new possibilities for her self, she needs to recognize her self as exceptional. Instead of trying to "strike a balance" (9) between speaking too softly and speaking too harshly, she needs to textualize herself as an eccentric, de-centred subject and participate in, rather than deny, her extremes, her extremities. She will have a fuller understanding of her identity once she embodies, or at least acknowledges, her potential as a divided, speaking, and desiring subject.

The process of Rachel allowing "houseroom in [her] skull" for her eccentric, hysterical knowledge spans the length of the novel. She questions the sound of her voice and the trace of her mother in her voice. Instead of understanding her identity as containing the voices of her ancestors, she seeks to discover her father and erase all traces of her mother:

Oh God. I don't mean to be condescending. How can it happen, still, this echo of my mother's voice? My navy wool dress is three years old and much longer than they're being worn now. I haven't had the energy to take up the hem. Now it seems like sackcloth, flapping around my knees. And the ashes, where are they? I dramatize myself. I always did. No one would ever know it from the outside, where I'm too quiet. (10)

If the Real is "what is, what has been, and what will become," Rachel resists the first two of these stages, which leaves hope for what she will become. For now, however, she criticizes what she is because it is made up of the past. She is comfortable in neither her body nor her clothing. Instead, she sees herself dressed in sackcloth, a dramatic figure of lamentation. Rachel's internal suffering and turmoil are signified through her clothing and her imagination, but she sees a division between her inner noise and her outer quietude. She denies herself the outer speech that her inner voice desires.

When Rachel does allow herself an outer voice, she hears that voice as a sound of betrayal. It is a childlike animal voice, jittery and uncontrollable. Indeed, her body acts on its own, startling her into destruction: “My own voice sounds false to my ears, a Peter-Rabbitish voice, and I find I am standing beside my desk, holding a new piece of orange chalk so tightly that it snaps in my fingers” (11). This wandering body of hers betrays the tension between Rachel as subject and object. Her own desire is reflected in her favourite student, James Doherty: “He goes his own way as though he endures the outside world but does not really believe in it” (11). Her voice is the voice of a male rabbit; her desire is embodied in a male child. She finds herself embodied in other bodies, as though potential can only be housed in a male figure.

Another male figure that influences Rachel’s sense of self is her principal, Willard Siddley. As a character to whom and by whom she is simultaneously drawn and repulsed, he represents Rachel’s denied desire for her own body as well as for the body of another:

My own hands, spread out on the desk, are too large. Large and too thin, like empty gloves. . . . It is only now, concentrating on my hands, the nails nicely manicured and coated with colourless polish, that I realize something else. When Willard Siddley’s spotted furry hands were on my desk, I wanted to touch them. To see what the hairs felt like. Yet he repulses me. I didn’t. I won’t. I didn’t feel that way. I’m only imagining things again. (15)

The critical assessment of her own body as a body without bones, her own frame without substance, leads her to desire a male body. As she studies her nails, the lifeless and colourless part of her hands, she recalls another set of hands, strangely animal hands. She remembers her urge to feel Willard’s hands, and remembers how she did not satisfy her desire. However, in the very next moment, she also denies the desiring moment. She refuses both her desire and her memory, as she devalues her imagination.

This critical assessment of her body recurs throughout the novel. She considers her body and then turns her looking into a comparison. Usually, Rachel suffers in the comparison because she sees herself as lacking. In the early part of the novel, Laurence focuses on setting up Rachel as a subject who orders her life according to a series of good/bad binary structures where Rachel is always in the powerless, secondary position. For example, Mother=good. Father=bad. Stacey like mother=good. Rachel like father=bad. Laurence's critique of patriarchal discourse allows the reader to see Rachel's progress throughout the novel, even if Rachel herself does not see her movements as resistant. Rachel does not realize that by placing her father in the secondary position, she is already subverting patriarchal power structures:

If I could put on a little weight, I wouldn't feel the cold so. But I've always been too thin, like Dad. Stacey takes after Mother, and in consequence has a good figure. Or had. I haven't seen her since the last two were born. I haven't seen my sister for seven years. She never comes back here. Why should she? She's lived away for years. She has her own home, and wouldn't be bothered to visit here, not even so Mother might see the children. She's very decisive, is Stacey. She knew right from the start what she wanted most, which was to get as far away from Manawaka as possible. She didn't lose a moment in doing it. (17)

Rachel judges Stacey's escape as Rachel feels she would be judged by others. However, as the next chapter explores, while Stacey may be physically away from Manawaka, Manawaka is never away from Stacey. Rachel's second guesses and lamentations are based upon what she is not, what she is lacking: if only she were not so thin, if only she were more decisive, if only she were not born second, if only she had not come back. This lack in her self of what is present in others that surround her is the basis for much of her suffering. Her subjectivity is divided into Self and Other where the Other is outside and privileged.

Rachel's divided subjectivity is also a division between the safety of habit and the desire for change, the security of the past and the indeterminacy of the future, the stability of the conventional and the unpredictability of the contemporary. All of these divisions can be summarized as the division between the known and the unknown. Laurence constructs Rachel as a modernist subject who is terrified of the unknown, while she is simultaneously drawn to it. By constructing Rachel as a divided yet desiring subject, Laurence identifies the potential that is present in the unstable and the body as the site of this potential. The reader sees that Rachel wears the same clothing, but feels she should take up the hem (10). She has her hair done in the same fashion every week, but wonders what would happen if she asked for hair "like candy floss, a high cone of it, and gold" (19). Her bedroom is the same, but she considers changing the "girlish . . . old-fashioned" furniture (22). Rachel lives on the cusp between youth and age, between innocence and experience. Not to have knowledge is shameful, yet she feels she is too old to question, as though she has been already fully formed and cannot transform her mold.

Early in the novel, Rachel ponders her tenuous position when she is confronted by students whom she has previously taught. The two young women she meets are approximately sixteen years old now, and Rachel sees them as very distinct from her. At first she categorizes them as beings from another planet, but then alters her definition to name herself as the alien: "They look like twins from outer space. No, not twins necessarily. Another race, Venusians. But that's wrong, too. This is their planet. They are the ones who live here now" (18). Significantly, she names them Venusians, beautiful women associated with sexual love and desire. Rachel cannot fathom a world where she is desiring or desirable; more youthful others have moved into that space.

Instead, Rachel wonders whether she appears “antediluvian” to the Venusians. This naming of herself as possibly antediluvian, as old and “out of date,” as belonging to the time before the biblical flood, identifies Rachel’s inability to imagine herself as part of the present, as part of a “new” and changing society. Instead she wonders how one achieves new knowledge: “But what beats me is how the Venusians learn to do all these things for themselves. They don’t have their hair done. Who teaches them? I suppose they’re young enough to ask around. At that age it’s no shame not to know” (19). Rachel cites age as a limitation to knowledge, as though there is an unnavigable gap that divides the ‘subject supposed to know’ from the subject who does not know.

In psychoanalytic terms, this meeting between Rachel and her students is related to the process of transference. Toril Moi in her entry in *Feminism and Psychoanalysis* entitled “Transference/Countertransference” connects hysteria and transference by acknowledging that Freud concludes his account of his treatment of Dora’s hysteria by claiming that it failed because he did not understand transference. That is, he neither understood his role in Dora’s unconscious fantasies, nor did he understand that he complicated the process by “projecting his own unconscious wish for gratification on to the patient” (432). Jean Laplanche and Jean-Baptiste Pontalis in *The Language of Psychoanalysis* define transference as a “process of actualization of unconscious wishes,” where “infantile prototypes re-emerge and are experienced with a strong sensation of immediacy” (455). While transference often occurs in an analytic situation where the analysand projects her wishes on to the analyst, Rachel’s transference occurs in her interactions with many others and also with herself as both analyst and analysand.

According to Moi, Freud’s failure to acknowledge his position with Dora is important from a feminist perspective because it calls attention to the problems of

authority between a woman subject and a male figure of authority who makes her the object of his attentions. Moi goes on to explore Lacan's view of this problem of authority. She sees Lacan's linkage of authority with knowledge as precisely the space that is, from a feminist perspective, full of potential. In *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* Lacan claims that "transference is unthinkable unless one sets out from the subject who is supposed to know" (253). Lacan's view is crucial to Rachel as a hysterical subject who does not know. Without self knowledge, Rachel cannot complete the process of transference and, therefore, cannot actualize her desire. While her "infantile prototypes re-emerge and are experienced with a strong sense of immediacy," Rachel does not recognize this experience as crucial to her process of development. Instead, she resists her girliness and casts herself in the role of the old maid or the antediluvian. It is the reader in the role of analyst who is privy to Rachel's unconscious desires and who is witness to her unacknowledged progress. Laurence produces a feminist modernist narrative of Rachel's emergence as a desiring subject that is so gradual it is almost undetectable. Hence, the reader as analyst and witness understands and sees moments where Rachel successfully displaces patriarchal discourse long before Rachel voices her potential.

Moi also discusses Shoshana Felman's work on transference and countertransference in the relationship between teacher and student. This discussion illuminates Rachel's fluid bifurcation as both teacher and student. The novel's opening chant takes Rachel back to herself as a child and a student while she stands in the classroom window as an adult and a teacher:

Twenty-seven years ago, which seems impossible, and myself seven . . . It would certainly have surprised me then to know I'd end up here, in this room, no longer the one who was scared of not pleasing, but the thin giant She behind the desk at

the front, the one with the power of picking any coloured chalk out of the box and writing anything at all on the blackboard. It seemed a power worth possessing, then. (7)

Rachel reflects on the seemingly impossible passage of time that has made her no longer and still the one “scared of not pleasing.” Rachel also perpetuates the stereotype of the tall spindly elementary schoolteacher when she names herself and her teacher as “the thin giant She.” By capitalizing “She” and using “the” instead of “a,” Rachel casts herself into a long line of stereotypical teachers. Significantly, however, her view has changed; now she no longer sees a teacher’s power as one “worth possessing.” Once she has power, she no longer sees it as valuable.

The figure of the teacher at the front of the class, the ‘subject supposed to know’ changes for Rachel now that she has assumed that position of power. Her very next thought deconstructs this model of knowledge and the teacher’s place within that model:

*Spanish dancers, turn around,
Spanish dancers, get out of this town.*

People forget the songs, later on, but the knowledge of them must be passed like a secret language from child to child—how far back? They seem like a different race, a separate species, all those generations of children. As though they must still exist somewhere, even after their bodies have grown grotesque, and they have forgotten the words and tunes, and learned disappointment, and finally died. (7-8)

Rachel sees children as the ones with knowledge, and the knowledge they acquire does not come from words written on a blackboard by a figure of authority with power over others; the knowledge comes from the “secret language” of children’s songs. In this phrase, Laurence demonstrates Rachel’s awareness of the existence of language that resists patriarchal discourse, although Rachel is not aware that she possesses such a language. Both *A Jest of God* and *The Fire-Dwellers* begin with a children’s rhyme, and the knowledge contained in those rhymes transforms according to the singer and the

listener, both of whom contain the memory of the child. Rachel's remembering of herself as a child takes her back to being a child. In this memory she is both a child and an adult who grasps at an unacknowledged knowledge that becomes knowable through repetition over time and space.

Like the students Rachel meets in the street, Rachel sees children as a different race of beings because she believes their knowledge is different from hers and unachievable by her. Significantly, their "secret language" and the children themselves, exist even after their bodies have transformed into the "grotesque," like hers. This calling attention to the body suggests that the body contains a knowledge that is "spoken" differently than the symbolic language of patriarchy. Each child's song in the sister novels contains a female protagonist in movement, in the process of leaving: the Spanish dancers leave town; Rachel Cameron dies from desire; and the ladybug flies away. Rachel hears the songs and occupies a subject position of both lack and desire. She is not the child-student, but she desires the knowledge that she sees children and students possessing. Paradoxically, Rachel is both the child-student and the mother-teacher; however, she does not yet understand that she occupies all of these positions. If hysteria is primarily a position in desire where the body speaks without being understood, then Rachel is a hysterical subject because she does not understand the knowledge her body speaks.

Pamela Banting in her article "The Phantom Limb Syndrome: Writing the Postcolonial Body in Daphne Marlatt's *Touch to My Tongue*" discusses the body as a site of resistance that writes back:

As material substance, as that which resists the operations of naming and categorization . . . the body also resists and displaces the official order which it acquires along with its native tongue. As flesh, the body is both vulnerable and

resistant to languages, discourses, and social formations. And in *both* its vulnerability and its resistance, the body 'writes back.' That is, the very properties which make it susceptible to inscription also preserve some measure of its resistant agency and signifying potential. The body protests. The body goes on strike. The body has other agendas. This is perhaps most strikingly evident in hysteria. Even in the crippling illness of hysteria—thought to be a resistance to, even a defiance of, the overwhelming impositions of phallogocentric constraints, repression, and overwriting—the body retains its ability to sign for itself. (8-9)

While Banting uses the postcolonial terminology of *writing* back to the centre, I will continue to discuss how Rachel's body *speaks* back to the centre. Rachel's struggle is to come to voice, and it is important to see that her body speaks before she consciously resists the centre by verbalizing her desire. The remainder of this chapter will focus on three moments when Rachel's hysterical body resists and defies patriarchal impositions. In each of these occurrences, Laurence foregrounds how feminist modernist narratives use corporeal language to demonstrate alternatives to verbal language.

Rachel's body speaks her defiance in her masturbatory moments, her ecstatic utterance, and her false pregnancy. Each of these occurrences is a speaking back to a patriarchal discourse. In the first example, Rachel's body speaks back to a patriarchal historical narrative. In the second example, she speaks back to religious discourse. In the third example, Rachel's body defies medical discourse and in doing so also speaks back to Manawaka. In each moment, Rachel reads and misreads her body—or listens to and then dismisses her body's speech—and therefore is initially unable to recognize the transformative potential of being a hysterical, eccentric subject who resists a centre that posits containment and constriction as positions with potential.

Rachel's masturbatory moments are events that occur in the night when Rachel is trying to get to sleep. She reasons that she must achieve the solace of pleasure in order to rest. This reasoning demonstrates that Rachel has internalized patriarchal restrictions

on women's pleasure. However, her body defies her reason when it constructs a narrative of pleasure even when Rachel thinks she does not deserve that solace:

— When Egypt's queen received Antony, that book said, she used to fall upon him even before he had taken off his armour. Think of that — even before he'd taken off his armour. They used to have banquets with dozens there. Hundreds. Egyptian girls and Roman soldiers. . . . They drank their wine from golden cats with seeing eyes. And when they'd drunk enough, they would copulate as openly as dogs, a sweet hot tangle of the smooth legs around the hard hairy thighs. The noise and sweat — the sound of their breath — the slaves looking on, having to stand itchy immobile while they watched the warm squirming of those — (65)

This suspended fantasy speaks back to an already constructed historical narrative where a woman's pleasure is animalistic. This passage also recalls the novel's opening chant in which Rachel is queen of the golden city. By not naming Cleopatra, Rachel imagines herself into the role of Egypt's queen. By doing so, Rachel constructs herself as both subject and object, participant and watcher. She is both the queen who falls upon her lover and the slave who watches the Egyptian girls and Roman soldiers. She is a hysterical divided subject who desires but is only able to speak that desire through her body.

Like the first masturbatory scene in the novel (24-25), which I will look at in the Conclusion to this dissertation, this scene uses the dash and the following white space as a signifying space where the body speaks on the page. Rachel creates a scenario in which she writes herself into an already written narrative of pleasure. She narrates the fantasy, but she does not speak of touching her own body. She does not acknowledge the simultaneous narration and touching. Laurence, however, demonstrates how signs on the page can signify corporeal pleasure. The gaps in Rachel's narrative are the moments when she touches herself, when she breaks from the telling in order to breathe,

to gasp, to sigh, and to climax. In this way, Laurence creates a feminist modernist discourse of pleasure through the use of silence and space that speaks and defies.

A similar moment of corporeal defiance occurs when Rachel goes with Calla to the Tabernacle. Rachel is extremely uncomfortable in this place where people “make a public spectacle of themselves” (41) by speaking in tongues and by bearing witness to those who speak:

I want to go home. I want to go away and never come back. I want—. . .
Silence. I can't stay. I can't stand it. I really can't. Beside me, the man
moans gently, moans and stirs, and moans—

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—

Not Calla's voice. Mine. Oh my God. Mine. The voice of Rachel. (42-
43)

Coral Ann Howells reads Rachel's pun on crypt and cryptic as the clue to Rachel's fear of death as the “true subtext of her [hysterical] narrative” (98). I have already argued that Howells's reading limits Rachel's expansive desire. Instead, this passage represents a corporeal and visceral response in which the surface and depth of the body transform the forbidden into language. Rachel's sense of being possessed or taken over is another hysterical symptom and is a response that is not based only on a fear of death. Rather, Rachel's body emulates Faustian heroism in an attempt to conquer death. She displaces this destructive narrative, however, because the body does not die. Instead, the corpse is stolen from its enclosure. The body defies death. The freed body signifies Rachel's desires, fears, potential, and grief. The voice of Rachel is heard although not yet understood. As in Rachel's masturbatory moments, Laurence uses the dash and spaces to signify what Rachel cannot yet speak. While Laurence provides the sounds that the man utters, she does not give Rachel's words or sounds. Instead, Laurence shows how

Rachel's body speaks. She displaces the man's moaning with the woman's voice. This displacement represents a challenge to a logocentric modernist society that encloses and removes women's speech.

Rachel's pregnancy is the third example of how her body defies patriarchal impositions. If one considers that the name *hysteria* is from the Greek *hysteros* meaning womb (*OED*), then Rachel's imagined pregnancy is her body's most hysterical, defiant sign. The tumour that the body produces, which Rachel initially misreads as a foetus, simultaneously signifies desire, death, resistance, anger, vulnerability, trust, fear, speech, motherhood, suicide, abortion, and adultery. On a more literal level, one might argue that Rachel's tumour is an organic cause for her hysterical symptoms. However, it is important to recall that lower pelvic edema¹⁰ is a hysterical symptom. In other words, Rachel's dissatisfaction may be the cause of her tumour or her tumour may be the cause of her symptoms. Regardless, as Rachel goes through the process of discovering that she has a tumour in her uterus, having the tumour removed, and removing herself from Manawaka, she sees how people read and misread her body. In maintaining the tumour as an ambiguous or wandering sign, the body defies patriarchal discourse in Manawaka. Doctor Raven is defied because he reads Rachel's body as virginal. The town is defied because the rumours that circulate around Rachel's body name her as suicidal and promiscuous. All of these namings are both true and false, but Rachel's refusal to deny the rumours demonstrates that she finally claims her body as a site of resistance that speaks back to the status quo in ways that verbal language cannot accomplish.

¹⁰ *edema* or *oedema* is from the Greek *oidema*, which means a swelling tumour, from *oidein*, to swell

When Doctor Raven faces Rachel and rules out pregnancy because she is such a “sensible girl” (184), Rachel responds in her mind with sound and gesture: “No words for my anger could ever be foul or wounding enough, against him, for what he’s saying. I could slash gouges out of his seemly face with my nails. I could hurl at him a voice as berserk as any car crash” (184). Already Rachel is beginning to acknowledge that both her body and her voice are tools. She sees words as inadequate for what she needs to express. Instead, she invents her own language that is enacted through her body and inscribed onto his. By imagining gouging the doctor’s face and hurling chaotic sound against his ears, Rachel creates a language of excess and flings it out into the community that attempts to confine her.

While Rachel imagines corporeal responses to Doctor Raven’s diagnosis, she does not yet move from imagination into action. She is still a divided subject who has two voices, and she recognizes this when the doctor tells her that she has a tumour: “My speaking voice, and then only that other voice, wordless and terrible, the voice of some woman mourning for her children” (187). This wordless voice is the sound of her body in mourning. It is irrelevant that her body does not house a literal foetus. It is enough that she imagines herself with child. At the beginning of the novel, the reader sees Rachel refusing to give “houseroom in her skull” (8) to morbid thoughts, yet now she has given houseroom to the idea of a baby and “No delicate probing would ever dislodge it” (179).

The dislodging occurs when Rachel has the operation to remove the tumour. While Rachel is under anaesthetic, she mumbles, “*I am the mother now*” (191). The body declares itself and is heard. When the nurse repeats what Rachel has said, Rachel does not dismiss the statement. She listens to her body. She incorporates the phrase into

her waking life and uses it to resist her mother's admonitions and assert her own needs. Rachel becomes a speaking subject who confronts those who have controlled and confined her. She speaks back to her mother when Rachel insists that they move to the coast. She defies Willard by leaving the school. She opposes Doctor Raven by claiming that he has no power to diagnose her mother's condition. She challenges Manawaka society when she refuses to debunk the rumours. Finally, Rachel liberates herself by leaving Manawaka and by naming herself an eccentric. By claiming this liberating role, she displaces the hegemonic discourses that have confined her.

It is instructive to place this ending beside a malestream modernist narrative in order to note how Laurence works against traditional modernist models, which end in hopelessness and/or destruction. *A Jest of God* invites a comparison to T.S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," for example. Indeed, the final stanzas of the poem show Prufrock, like Rachel, ruminating on growing old. He characterizes himself as

At times, indeed, almost ridiculous—
Almost, at times, the Fool.

I grow old . . . I grow old . . .
I shall wear the bottoms of my trousers rolled.
Shall I part my hair behind? Do I dare to eat a peach?
I shall wear white flannel trousers, and walk upon the beach.
I have heard the mermaids singing, each to each.

I do not think that they will sing to me.

I have seen them riding seaward on the waves
Combing the white hair of the waves blown back
When the wind blows the water white and black.

We have lingered in the chambers of the sea
By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown
Till human voices wake us, and we drown. (118-31)

Both Rachel and Prufrock identify with the character of the Fool, and both of them imagine growing old and walking upon the beach. The main difference between the two narratives is located in the tone of the rumination. Rachel embraces her future, while Prufrock laments his. Rachel sees herself as part of the rhythm of the landscape, borne by the wind. Prufrock lingers “in the chambers of the sea,” but he drowns in these chambers overhearing but not participating in the mermaids’ song. Both of these narratives are love songs; Rachel sings her song, celebrating the sound of her own voice, while Prufrock hears the celebratory songs from a distance, hopeless in a future where his own love song announces his death.

Laurence begins *A Jest of God* with a child’s chant that moves Rachel to a troubled reflection on her childhood, and she ends the novel with Rachel’s joyful anticipation of her future. The language that Laurence gives Rachel at the end of the novel is riveting, evocative, humorous, insightful, and poetic. It is a language coming from a subject who knows that she will not know all. It is a language that speaks of a damaged body learning to heal. It is a language that carries the speaker to a place by a sea that she has not seen, even as she imagines herself there. It is a language that does not forget the body as it leaves the mouth:

I may become, in time, slightly more eccentric all the time. I may begin to wear outlandish hats, feathered and sequined and rosetted, and dangling necklaces made from coy and tiny seashells which I’ve gathered myself along the beach and painted coral-pink with nailpolish. And all the kids will laugh, and I’ll laugh, too, in time. I will be light and straight as any feather. The wind will bear me, and I will drift and settle. and drift and settle. Anything may happen, where I’m going. (209)

This passage, like the child’s chant that begins the novel, shows Rachel being moved by the wind. Instead of the wind blowing high and low but always blowing, this wind embodies both movement and stasis. Rachel no longer sees her condition as one of

binaries, of extremes. She no longer fears the passage of time. Instead, she acknowledges the potential of time and the freedom of space. She can act and also be acted upon. Her body signifies her eccentric subjectivity even as it is borne by the wind.

4. POETIC REDRESS: HER BODY, HER HOUSE IN *THE FIRE-DWELLERS*

Out there in unknown houses are people who live without lies, and who touch each other. One day she will discover them, pierce through to them. Then everything will be all right, and she will live in the light of the morning. (*Fire-Dwellers* 85)

Sister novel to *A Jest of God*, *The Fire-Dwellers* takes place in the same period of time as *A Jest of God*; these two novels occur simultaneously, as do the lives of the two Cameron sisters, Rachel and Stacey. Simultaneity is a strategy that resists a patriarchal, hierarchic structure which privileges the isolated individual over collective experience. As Sylvia Fraser states in the 1988 Afterword to *The Fire-Dwellers*, “Laurence recreate[s] the kaleidoscopic sixties as experienced by Stacey MacAindra . . . a woman caught at a particular time of her life, in a particular time of the female collective life” (285). This chapter explores how “woman” occurs “simultaneously in private and public spaces” (Spivak 158) and how time and space collapse in the theatre of memory where “the past doesn’t seem ever to be over” (235). The simultaneous woman is layered even further when we consider that, in addition to the simultaneity of Stacey’s past and present, she also exists simultaneously in the Manawaka cycle with her sister, Rachel. In *The Fire-Dwellers*, Stacey MacAindra performs past and present selves and in this way begins to recognize how memory can be resistance against the social pressures that bind her.

Furthermore, Stacey's subjectivity and intersubjectivity (her individually focussed self and her relational or communal self) exist and co-exist simultaneously with Rachel's subjectivity and intersubjectivity. This relationship is made implicit in the memorialized voice of the prairie freight train. Both Rachel and Stacey remember hearing the wail of the freight trains of their childhood. It is a mournful sound that mocks the listener: "all the trains ever said was *Get on your way, somewhere, just so something will happen, get up and get out of this town. So I did*" (*Fire* 33). Stacey hears the train voice commanding her to leave Manawaka, promising her a life of action if she leaves. Similarly, Rachel remembers "the sound all prairie kids grew up with, the trainvoice that said *don't stay don't stay just don't ever stay—go and keep on going never mind where*. The mourning and mockery of that voice, like blues. The only lonelier sound I ever heard was the voices of the loons . . . I want to see my sister" (*Jest* 174). The freight train and its mournful voice signify futility, with its multiple implications of ineffectiveness, triviality, fluidity, and loquacity (*OED*). It is a voice that will utter Rachel and Stacey's longing and connect their childhoods, but it will not provide a strategy of transformation.

Janet Wolff in her article "The Invisible *Flâneuse*: Women and the Literature of Modernity" describes modernism as a literature concerned with the experiences of men. Wolff illuminates Western societies' coding of the public sphere as male and the private sphere as female: "The ideology of women's place in the domestic realm permeated the whole of society" (37). Given that modernism privileged the public sphere and that the public was a place from which women were traditionally excluded, Wolff cites the following possibilities for female city-dwellers: the prostitute, the widow, the old lady, the lesbian, the murder victim, and the passing unknown woman. "Woman" can be

neither Goethe's Faustian developer hero, nor Baudelaire's strolling flâneur. Stacey, while seemingly unaware of lesbian possibilities (unlike Rachel), tries the roles of heroine and flâneuse, resists old lady, and reclaims prostitute:

A girl gets on the bus and sits beside Stacey. . . . What's she seeing? Housewife, mother of four, this slightly too short and too amply rumped woman with coat of yesteryear, hemlines all the wrong length . . . lipstick wrong color, and crowning comic touch, the hat. . . . I want to explain. *Under this chapeau lurks a mermaid, a whore, a tigress.* (15)

Stacey recognizes herself as heroine of a tragi-comedy, dressed for the part of fool, complete with hat. But she also realizes the falsity of surface. Although she wears the costume of housewife, mother, fool, she identifies as characters living on the margins of society—in the water, on the streets, in the jungle. Stacey strategically reconstructs her self; the fool's cap becomes an exotic chapeau as she imagines herself off the bus and into other, more liberating, worlds. Stacey's eccentricity—her privileging of marginal spaces—enables her to move in a world that values her stasis. As Rachel claims her eccentric subjectivity, so Stacey declares eccentric spaces as enabling. Rachel revisions private spaces, and Stacey restores public spaces to women.

It is crucial to examine an implied division between public and private spheres as one of the central gender issues within modernism. Men occupy the privileged public space of the streets while women are relegated to the private space of the home. Women, therefore, must imagine other possibilities beyond this public/private dualism in order to recognize violence within collective practice turned myth. White, middle-class, housewives are segregated from each other, enclosed within their houses. As alluded to in this chapter's opening quotation, the irony of a suburban neighbourhood is that houses and their occupants are unknown even in their paradoxical proximity. Stacey knows she exists in a world that is divided into inner and outer—both inside and

outside her house and her body. She must get past the houses and make it to the water in order to be touched. She must translate her inner motions to outer action. When she finally meets her lover, Luke: “Crash. Out of the inner and into the outer” (161). The gentle hands of her lover momentarily erase the violence of her husband’s thumbs on her collarbones pressing her into lies and submissions. Stacey constantly strategizes within and against the confines of home, which is both her house and her body.

Paramount to this necessary reconstruction is the need for Stacey to realize that her body is her bone-house and that home can be wherever she is in the world. David Harvey reads Gaston Bachelard’s *The Poetics of Space* in which Bachelard theorizes on space containing compressed time and the house being the space that is crucial for memory. Harvey states:

Being, suffused with immemorial spatial memory, transcends Becoming. It founds all those nostalgic memories of a lost childhood world. Is this the foundation for collective memory, for all those manifestations of place-bound nostalgias that infect our images of the country and the city, of region, milieu, and locality, of neighbourhood and community? And if it is true that time is always memorialized not as flow, but as memories or experienced places and spaces, then history must indeed give way to poetry, time to space, as the fundamental material of social expression. (218)

The one moment in which Stacey gestures towards *being* in space and time rather than *becoming* is when she dances poetry alone in her house in rebellion and celebration:

“I’m not a good mother. I’m not a good wife. I don’t want to be. I’m Stacey Cameron and I still love to dance” (124). She removes the roles of mother and wife and dances hope and hurt and “the fucking [she’s] never yet done” (125). She puts on her “vulgar” high heels, tight-fitting green velvet slacks, and a purple overblouse: “She puts her arms out, stretching them in front of her, her fingers moving slightly, feeling the music as though it were tangible there to be touched in the air. Slowly, she begins to dance. Then

faster and faster” (123-24). Stacey embodies this space, which is both inside her house and outside. She is her body because she dresses it as she chooses and moves it as she likes. Music and space are tangible, but time is not.

Stacey reaches into memory and finds music inside her body. Closing her eyes, she performs herself as Stacey Cameron and double dances her divided consciousness. She dances alone in her house to Tommy Dorsie Boogie. She dances hope and she dances hurt:

—Once it seemed almost violent, this music. Now it seems incredibly gentle. Sentimental, self-indulgent? Yeh, probably. But I love it. It’s *my* beat. I can still do it. I can still move without knowing where, beforehand. Yes. Yes. Yes. Like this. Like this. I can. My hips may not be so hot but my ankles are pretty good, and my legs. Damn good in fact. My feet still know what to do without being told. I love to dance. I love it. I love it. It can’t be over. I can still do it. I don’t do it badly. (125)

In this one moment, Stacey recognizes music and dancing as places where she can go to name herself without labels. After being immersed for so long in a relational self, such as wife and mother, Stacey realizes that dancing is a way of recovering her subjective self, a way of bringing the subjective self to the surface of her body. What she does not realize, however, is that this bifurcated subjectivity is a possible survival strategy. Instead, she reflects that although she has not been Stacey Cameron for a long time, she will “always be her, because that’s how [she] started out. But from now on, the dancing goes on only in the head” (276). While, as Harvey suggests, time may not be memorialized as flow, memory as a fluid space provides an alternative narrative for Stacey. Indeed, movement and music are alternatives to the fixed stances of middle-aged wife and mother.

No longer just, and yet still, Stacey MacAindra, she returns to Stacey Cameron; she is both at once. She is present and past, memory and forgetting. She transgresses

borders of body and house, touches spaces where sound and voices and night translate into colour. She is merwoman heroine of the still untold story:

The music crests, subsides, crests again, blue-green sound, saltwater with the incoming tide, the blues of the night freight trains across snow deserts, the green beckoning voices, the men still unheld and the children yet unborn, the voices cautioning no caution no caution only dance. (125)

Language and imagery flow into each other without end or beginning. Borders dissolve and senses blend. The lyrical rhythm recalls freedom and the possibility of existence in several places at once.

The ability to occur in multiple places recalls Harvey's reading of Bachelard; Stacey's subjectivity and intersubjectivity connect memory to place and to childhood. This formulation of collective memory links all of the inhabitants of Manawaka, especially those who were born in and grew up in Manawaka. By sharing a common childhood space, each individual is connected to another and to her own childhood self. Furthermore, Harvey's reconceptualization of memory also addresses the need to fictionalize history and the need to look to artists for means of social expression. If an archetypal Faustian modernism relies on the destruction of place as a means of narrative expression, then it follows that such a narrative would only allow for individual expression because the source of collective memory would be annihilated. Feminist modernism works to reclaim sentimentality and nostalgia, which suffuse discourses of place and home.

The necessary redefinition of home is connected to sentimentality and to finding voice within the operation of domestic fiction. This generic engagement is a way of blending narrative and ideology to reimagine the world. The mainstream modernist move towards a reversal of value is also a motion away from domestic fiction and

women's writing. Sentimentality is intimately connected with women's writing at the same time as it is linked to historical conflicts of middle-class culture. Susan Clark, in her text *Sentimental Modernism*, argues:

From the point of view of literary modernism, sentimentality was both a past to be outgrown and a present tendency to be despised. The gendered character of this condemnation seemed natural: women writers were entangled in sensibility, were romantic and sentimental by nature, and so even the best might not altogether escape this romantic indulgence in emotion and sublimity. (2)

Affiliated with the modernist entanglement is resistance against the vernacular and the mundane. Clark explains this disconnection from the social and from history in terms of the gendering of intellectuality where a "crisis emerges from the rejection of the narratives that have explained and legitimated feeling" (3). The modernist space is the public sphere where movement away from the home is celebrated even as the home is valued as a necessary woman's space implicit in the production of familial happiness, in part because the home provides a necessary harbour from the storm for husband and children. This is why Stacey's dance is so transgressive: Stacey is able to find movement away from the home while remaining in this valued woman's space. And she dances alone. Stacey's dance must be celebrated for the action but also lamented because she resolves to dance only inside her head.

It is this type of voice and transformative movement inside the home that is silenced and unheard so that half of the history of modernism is muted. Clark believes it crucial that the sentimental be restored within modernism so that women's experiences might be heard and valued. If modernism is about revolution, then women are the key revolutionaries because they always already critique notions of individual identity and the bourgeois subject:

But modernism also gendered mass culture, identifying woman with the mass and regarding its productions . . . like advertising, as objects of critical disdain. Modernism developed its antisentimentality into a contemptuous treatment of women, who had to struggle both internally and externally with that contempt. (4-5)

Stacey's internal struggle with male modernist contempt is apparent in her tendency to criticize herself. She internalizes patriarchal criticism and turns it against herself. This self-oppression is another reason why Stacey's dance is transgressive. She liberates herself internally and displays this liberation externally. Her body dances to defy patriarchal critique.

The gendered nature of advertising is made explicit as Stacey is battered by mass noise that rises from the pages of magazines and throbs from the television and radio: "Salad Days—Here's How to be Slim in the Swim.' . . . 'Icings with Spicings.' Flick. 'A Nervous Breakdown Taught Me Life's Meaning.' Flick" (153). External disembodied voices tell Stacey how to protect her children and manage her weight. The internal voices collide with the external as she internalizes these directives and exerts these pressures on herself. She is pummeled by the world which surrounds and embodies her. She both recognizes and resists these intrusions: "Listen, God, I know it's a worthwhile job to bring up four kids. You don't need to propagandize me. I'm converted. But how is it I can feel as well that I'm spending my life in one unbroken series of trivialities" (89)? She speaks to God, who in this instance represents disembodied patriarchal voices, and problematizes a world that devalues mundane details. The persistent critique of the hegemonic structures is both enabling and constraining. If mass culture is the feminized enemy of modernist authority, then Stacey distinguishes this authority and attempts to revalue the trivialities. By the end of the

novel, the critique still persists, but the reader hears her question whether the “trivialities aren’t so bad after all. They’re something to focus on” (280).

Through multiple layers of voices and fragmented text, Laurence constructs a parallel critique to the reality through which her protagonist flicks. While Stacey struggles to negotiate the jarring rhetoric, Laurence stylistically investigates social impositions. Laurence strategically politicizes her style by critiquing monolithic patriarchal narratives with fragmentations, multiple-voicings, and interferences. She goes further in her collapsing of the inner and outer world by bringing the noise and events of the world into the home and the city into Stacey’s consciousness. In this act, Laurence problematizes hierarchical binary distinctions. Clark highlights and calls attention to the notion that while modernism “practiced a politics of style . . . it denied that style had a politics” (5). Furthermore, she elaborates on this impossible separation of politics from the home:

Lest we think that the modernist separation of literature from the kitchen was politically innocuous, at worst resisting the influence of a mass culture that was all too powerful outside the domain of literature, consider what else was lost, along with the sentimental. The modernist exclusion of everything but the forms of high art acted like a machine for cultural loss of memory. (6)

When culture is placed on the other side of the binary from politics, women are excluded and named as the dangerous Other. Neither culture nor politics is made available for women as a positive identity, thereby leaving women without a viable subject position.

One of the ways in which Stacey attempts to unify her fragmented sense of self into a viable subject position is to collapse time through memory. This strategy is both modernist and feminist in configuration. Stacey Cameron, small-town girl from Manawaka moves to the big city, Vancouver. Four years later, at twenty-three years old, her life is settled, and she becomes Stacey MacAindra. The recovery of Stacey Cameron

and the realization that the past never seems to be over even while it is always already beginning, is implicit to the movement of the novel. A second feminist/modernist strategy is the way Laurence overlaps form and content by using five distinct voices that are represented by variations in typography. Regular font signifies a third-person point of view while regular font preceded by a dash identifies a first-person point of view. If a passage is in regular font, but is indented, this typography indicates a remembered moment. Words printed in italics represent Stacey's stream of consciousness. Passages typed all in capital letters are the media interruptions that punctuate Stacey's life. Through this cacophony of utterances, Stacey reaches for a place where she can recognize herself without the labels of mother and wife, where she can reconcile both subjective and intersubjective selves.

Voices in advertisements are not the only voices that remind Stacey of her place in the home. If the internal rhythms of Stacey's body are poetic and liberating, then the traditional rhymes are the chants that torment her, that claim she cannot exist simultaneously:

*Ladybird, ladybird,
Fly away home;
Your house is on fire,
Your children are gone. (7, 209, 280)*

Like *A Jest of God*, *The Fire-Dwellers* opens with a child's rhyme. This rhyme returns in the mouth of Stacey's lover, Luke. Stacey also recalls this rhyme at the end of the novel, but the repetition of the rhyme changes slightly: the final line is now "Your children are ...". The ellipsis opens a space of possibility, an affirmation that Stacey has brought her children into being to script their own subjective and intersubjective relations. Along with that blank space comes hope and "another episode" (280).

The rhyme taunts her, but it also provides her with the safety of an identity that the world values. This security in itself is seductive. Safe in the role of mother, she takes her children with her into the world because it is easier to face “with one of them along. Then I know who I’m supposed to be” (90). At the same time, the role of mother is one of the strongest bonds in her perceived entrapment. Paradoxically, she believes that this role is one at which she is not good. Stacey defines herself in the singular, provides only one option of how she can be in the world. However, through the resistance of memory and the fluidity of dance, she is capable of living simultaneously: Stacey, mother, wife, lover, dancer. She finds Luke because she leaves her house in an attempt to define herself outside in the world. With Luke, she recreates her self by lying about her age and becoming a young lover. Confirming a name that she has already chosen for herself, he transforms the medium in which she exists by calling her merwoman. She breathes both air and water. But, once there, once touched by him, home still haunts her, still summons her back. *Ladybird ladybird*. Yet she is grateful to Luke for: “show[ing] me where I belonged, when you said *What can't you leave?*” (252). “You faced me and touched me. You were gentle” (253). With Luke, Stacey is faced instead of defaced, given fluid possibilities instead of fixed labels. Alone, she has no relational self and no story that tells of woman in motion negotiating both the public streets and the private rooms of her world.

Hélène Cixous in “Sorties: Out and Out: Attacks/Ways Out/ Forays” writes of the dilemma for women who look for, but do not recognize themselves in the world: “What is my place if I am a woman? I look for myself throughout the centuries and don’t see myself anywhere” (574). Stacey looks for herself as she walks the city streets, flips pages of magazines, takes evening courses, talks to God, and travels in her

memory. Prevailing ideologies, which structure the world, do not reflect her back to herself. Instead, she walks the streets and sees a girl she misrecognizes as “myself coming back to meet me with a wiser chance” (85). She reads a magazine article that tells her there are “Nine Ways the Modern Mum May Be Ruining Her Daughter” (17). Her Aspects of Contemporary Thought teacher admonishes Stacey not to spend her life worrying because “Pre-mourning is a form of self-indulgence” (15). She imagines God asking her, “*Stacey MacAindra, what have you done with your life?*” (14). And her memory takes her dancing: “Knowing by instinct how to move, loving the boy’s closeness . . . loving the male smell of him. Stacey spinning like light, like all the painted singing tops of all the spinning world, whirling laughter across a polished floor. Five minutes ago. *Is time?*” (15). Stacey instinctually recognizes cyclical spatial and time patterns in the world, yet the closest she comes to recognizing her simultaneous selves is in memory. She has no way to differentiate inside from outside because she has not yet realized that the two are not separate.

Stacey remembers seventeen, remembers her sensual body. She is all the singing tops of all the spinning worlds. She is seventeen—twenty-two years ago, five minutes ago. She moves through time, compressing it, and simultaneously moves through space. She is simultaneous with the motion of the world. In this moment of Stacey’s remembering, she transcends the ordinary and becomes mythic in a fleeting eternal moment of childhood. She defies both God and a popular culture that define success in an American Dream of mother and wife as the superwoman who loves staying at home to care for family and home. Instead, she is a modern subject working towards a strategy of reconstruction by redefining home.

Stacey's voices mediate between domestic concerns and popular culture, internal remembering and external forgetting. She defines herself through her role as wife and mother and moves through the world with more ease wearing these masks because they signify who she is supposed to be. It is the remembered passion and freedom propelling her past that she does not know how to embody. Her language dislocates her from her family, who speak through silence instead of in: "full technicolor and intense detail. And that's okay. . . . Ian gets the message. It's his language, too. I wish it were mine. All I can do is accept that it is a language, and that it works, at least sometimes. And maybe it's mine more than I like to admit" (269-70). The tenuous balance that Stacey achieves collapses even as it rebuilds in her internal dialogues. Through unconscious speech, like Rachel's glossolalia, she attempts a movement away from the sites of her confinement.

Hélène Cixous theorizes the parallel location and dislocation connected with woman's movement within and towards her self: "Through the same opening that is her danger, she comes out of herself to go to the other, a traveler in unexplored places; she does not refuse, she approaches, not to do away with the space between, but to see it, to experience what she is not, what she is, what she can be" (*Newly Born* 86). I would add to Cixous's list that a woman also experiences what she has been, incorporating her past into her present subjectivity. Stacey approaches the unexplored places and glimpses the possibility of a reimagined self.

However, Stacey's modernist condition is one of tragedy. Though Stacey writes herself as heroine, she ends her story in suspension between death and dancing. Seeing the world as trap and not travel, she condemns even while she consoles herself: "Well, in the head isn't such a terrible place to dance" (276). Stacey is becoming rather than

being Spivak's "appropriate subject for . . . a new story . . . that makes visible all the plural arenas that are suppressed when history is written with the representative man as its subject" (158). This story is possible for Stacey because she danced and remembered and forgot. She imagined herself away from the house where Mac invades her space. She lived alone in her body, away from his hands on her collarbones forcing her to say there is no pain. But her forgetting is too great. Instead, as Cixous tells us, the mother listens and dances inside, quiet in her movement from bed to bed to bed:

Bridebed, childbed, bed of death . . . a bed of pain in which the mother is never done with dying . . . the bed framing endless erotic daydreams . . . voyages in her memories. She wanders, but lying down. In dream. Ruminates. Talks to herself. Woman's voyage: as a *body*. As if she were destined . . . to be the nonsocial, nonpolitical, nonhuman half of the living structure. On nature's side of this structure, of course, tirelessly listening to what goes on inside—inside her belly, inside her "house." ("Sorties" 563-64)

Stacey will listen to the dance inside her belly and inside her head and will try to believe that inside is not such a terrible place to be.

Relentlessly, inside pursues outside. There is hope for the future because although Stacey may have suspended dancing, she has not stopped questioning: "She feels the city receding as she slides into sleep. Will it return tomorrow?" (281); this final line of the novel implies the possibility of movement. For Stacey, her movement brings the external to the internal where the objectified outer city pulses inside her house and her body. She is joined both to the city and to her family by fluid bindings. The question of tomorrow coincides with her slip into sleep where all tomorrows and past tomorrows occur simultaneously. The ambiguous *it* both reveals and disguises whether she is speaking of her sleep or the city or the quietly secured house and family. The ending disrupts closure and incorporates fragility into prolonged reopenings of possibility.

In *The Fire-Dwellers*, Margaret Laurence constructs a feminist modernist narrative by using subversive narrative strategies as a way to invent stories with a female subjectivity. Through fragmentation and polyphony, memory and movement, Laurence represents Stacey MacAindra's experiences as types of struggles in which Canadian women must engage if they are to persistently critique traditional social conventions and produce social change. *The Fire-Dwellers* is a novel that resists stasis and disrupts a malestream modernist practice which names woman as contemptible. Instead, Stacey questions power structures which threaten to keep her body confined. She strategizes beyond endings in movements toward uncertain futures. She resists isolation by moving through time in her memory and through space with her body. She redresses herself in a poetics of dance and articulates herself in a multiplicity of voices.

5. FLOATING PIQUE: “HARBINGER OF MY DEATH, CONTINUER OF LIFE”

The preceding chapters have demonstrated how the train signifies loss and leaving in *The Stone Angel*, division in *A Jest of God*, and mourning and escape in *The Fire-Dwellers*. Each of these meanings provides insight into the identity of each novel’s protagonist. In addition, individual chapters address the complex relationship each protagonist has with her children. For example, in *The Stone Angel*, Hagar deals with the death of her youngest son. In *A Jest of God*, Rachel becomes mother to her mother and to the children whom she teaches. In *The Fire-Dwellers*, Stacey pre-mourns the death of her children and escapes through memory into her own childhood body.

In *The Diviners*, the train signifies infinite possibility: the train “[goes] into the Everywhere, where anything may happen” (303). Pique, Morag’s child, also signifies unknown possibility. Through Pique, Laurence brings attention to the fullest range of contradictions in Canadian society, historically and presently. One aspect of Laurence’s modernist impulse is to put instability to work by showing how it encourages movement and intervention. Laurence writes against a malestream modernist narrative of an archetypal Faustian individual destructive hero by constructing a heroine—Morag Gunn—who transforms and creates community by enabling the multiple voices that she hears to be heard by others. This chapter argues that Pique is a floating signifier—both a character with an individual identity and a signifier that charts Morag’s entrance into story—who defies and displaces the hegemonic centre by adding multiple individual and

communal stories to already existing narratives. Through *Pique*, a community is created that expands beyond the breadth of a country and the length of a novel.

The complex relationship between *Pique* and *Morag*, between a Métis woman and her white mother, opens a crucial space simultaneously full of potential and fraught with adversity. *Pique* is almost constantly on the move. The space that opens is the literal geographical space that is created as *Pique* moves away from *Morag*. It is also a storied space. As *Pique* travels across Canada, she charts *Morag*'s story. Each of *Pique*'s movements, or anticipated movements, prompts *Morag*'s memories, which become narratives. As the novel progresses, *Pique*'s physical movement through space propels *Morag*'s narrative movement through time and memory and into story.

Together, they embody and create a revisionary modernist narrative, one that contains many stories within *The Diviners*. The body of the mother and the body of the child are both independent and interdependent as they defy destruction and create alternatives.

It follows that the signifier *Pique* is a narrative strategy which enables a plurality of meanings. *Pique* constructs herself as a literal floating signifier on the first page of *The Diviners* when she leaves the following note for *Morag*:

Now please do not get all uptight, Ma. I can look after myself. Am going west. Alone, at least for now. If Gord phones, tell him I've drowned and gone floating down the river, crowned with algae and dead minnows, like Ophelia. (11)

Pique imagines herself as a floating Ophelia figure, regal and tragic in her driftings.

Significantly, *Pique* uses this image as a way to elude Gord. When she compares herself to Shakespeare's Ophelia, *Pique* understands that Ophelia is an archetypal image that Gord will understand. *Pique* uses the Ophelia figure to cut across time and place, gender and race. To construct herself as an Ophelia figure is to write back and in to an Anglo-Saxon literary tradition while she searches for languages and stories that represent her

own history. Notably, Pique chooses the female water figure Ophelia as her model. In this comparison, Pique is connected to a woman in literary history and to the other Manawaka heroines who see water as a transformative element. Pique's description of Ophelia also connects to a modern condition in its amalgamation of the horrific with the beautiful: Ophelia is described as a regal figure even in death. When Pique returns from her watery travels, she has songs that her father has given to her and her landscape now includes the mountain and the valley. Pique's history includes the literary and the oral, Shakespeare and the feminine, Métis tales and the masculine. When Pique leaves a note in Morag's typewriter telling Morag that she is "going west. Alone, at least for now" (11), Pique writes herself into Morag's story while also writing her own woman's life and her own story.

The condition of a feminist Canadian modernism is composed in part by impossible contradictions that are made apparent and possible. It is this notion of making something apparent out of the impossible that defines both a feminist aesthetic and a modernist challenge. The opening paragraph of *The Diviners* provides a useful metaphor for a contradictory condition that becomes a feminist strategy, especially when taking into consideration that Pique's Ophelia figure floats in this river: "The river flowed both ways. The current moved from north to south, but the wind usually came from the south, rippling the bronze-green water in the opposite direction. This apparently impossible contradiction, made apparent and possible, still fascinated Morag, even after the years of river-watching" (11). Morag watches the river "trying to avoid thought, but this ploy was not successful. Pique had gone away" (11). The connection between Pique and the river is explicit. In previous chapters, I have looked at how the death of a child, or the fear of a child's death, influences a mother's identity. This fear is

examined again in *The Diviners*. However, in this case, Pique's floating body is enabling, regenerative, defiant, and contradictory. Her body simultaneously resists and contains Morag's stories—both imagined and realized—while writing its own stories as well. It follows then that this paragraph also speaks to the importance of the female gaze, which bears witness to and then translates apparently impossible contradictions into accessible multi-voiced narratives.

Laurence's use of simultaneity in *The Diviners* is an important modernist and feminist strategy. For women, simultaneity connects subjectivity and intersubjectivity, the individually focused self and the relational or communal self. Cixous claims that "As subject for history, woman always occurs simultaneously in several places . . . personal history blends together [*sic*] with the history of all women, as well as national and world history" ("Laugh" 882). This spiraling outward—from the individual to the communal—embraces women without erasing difference. Communities connect with communities and individuals touch each other, even if only for a fleeting moment. In other words, when an individual woman sees herself represented in narrative, she imagines a community of women that share her experiences. She is simultaneously an individual and part of a collective.

One way that a feminist aesthetic of simultaneity is created is by interweaving memory and imagination. Simultaneity is especially important when the female subject is a writer because through her creation of story, she connects to herself and to other women. Cixous expresses the necessity of writing as a

process of different subjects knowing one another and beginning one another anew only from the living boundaries of the other: a multiple and inexhaustible course with millions of encounters and transformations of the same into the other and into the in-between, from which woman takes her forms. ("Laugh" 883)

This ideology dismantles a binary logic that names and places the other as Other without exploring the possibilities of self and the in-between, or liminal, space. The “living boundaries of the other” intermingle with the self’s boundaries so that at moments, one is indistinguishable from the other. For example, when Morag is writing *Spear of Innocence* she talks about how she “has felt Lilac’s feelings. The blood is no less real for being invisible to the external eye” (249). In this moment of memory and imagination, Morag recalls Eva and experiences pain for Lilac. The boundaries of Morag’s self intermingle with both her remembered past and the present she is fictionalizing.

One aspect of moving beyond fleshed boundaries is recognizing the complex multiplicity of existence. Knowledge is not simply contained in the present moment, but in all the intricate connections that form this moment. Morag speaks of this bulk as an embodiment of present and past selves, as multiple, connected beings:

We think there is *one* planet called Earth, but there are thousands, even *millions*, like a snake shedding its skin every so often, but with all the old skins still bunched around it. You live inside the creature for quite a while, so it comes as a shock to find you’re living now in one of the husked-off skins, and sometimes you can touch and know about the creature as it is now and sometimes you can’t.
(188)

When Morag thinks about the past, she thinks about it as “Another shed skin of another life” (188). She is the creature at the centre of these lives, but she cannot decide whether she wants to leave her other skins behind as remnants, as evidence to others of her living, or whether she wants to keep them attached, as proof to herself that she has lived. This experience is a modernist condition, for she is awkwardly connected to the past while uncertainly anticipatory about her place in the present and future.

Another way of reading these “husked-off skins” is to see them as roles that Morag has worn (and still wears) at various moments in her life. Like Hagar, Rachel, and Stacey, Morag has lived in several skins as daughter, lover, wife, and mother. Stacey characterizes these roles as masks that she wears, but Morag sees them as skins that cannot be completely removed. The skin that she is presently living inside is the skin of the mother, and it is a skin that cannot be shed. Pique’s absence, the physical separation of a mother from a child, is what shocks Morag into realizing that she is living in this mother-skin. She is covered with Pique. Everything she touches contains traces of her self as mother and of Pique as the always present child.

5.1 “going west”

Pique’s movements are the impetus and frame for Morag’s own stories. As Pique leaves to go west so Morag remembers and narrates her own series of leavings. Leaving, however, also implies arriving. Each time Pique leaves, both Pique and Morag simultaneously anticipate an arrival, which signifies an entrance into knowledge and story. Leaving does not mean leaving behind. Pique’s travels contain both the past and the present. Stories are not replaced but displaced. They are not erased but added to. Laurence’s feminist modernist model for a transformed society is not based on a paradigm that replaces one story with another. She suggests that stories be added to each other so that all voices are heard. Importantly, Pique, as a signifier that floats throughout the novel, is the surface. the skin through which meaning is produced and stories are reproduced by Morag. Indeed, one cannot read *The Diviners* without acknowledging Pique’s (primarily absent) presence throughout Morag’s narrative. In other words, Morag’s narrative is informed by Pique’s presence.

The mother's body defies singularity in that it contains traces of the child. Morag explores this embodiment when she looks through old photographs. She sees the photographs as both a totem and a part of her spirit, and she keeps them not for what is apparent but for what is hidden (14). This dual-voicing, the way in which a signifier produces multiple meanings that are apparent and hidden on the page, demonstrates how meaning is layered and how some meanings are more accessible than others. Robert Kroetsch in his article "Beyond Nationalism: A Prologue" talks about the snapshot as a mocking of authority because it depends on an amateur to provide proof, and it relies on memory to analyze this novice evidence: "The *snapshot* suggests the local, it suggests the magic of recovery, the metaphysics of time stopped, the validation of art by art denied. And it admits, through its lack of intentionality, that even in knowing we cannot know" (*Lovely Treachery* 69). The photograph, therefore, represents both the local and the mythic, the individual story and the collective history. In the recreation of a photograph in words, the writer re-collects the image and processes it again to tell a story beyond and behind the story already seemingly apparent in the snapshot.

The first snapshot at which Morag looks is a photograph taken in the middle of the 1920s. Morag is both hidden and apparent. She is "concealed behind the ugliness of Louisa's cheap housedress, concealed in her mother's flesh, invisible. Morag is still buried alive, the first burial" (15). Morag's reading of this photograph is informed by her fear of her own child's death; she reads this photograph as an image that contains both life and death: her own life and death. This is the first visible contradiction. There is a simultaneous revealing and concealing, and Morag embodies the future and is embodied by the past. She is both mother and child. Now forty-seven, Morag is no

longer contained in her mother's body even as she will remain so in the frame of the photograph.

By the end of Part One, "River of Now and Then," Morag and her parents have switched places. Morag is five years old when her parents die of polio, and looking back forty-two years later at their nearly simultaneous deaths, Morag tries remembering the life she shared with her parents. She sees that story is the way that death is transcended. The death of a person does not mean the end of his or her story. Initially, Morag is frustrated because she only remembers their deaths with any certainty. She does not trust her memory to give her an accurate account of their lives. She then questions whether an inaccurate memory is really more important than the alternative life that she has invented for all of them. Morag's fear of forgetting is lulled by the assurance that she embodies her parents as much as her mother once embodied her:

They remain shadows. Two sepia shadows on an old snapshot, two barely moving shadows in my head, shadows whose few remaining words and acts I have invented. Perhaps I only want their forgiveness for having forgotten them. I remember their deaths, but not their lives. Yet they're inside me, flowing unknown in my blood and moving unrecognized in my skull. (27)

Her ancestors remain with her in visible and invisible ways. While her parents once gave life to her, now Morag invents life for her parents. Creation flows both ways. Underlying this realization is the idea that Morag's own story is being created by Pique.

While Hagar, Rachel, and Stacey all embody characteristics of Canadian identity, it is Morag who takes these lives one step further as she recreates them in writing. Each of these protagonist's narratives is a narrative of Canadian experience. Robert Kroetsch discusses the search for shared meta-narratives as necessary for the writing of individual stories. He claims that these meta-narratives evade the Canadian imagination in the same way that Canadians cannot decide upon a moment of origin. Canadians can

neither be united nor disunited because “each move of a generation back into time doubles the number of ancestors instead of refining itself toward a sacred moment” (*Lovely Treachery* 27). Rather than a linear history, fragments of a story are unearthed. Kroetsch, reading Michel Foucault, uses the imagery of archaeology to ground the layered, fragmented, discontinuous narratives of the past against the “coerced unity of a traditional history” (7). This insistence upon multiplicity and uncertainty and the persistent critique of Canadian history are reflected in the literature that modern and arguably postmodern Canadians produce.

This experience of going back to ghostly shadows of ancestors leads Kroetsch to laugh at those who say that Canada has no ghosts: “Canada lacks ghosts. Ha. We are our own ghosts” (*Lovely Treachery* 57). Certainly, this insight is useful when thinking about the spectral presence of Hagar in *The Stone Angel*. Indeed, Hagar’s presence also haunts *The Diviners* as her plaid pin becomes Morag’s ancestral pin. Canada’s meta-narrative then becomes a meta-narrative about multiplicity and difference, memory and forgetting. For example, Morag’s shadow parents are two of the ghosts whom she makes live by her own living. The more she writes of their shadowy existence, the more solid they become.

Morag’s struggle with language exists throughout the entire novel, both in the present and the past. Form and content echo each other as Morag experiments with words. Her fragmented and repetitive life is reflected in sentence fragments and repetition, especially as she runs her “*Memorybank Movies*”:

The long long long long street, and Morag walking, slowly. Her hand, sweaty, in Christie’s hand. His hand is like when you feel the bark of a tree, rough rough. Not far now. She wishes it was about another million miles. All kids have to go to school when they are six. It is LAW. What means *Law*?” (38)

Even as early as six years old, Morag is questioning and asking for clarification about words. At this point, law means she has to go to school and in this hierarchy she, with Eva Winkler, is near the bottom.

One of the enforcers of this law is the teacher, and, interestingly, Morag sees her teacher much the same way as Rachel, in *A Jest of God*, sees both herself and the teacher before her, as though all teachers are giants emerging from the landscape, part hero, part tormentor, part jester: “The teacher is a lady. Tall, giant, like a big tree walking and waving its arms. A tree wearing spectacles. Morag giggles, but inside” (40). Morag reflects upon how as a child she understood that part of a female’s survival in a patriarchal world depends upon keeping her body under control and keeping her sounds silent, inside. Laurence shows how the status quo is perpetuated and also how it can be resisted by showing Morag’s transformation into a woman who understands how her voice and her body can displace and defy authority.

If Morag’s fragmented childhood world is reflected in sentence fragments, the teacher, Miss Crawford, is effluvium that gushes and touches all. It seems, to Morag, that Miss Crawford pushes all her words together into an incomprehensible lump. Morag learns from watching Miss Crawford that a person needs to be careful with how she uses words:

The teacher says a whole lot of stuff welcome boys and girls I know we’re going to get along just beautifully and I know you’re going to work hard and not make any trouble and I may as well say right now that troublemakers will find *themselves* in trouble and it is the ruler across the hands for them and the really bad behavers get the strap from the Principal. (40)

The body is the site of debasement and of the inscription of power. By damaging the body, authority figures assure their dominant position. This passage brings together language and the body and shows how both words and gestures can speak.

Morag learns a language of words and a language of the body and redefines both to make them more representative of her own experiences. Miss Crawford becomes Miss Crawfish and Morag translates Eva's tears into sound "drip-drip-drip-splot," using assonance to connect the dripping of her tears to the dropping of her excrement: "Eva scuffs out. Plop-plop-plop behind her as she begins to run and the floor has stuff on it yellow-brownish and smelly" (41). After the first day of school is over, Morag is disgusted that she does not yet know how to read the page (42) although she reads the world very effectively. She learns to control her body: "Hang onto your shit and never let them know you are scared" (42).

Morag's swearing, watching, and listening are tools that she uses to resist and subvert authority. She watches how teachers react to students' behaviour; she listens to how students talk about and to each other; and she conducts herself accordingly. The contradiction between her timely swearing (never at school) and silence (at school), between her boisterousness and her sullenness makes her difficult to read. The teachers cannot determine whether she is bright or dim. Morag uses this confusion to her favour. Her strategy is never to "let on" (72). Once you are named and categorized, then they have possession of you in a way that Morag refuses.

Through poetic play, Morag's words also generate new understandings. As an adult, Morag makes sense of the world by watching and listening and then translating into written language. When she remembers her childhood, she sees that even as a child she was interested in a modernist connection between death and beauty, deterioration and decoration. These apparent contradictions inform the questions that Morag explores. How can something be both beautiful and ugly? Both alive and dead? These questions also stem from Morag's own fears surrounding Pique's well-being. When

Morag is a child, bluebottle flies burrow, nuzzle, and crawl across the kitchen table, and Morag watches the ugly flies with the beautiful name: “When she peers close, she can see that their wings are shining, both blue and green. Can they be beautiful and filthy?” (49). When Prin explains to Morag about how her only child was born dead, Morag is shocked: “Dead when born? Oh. How could you be born and dead at the same time?” (53). Morag investigates the dominant binary thinking and begins to discover that the world is not dualistic. Although to some the gap between beauty and filth, life and death, may seem impossible to bridge, to Morag that gap is what is important. What exists in that gap is possibility.

Morag finds possibility within gaps because that is where she stands. The hidden, the unsaid, the unmentionable are what she sees and what she translates, and therefore makes visible and spoken. She is of the farm and of the town. Her parents are dead, yet Christie and Prin become her parents. The past and the present exist simultaneously. Her education comes from books and mouths. She reads Wordsworth and Christie reads old songs and performs them for Morag. Christie believes in the power of songs and tales. He believes in passion and conviction. He shows Morag how to embody both, from the pages of books and from the seat of his wagon. Morag takes from many places and makes this knowledge her own. Pique’s leaving in search of her own knowledge leads Morag to reflect on her own processes of acquiring knowledge. What Morag remembers is related to trying to understand Pique’s desires and needs.

Morag’s sees that her education comes from a variety of places, and what she learns as a child from the LAW is very different than what she learns from other places and people, especially in terms of her identity and her place in the social order. Morag rolls her “*Memorybank Movie: The Thistle Shamrock Rose Entwine the Maple Leaf*

Forever,” and the reader sees Morag’s identity being constructed by what is inside and what is outside:

Morag is twelve, and is she ever tough. She doesn’t walk all hunched up any more, like when she was a little kid. Nosiree, not her. She is tall and she doesn’t care who knows it. Her tits have swollen out already, and she shows them off by walking straight, swinging her shoulders just a little bit. Most of the girls are still as flat as boards. She has started her monthlies, too, and occasionally lets kids like Mavis or Vanessa, who haven’t started, know it by a dropped remark here and there. She is a woman, and a lot of them are just kids. (70)

Morag’s body and attitude, even more than the length of her dresses, provide her with an identity that is distinct and separate from that of the other children, especially the other girls, and she uses what she has to her advantage. Morag chooses not to let class be what distinguishes her. Instead, she fashions her own image and identity, and that identity is, again, one built on contradictions. Although her body is developing as a woman, she uses her body in a way that resists the female stereotype. She is tough, and she does not “fight like a girl, scratching with her fingernails. She slugs with her closed fist. Boys or girls, it makes no difference” (70). Morag will confront anyone and protect Eva Winkler against anyone, except Eva’s father. Morag is tough, but she also knows when she cannot win a battle.

Aspects of Morag’s identity are founded on what is present outside her body, as well. For instance, she overhears her teachers’ conversations as they discuss her attitude, but she uses this information to her advantage. By knowing how she is being labelled, she can subvert their expectations, contradict their labels. People with whom Morag has contact are one aspect of identity-making and place is another. If landscape and place are meta-narratives that speak to a Canadian identity, then the school building where the LAW is taught and applied also informs Morag’s sense of self—and it is a distinctly British identity that is promoted. Although as a child Morag criticized the

classroom when she stopped singing because of Jules, the fact that Morag's daughter is Métis suggests that Morag's present criticism of her grade six classroom gains force and is informed by Pique's racialized identity. Morag sees the classroom as she did when she was twelve, but she also sees it more clearly as a space that would exclude her daughter as it excluded Pique's father.

On the walls of the Grade Six room are two "great big framed pictures. No colours, just very dark brown or black, shadowy. One is of two people, a man and a woman, dressed in olden days poor clothes, kneeling down. *The Angelus*. Which means a bell is *tolling*, telling them it is time to pray" (75).¹¹ Painted between 1857 and 1859, *The Angelus*, by Jean-François Millet, depicts a man and a woman standing in a field that they are harvesting with a pitchfork, a basket, and a rustic wheelbarrow. *The Angelus* is a French realist painting that privileges both the individual and the landscape. These peasants dominate the foreground of the painting with the land stretching beneath their feet and the church steeple a mere shadow on the horizon. The man faces forward with his hat in his hand and the pitchfork beside him as rigid in the soil as the man himself. The woman is in profile with her head so bent that her nose almost touches the horizon. These are pious people who respect both land and God—a good lesson for children to learn. While the criticism of the time objected to the "dirtiness" of the painting, contemporary critic John Canaday says that "Millet's noble poor seem a little self-conscious of their symbolic importance, a little too cleaned up to smack convincingly of the soil of which they are supposed to be an emanation" (164). Morag, however, sees the two figures as the school intends her to see them. They are poor and

¹¹ Laurie Ricou and Gillian Siddall discuss *The Death of General Wolfe*, but neither of them discusses *The Angelus*.

humble, and the picture speaks of days past. They are a reminder of how far society has come, while reminding the children that these pious and humble figures are still recognizable and familiar.

Furthermore, Morag's memory expands upon the symbolism embodied in *The Angelus*. Morag remembers the picture with the two figures kneeling—not standing—on the soil, subordinate to both God and land. This mis-remembering illustrates the effects of time and the expansion of story. While the figures change positions in the remembered image, the content and intent of the painting remain the same. Nothing is lost in this translation. Rather, the symbolism is intensified as the landscape disappears from memory and the figures' poverty and subservience are foregrounded. Morag's earlier questions about the importance of inaccuracies are answered; the inaccuracies are less important than the poetically truthful telling. Like the snapshot, the painting also demonstrates Kroetsch's notion of the unknowable. Morag cannot know the life of those two figures, but the familiar landscape gives the illusion of knowledge. Unlike the snapshot, the print of the oil painting represents not the local, but the foreign—the foreign in both time and place. This painting represents another time and another place, yet even the familiar can be found in the unfamiliar. Both the snapshot and the painting are an attempt to create the mythic and the noble.

The second painting on the wall of the Grade Six classroom is even more complex, both for what is present and what is hidden: "The other picture is worse—a whole lot of soldiers looking terrible, and a drooping Union Jack, and in the middle a man falling or fainting (dying, actually) with his eyeballs rolling upwards. *The Death of General Wolfe*" (75). Painted by Benjamin West in 1770, *The Death of General Wolfe* portrays James Wolfe's death on the Plains of Abraham in 1759. The painting

represents a pivotal event in Canadian history. The painting's complexity, however, stems from its context, its content, and its reception. As Daniel Francis explains in *The Imaginary Indian: The Image of the Indian in Canadian Culture*, the painting

became one of the most enduring images of the British Empire, reproduced on tea trays, wall hangings and drinking mugs. . . . Today it still appears in history textbooks as an accurate representation of the past. Yet as an historical document, it is largely a work of fiction. In reality, Wolfe died apart from the field of battle and only one of the men seen in the painting was actually present. Other officers who were present at the death refused to be included in the painting because they disliked General Wolfe so much. (13)

Painted by an American living in London, it depicts a romanticized view of a victory that makes Canada a British colony. A hero is made on a canvas, not on the battlefield, and Morag recognizes the posturing present without understanding all that is hidden.¹²

Benjamin West was born near colonial Philadelphia in 1738. At twenty-one, he was sent to Rome to study art. An American with flair, West used Europe's fascination with Native peoples to his advantage, "claiming to have had his first painting lessons from wandering Indians who had shown him how they made colors from clay to paint their faces" (Canaday 25). He became immensely popular in Italy and then went to London three years later and was equally successful. He received many commissions from being under the patronage of King George III, and he was a leader in the founding of the English Royal Academy. For an American, West was steeped in English

¹² In *The Stone Angel*, *The Death of General Wolfe* is one of the paintings that Hagar hangs in the Shipley place: "The Shipley place didn't have a single solitary picture when I went there. I could never get hold of many, but over the years I managed to put up a few, for the children's sake, especially John, who was so impressionable. . . . I recall a steel engraving, entitled *The Death of General Wolfe*" (82). Hagar wants to impress upon her children the values represented in this British victory. By revisiting this image in *The Diviners*, Laurence demonstrates the instability of the text, the multiple ways of reading, and the importance of having multiple readers and speakers.

tradition, and he combined his North American past with his European present to create *The Death of General Wolfe*.

The painting combines the classical with the contemporary, both in form and content. The painting was an innovation because it dealt with a contemporary event when the Royal Academy was privileging the past over the present and the general over the particular. To paint a particular event that occurred a mere ten years earlier, and in one of the colonies, worked against the grand manner in painting. However, the style of the painting and the positioning of the figures in a tableau that echoes Christ's deposition from the cross borrows from the classical tradition. As Morag remembers, General Wolfe is the central figure in the painting as he swoons in the foreground. The "drooping Union Jack" is hardly recognizable as it billows down a pole held by a soldier. The sweeping billow of the flag contains the same sweeping line of Wolfe's body while the flagpole is a strong vertical line that draws the eye to the general and then to a crouching figure in the left foreground. One contradiction contained in this image is that while Wolfe dies and the Union Jack sags, victory is at hand. Wolfe's death is a noble and valiant death, his life given for Britain; he is a Christ figure sacrificing his life for his people.

The classic and the contemporary, chaos and order, fact and fiction also exist in this painting. The background of the painting is a mass of upright, shadowy bodies moving beneath billows of smoke that make up the sky. The foreground, however, is divided between three groups of soldiers who look down on Wolfe's body. In one of the clusters of soldiers, an Iroquois warrior crouches with his chin resting on his fist. This figure is closest to the viewer and immediately apparent because of the line from the flag to the general to the warrior, but also because his torso and legs are bare while all the

other figures in the painting are fully clothed in army uniforms. This inclusion of the Iroquois warrior is West's own fabrication. While he may have been interested in "the Noble Savage of the American forest" (Francis 13), West also commodifies the body of the warrior knowing that "Europe was fascinated by stories of the Indians, who were sometimes regarded as exotic savages and sometimes as personifications of nature's nobleman" (Canaday 26). Furthermore, there were certainly no Native peoples at Wolfe's side, for Wolfe despised Native peoples, "all of whom fought on the side of the French, anyway" (Francis 13). In such a way, history is fictionalized, humans become mythic, and those in positions of authority are the ones who control what stories are disseminated.

The Death of General Wolfe creates a fictionalized history that represents Wolfe as a powerful and noble hero for Canada. There is another aspect of Wolfe's military history that further complicates who is privileged in Canada's identity formation because Wolfe's story is another side of Morag's story. Morag's sense of her history is intricately connected to the stories and books that Christie shares with her. Without parents to narrate her own personal history, she borrows from Christie, who tells Morag both his history and hers. Christie's ancestry is located in the Scottish Highlands. The Logan motto, "*This Is the Valour of My Ancestors,*" and the war cry, "*The Ridge of Tears,*" signify unity and disunity. Christie uses these symbols to tell Morag the story of the lost battle at Culloden: "A cry heard at Culloden, in the black days of the battle, when the clans stood together for the last time, and the clans were broken by the Sassenach cannons and the damned bloody rifles of the redcoat swine" (57). James Wolfe was one of the "redcoat swine" who defeated the clans and Charles, The Young Pretender, in the Forty-Five Rebellion when Charles tried to drive King George II from

the British throne. The contradictions between the images and stories Morag hears at home and those she hears and sees at school create an identity that is multiple and fragmented. As the layers of meaning in Morag's story become more apparent, so the complexity of Pique's story surfaces. It is important to recognize that many of these layers are not overtly apparent on the page. Pique's presence as a floating signifier shifts what is said and what cannot be said. Morag recalls her own story as it is altered by Pique's presence.

There are a number of important aspects to the fact that West's *The Death of General Wolfe* hangs in Morag's classroom alongside Millet's *The Angelus*. The stories and histories that are being privileged are not the stories that affirm either Morag's identity or Jules Tonnerre's identity or that of many of the other children in the classroom. These two paintings reinforce the myth that Canada has two founding cultures—English and French. While *The Death of General Wolfe* fortifies an image of British superiority, *The Angelus* serves as a testament to survival in the face of adversity and to hope through faith in God and Church. These images and the stories they tell remind the children of the power of church and state.

The state's powerful role in identity formation is also reinforced through song. Every morning "Grade Six shuffles to its feet" to sing "O, Canada" in English and French (76). Besides strengthening the binary construction of Canada into English and French, the song also encourages a patriarchal structure where war is privileged. While there is reference to the forefathers' land and the sons' command, there is no mention of Canada's daughters or the role women play in patriot love and guarding of the fatherland. At this time, the mid-1930s, "O, Canada" is not yet the national anthem, but it is still part of the ritual of being a Canadian and therein affects the way people

understand the role of Canada and the role of the individual in Canada. Through song, voices come together and blend into one. Difference is erased, while a single identity is reinforced.

At the end of the day, Grade Six rises again as “Miss McMurtrie leads the class in ‘The Maple Leaf Forever.’” If the students were unsure as to General Wolfe’s position of hero, then the song clarifies him as a British hero who “planted firm Britannia’s flag / On Ca-na-da’s fair do-MAIN. / Here may it wave / Our boas’ our pride / And join in LUV together / The THISTLE SHAMROCK ROSE entwine / The MAPLE LEAF FOREVER!” (79-80). Morag loves this song and she “sings with all her guts.” This song firmly establishes her Scottish identity as one that is intricately embedded in Canada’s identity, regardless of class. Through the emblem of the British flag, Scottish, Irish, and English join together to form a Canadian identity. Morag also notices, however, whom this emblem excludes: “Suddenly she looks over to see if Skinner Tonnerre is singing. He has the best voice in the class . . . He is not singing now. He comes from nowhere. He isn’t anybody. She stops singing, not knowing why. Then she feels silly about stopping, so sings again” (80). In that instant, Morag recognizes a fallacy about Canadian identity—in order to be Canadian, you must come from somewhere else.

Jules (Skinner) Tonnerre, like Christie, untangles the entwined emblem of Britannia by telling stories about family history that are part of an intricate Canadian history. These oral histories are the bookends of Morag’s education; without them all the information she receives from school is unsupported, unquestioned. For Morag, home and the Nuisance Grounds are equal to the classroom as important places of learning. The first time that Morag goes to the Nuisance Grounds, she goes by herself in

order to bear witness to Christie's life without being witnessed. In another contradiction, which becomes one of the ordering principles of Morag's life, Morag finds life where she expected to find only death and rot: "She knows exactly where the spot is [the Nuisance Grounds]. Everybody knows that. A little above the town, the second hill, the same hill as the Manawaka cemetery. All the dead stuff together there on the same hill" (80). Morag makes an extensive list of all the "heaps of old muck" (81), but when she turns around she finds she is no longer alone among the heaps: Skinner Tonnerre is there with her.

Skinner brings another aspect to Morag's life. While she learns her own ancestral history through Christie's stories, Morag has not thought that others might also have unwritten, unrepresented stories. Skinner begins to share his family history with Morag there, that first day in the Nuisance Grounds, among the refuse. His stories, like Morag's and Christie's, are unacknowledged by mainstream Manawaka society, and even if Morag's Scottish heritage is shared with the Camerons and the McVities and the MacLeods, then her class position keeps her from this knowledge. Morag feels extremely vulnerable to this absence because she is separated from her immediate ancestors, her parents, and is looking for an identity, a history, with which to fill her parents' absence. Only through Christie's stories of Piper Gunn is Morag able to feel a connection that reaches back further than her memory:

"My family name is Gunn, see? And you better not forget it."

Skinner's eyes grow narrow. Cruel Mean.

"That so? You t'ink that means yer somebody? You're a little half-cunt, dry one at that I betcha."

"Listen here," Morag spits, "my family's been around here for longer than anybody in this whole goddamn town, see?"

"Not longer than mine," Skinner says, grinning.

"Oh yeh? Well, I'm related to Piper Gunn, *so there*."

"Who in hell's he?"

“He—” She is afraid to speak it, now, in case Christie has got it wrong after all, but she can’t quit. “He came from Scotland, and he led his people onto the ships when they were living on the rocks there in the Old Country and poor because they didn’t have their farms because the Bitch-Duchess took them, and all, and they were scared, leaving there, but then Piper Gunn played the pipes and put the heart back into them.”

Skinner gapes at her. Then grins again.

“Where’d you get that crap, eh?”

“It’s true. It’s true!” (82-3)

Morag and Skinner share stories that supplement and/or correct the education they receive in the classroom. Here, in the Nuisance Grounds, they debate the power of naming and call attention to the gaps in history. Skinner, too, finds identity and history through the stories of his family, and they both work through their own conflicts to listen and accept each other’s histories:

“My grandad,” Skinner says, “he built the first of our place, and that was one hell of a long time ago, I’m tellin’ you. He come back from The Troubles.”

“What’s that?”

“Out west, there. *You* wouldn’t know. You don’ know nothin’. My grandad was lucky he never got killed, there. Lucky they never shot his balls off, my dad says. But they couldn’t, because he was a better shot than them soldiers. I can shoot pretty good, too. I got his name, see? That means I got—” (83)

If Skinner has his grandad’s name, then Skinner also has his grandad’s history and destiny. The unfinished sentence demonstrates Skinner’s hesitance to be proud of that destiny in front of Morag. As Morag fears finishing Christie’s story, so Skinner fears the possibility that this history is inaccurate or that Morag will discount or scorn his story.

Morag, however, yearns for an alternative knowledge, one contained in stories, in histories, and asks Skinner to share his story with her:

“Tell me about your grandad. Aw, come on.”

He jumps to his feet and leaps over the tar barrel.

“Shit, I can’t remember. It’s all crap. Anyhows, I wouldn’ tell *you*.”

“Why not? Why not?”

“It ain’t none of yer business. I tell you one t’ing, though. Long time before my grandad, there’s one Tonnerre they call Chevalier, and no man can ride like him and he is one helluva shot. My grandad, he tol’ my dad about that guy, there.” (84)

Skinner’s response teaches Morag that there are some stories that are not hers to hear or to tell and that this silence is to be respected. Skinner’s stories reach back and back in order to find heroes and histories that define his identity positively. With this knowledge is a sense of belonging to something more than the present. Myth and fact combine to disrupt the authorities that try to silence non-hegemonic histories, like Morag’s and Skinner’s.

Christie embodies what Morag both cherishes and loathes. His stories are vital to Morag’s existence while his appearance and his public behaviour are a repeated embarrassment. This contradiction is fundamental to how she sees the world from multiple perspectives rather than a predominantly dualistic view. Christie teaches Morag to question the relationship between words and meaning, truth and fiction. Christie’s stories are, according to his report, often based upon narratives that he reads: “Well, now, then, I read it all in a book somewheres, so help me, and it is all there in the books, but you don’t want to believe everything them books say, for the good christ’s sake. We believe what we know” (94). Christie privileges not only a text-based knowledge but also a knowledge based on experience and story. His knowledge makes a space for a spectrum of possibility where contradiction is not about disagreement but about multiplicity.

Morag, therefore, learns that one way of telling a story or relating a tale is both true and not true, where “the opposite is also true” (99) and “it was like the book says, but it wasn’t like that, also. That is the strangeness” (101). Morag’s own writing

becomes another version of the tales that Christie tells and a combination of imagination and experience, mythical heroes and everyday people: “Morag is working on another story as well. In another scribbler. She does not know where it came from. It comes into your head, and when you write it down, it surprises you, because you never knew what was going to happen until you put it down” (98). This blending results in a process and a product that speaks to both fact and fiction, imagination and reality, past and present, joy and sorrow. Her stories expand upon the stories she hears and are alternatives to those others insist are true. She is creating stories of a new generation that question the given authorities and do not accept history by default.

Instead, Morag’s history becomes entwined with the history of those who surround her. Her ancestors are connected to her by more than blood and the ones connected by blood become indistinguishable: “Morag looks at the long-ago picture. One of these men is Colin Gunn, her father. But it could be any one of them” (101). All that Morag has of her father is a few photographs, some memories, and the stories that Christie tells. When Morag asks whether she can keep *The 60th Canadian Field Artillery Battery Book* in which she sees her father in the “long-ago picture,” Christie refuses. Instead, he gives Morag a knife with a sign burned into the handle (103). At the time, neither Morag nor Christie understands the significance of the sign, but it binds Morag inextricably to the past and to her future. With the knife, she touches a symbol that has changed hands several times and with each touching becomes another story as well as part of the same story.

The knife first appears in *The Stone Angel* when John Shipley trades the Currie plaid-pin for Lazarus Tonnerre’s knife. Both the plaid-pin and the knife embody stories and people of past and present:

When John was six, I [Hagar] gave him the Currie plaid-pin. It was sterling silver, and although it had grown black in the years it was put away, I polished it for him.

“Your grandfather got this when his father died. That was your great-grandfather, Sir Daniel Currie. The title died with him—it wasn’t a baronetcy. . . . You’re to look after this plaid-pin, do you hear? And not use it for playing with. The Curries were a sept of the MacDonald clan, the Clanranald MacDonalds. You can see their crest on the pin—a three-towered castle and an arm holding a sword. Their motto was *Gainsay Who Dare*. They were Highlanders. Your grandfather was born in the Highlands. I’ve heard him tell how, when he was a boy, before they moved to Glasgow, he used to waken early in midsummer and hear the pipers bringing in the dawn. I always wished I could have heard them.”
(*Stone Angel* 124)

Initially, this story belongs to Hagar’s family history, but by the end of *The Diviners* the plaid-pin and its accompanying history become a history that Morag adopts in trade with Jules Tonnerre, and the knife returns into the hands of a Tonnerre.

5.2 “on to the coast”

It is fitting that the Tonnerre knife should end up in Pique’s hands because the knife provides Pique with a tangible symbol to connect her with her Tonnerre past and to complement the link evident in her name, which connects her with Jules’s sister Piquette. Pique drifts through most of *The Diviners* in search of her past, desperate for a history that will give her some answers about her future. Pique is also the poet musician, synthesis of both musician father and writer mother. Pique goes back to Morag and Jules’s hometown and provides another voice for her parents’ histories. When Pique phones Morag to tell her that she is okay and that she is “going on to the coast” (120), Morag sees in her mind’s eye “Pique sauntering along Main Street in her jeans, her guitar on her back, a stranger in a place strange to her. What had she seen or found? Who?” (117). But Pique refuses to share her stories with her mother, at this time. She opens the space of the story but does not fill that space with her words.

Instead, she reinforces to her mother that Morag cannot know what Pique expected or what she found, and Morag acknowledges that her daughter's experiences cannot always be shared (118).

By delaying Pique's story of Manawaka and by showing how Morag learns silence, Laurence demonstrates how stories are porous, like skin, and how even when one person's flesh touches another there is space in between. This space allows for movement. The body, as a material presence, resists the solidity of another's flesh, but when flesh touches flesh the surface is warmed by the contact or friction, if the touching is gentle. Bodies, like stories, need room to breathe, and Morag is learning that she needs to allow space for Pique's stories. Pique represents what cannot be said on the page, what does not need to be spoken, what Morag cannot speak. Morag cannot and does not try to force Pique to speak, and she does not try to fill in the space that Pique has left.

Although the geography remains constant, time and experience change the occasion. Pique is both Scottish and Métis, and despite Morag feeling as though her class marks her indelibly, Pique's skin is more of a signifier than Morag's class. Class origin is more easily disguised than skin. When Pique is harassed by a carload full of "middle-aged guys, pretty jowly and obviously the local businessmen or something" (119) when she is "outside of some little nothing-type town just inside Manitoba" (118), Morag begins to imagine Pique's experience by remembering her own experiences. Morag remembers how her Manawaka world saw and treated the Tonnerre family: "*My world in those days was a residual bad dream, with some goodness and some chance of climbing out. Hers is an accomplished nightmare, with nowhere to go, and the only peace is in the eye of the hurricane*" (119). Pique's body carries traces of her Métis

ancestry and because of this biological heritage, she searches for ways to find the history that her mother cannot give her. Pique cannot climb out of her own skin, but she can go to experience places and listen to people who will share with her the gift of her own proud but often painful history.

Morag understands that she cannot reach out to Pique on the level of surface, of skin, but Morag also knows that exterior is intricately connected to interior and cannot be separated. When Pique's arm is cut from the broken beer bottle that is thrown from the car, her blood "kind of scared them" (119). While her skin provokes anger and hatred, her blood invokes fear and shame. The middle-aged jowly men take off and the authorities in the small town give Pique a warning while dismissing the actions of the men. A young Métis woman wandering the streets alone is a source of discomfort for the townspeople. They prefer the comfort of their own closed world. Pique represents the unknown, the uncontrollable, and they are not ready to face her possibilities. Morag asks Pique if her arm is okay, but is also concerned about the "other dimension" (119), the interior dimension that is also harmed by closed hateful eyes that construct her difference as inferior.

Pique's "hardluck story" (120) connects Morag back to her past. Although Morag perhaps cannot fully understand racialized subjectivity, she does know that class also marks the body and is, in some ways, as identifiable as one's race. Language and clothing are two signifiers of class, and fourteen-year-old Morag believes that she can disguise herself by changing the way she speaks and the way she dresses. While Morag in Grade Six loves to swear, fourteen-year-old Morag "does not swear. If you swear at fourteen it only makes you look cheap, and she is not cheap, goddamn it. Gol-darn it"

(122). Morag also discovers, however, that it is not easy to wear disguises, for sometimes the body uncontrollably reveals itself.

Regardless, fourteen-year-old Morag wears clothing that she believes will disguise her working class context:

Morag is dressed nicely. Nobody could deny it. She spends on clothes everything she earns Saturdays working at Simlow's Ladies' Wear. Her hair is done in very neat braids, twisted around her head, and her hat is that very pale natural straw, with just a band of turquoise ribbon around it, in good taste. Her coat, also turquoise, matches the ribbon exactly and is princess-style, fitted, and flaring at the bottom. It shows off her figure, which is a goddamn good one—that is, a very nice one. But all this makes no difference. When church is over, and they're all filing out, chattering, the Camerons and MacLeods . . . and them, no one will say *Good Morning* to Morag and Prin. Not on your life. Might soil their precious mouths. (121-22)

Morag simultaneously believes that she can disguise her class while knowing that her history informs her identity in ways that she can never disguise. While she lives in Manawaka, she cannot disguise her past. In contradiction to this, Manawaka forgets that before Christie and Prin Logan were Colin and Louisa Gunn, Morag's parents, and before them, Alisdair Gunn, Morag's grandfather, who came to Manawaka "a long long time ago and built the house and started the farm when probably nothing was here except buffalo grass and Indians" (16-17). But the farm and the house no longer belong to the Gunns, and Morag is the only Gunn left. Manawaka now sees Morag as a Logan, a low Gunn.

Morag recognizes that body image is informed by the people with whom one associates. Like clothing and language, friends and relations are also part of an individual's identity. No matter how well fourteen-year-old Morag speaks or dresses, if she is in public with Prin or Christie, Morag is seen in the light of the Logans: "She loves Prin, but can no longer bear to be seen with her in public. Prin maybe knows this,

and is grateful when Morag goes to church with her, which makes Morag feel bad, that is, feel *badly*” (121). Morag tries to compensate for being with Prin by attempting to speak grammatically correctly so that Manawaka can see how well-spoken Morag is despite Prin’s influence.

Morag’s feelings are also part of what she wears for when “Morag stands beside Prin, [in] the back row of the church, [she hates] her own embarrassment but [hugs] it around her” (121). Morag wears embarrassment and guilt as she wears her natural straw hat and her princess-style coat. She tries to reinvent herself, and, in this way, dissociate herself from aspects of her present reality. This making new does not work when she tries to discard the old. Instead, over time, she learns that she must create with what surrounds her and in this way, represent her multiple selves, which include all those who have informed her simultaneous and contradictory identities. Forty-seven-year-old Morag makes herself possible by denying neither her blood nor her adopted heritage.

Fourteen-year-old Morag, however, denies both Prin and her childhood friend Eva Winkler because both of them seem “beaten by life already. Morag is not—repeat *not*—going to be beaten by life” (126-27). Morag senses that she will pick up the characteristics of those with whom she associates, yet these denials are in contradiction to what she wants to do. For example, Morag does not want to be seen talking to Eva while at work, so she uses the excuse that Millie, the boss, does not want employees to talk with friends while working. Afterwards, “Morag wants to call Eva back. But doesn’t” (127). With Eva’s exit comes Stacey Cameron’s entrance and this crossover demonstrates to Morag, once again, that perception is often both true and not true. Morag both envies and detests people whom she sees as having money and who, therefore, believe themselves to be better than Morag. Stacey Cameron and Vanessa

MacLeod are two such people. Vanessa MacLeod, however, has lost her father and because of this loss, Morag is forced to reconsider Vanessa's social position.

Similarly, Stacey Cameron changes in Morag's eyes. Morag believes that part of her perceived failure as a valued member of Manawaka society lies in the fact that her birth parents are dead. However, when she sees that "real parents" are also problematic, Morag's perception alters. One night when Morag is working, Mrs. Cameron comes into Simlow's with Stacey. Morag can see that Mrs. Cameron is embarrassing her daughter, just as Morag is embarrassed by Prin. When Mrs. Cameron openly, if unintentionally, insults Morag, Stacey is horrified and runs out of the store. With this act, Morag knows that the power relationship between herself and Stacey has changed, all because of something that a parent has done (127-29). With this realization, Morag begins to recognize the spectrum of possibilities for both constructing oneself and being constructed by others.

Morag is caught between the need to change and the desire to be authentic. Charles Taylor, in *The Malaise of Modernity*, discusses modernism as a form of authenticity (66). Taylor claims that an individual may reclaim a modernist sensibility by striving for individual authenticity, which remains connected to one's past. Pique signifies such characteristics and therefore enables Morag to remember her own efforts to achieve authenticity and interconnectedness as she struggles to recreate herself as a modern subject. She senses that it would be quite easy to construct a new identity and then lose herself in the process. She, therefore, searches for role models, like Julie Kazlik, both within her present and her past.

If Morag is embarrassed by Prin and Eva, then she is envious of Julie Kazlik. Julie works at the Parthenon Café, liking the "sociability of the job" (129). Morag looks

at Julie and sees that she has style and “Good Taste”: “The light applegreen smock-dress [waitress uniform] goes really well with her blonde hair which she wears in a smooth French-roll when at work although long or in braids at school” (129). Julie is someone after whom Morag can model herself because Julie and Morag occupy similar social positions (Julie being the daughter of the milkman). Morag observes Julie and envies her her boyfriend and her

breeziness. Ever since she herself decided to drop her tough act, she has been not too certain what to aim for. To act really ladylike would be too old for her, and also kind of phoney. She has therefore gone back to not speaking much, like when she was quite a little kid and scared. She’s scared again, now, but she doesn’t know what she’s scared of. (130)

Morag is caught between wanting to be authentic and fearful of being disliked because of her authenticity. She looks around for role models, while trying to be unique. In this process, she finds herself moving back to one dimension of her childhood self, a position both authentic and rejected, one made new in its move backwards in time while Pique moves west in space.

Marshall Berman, in his *All That is Solid Melts into Air*, considers Goethe as a prototype of modernism and sees that in Goethe’s vision “the rediscovery of childhood feelings can liberate tremendous human energies, which may then generate much of the power and initiative for the project of social reconstruction” (45). Much of Morag’s individual and collective re-creation and reconstruction is based upon both a return to childhood experiences and a remembrance of security and safety in childhood feelings. To reconnect with sanctified moments, she returns both to silence and to speech. She is both a listener and a storyteller. In these subject positions, she is an agent of re-creation and revolution by actively creating art and history that reflect the time in which she is

living and the past times that have informed her present. She also respects the silences that are the stories which are not hers to tell.

Pique's travels to Manawaka and Morag's vision of Pique sauntering down Main Street recall Morag's own experience on that street. In this moment, Pique signifies a compression of time as Morag's memorybank movie rolls and Morag remembers herself going with Julie to sit in a parked car on the main drag of Manawaka, watching everybody go by on Saturday night. Morag recreates the moment as a series of fragments describing the people, the sounds, the smells:

Farmers . . . their women . . . kids . . . town whores . . . some girls . . . Noise hooting yelling *DIN WOW*. Smells, dust from the streets, grittily blown by the wind—French fries from the Regal Café dusky musky smell of perfume Lily-of-the-Valley Sweet Pea cheap Bad Taste and also Tweed Evening-in-Paris expensive Good Taste and finally the smells all mashed into one smell inside your nostrils. (131)

Laurence plays with language by placing extra spaces between words and capitalizing and italicizing words to represent Morag's heightened responses to the street scene. Fragmented sights, sounds, smells, tumble together into one as Morag takes it all into her body. Her silent watching loses its separation as the poet, the watcher gets caught up in the movement of the street. The language reflects the chaotic business and Morag's own excitement at partaking in the evening, where senses are not separated from people, and the people are not distinct from the street. Town and sounds and people combine in a joyous celebration of living.

Morag's stilted observations run into each other, paralleling the ways that people pass and meet and greet each other. Morag herself is carried away by the flow and even the multiplicity until one figure emerges, "sauntering" (117, 131) like Pique, from the nameless crowd: Christie Logan. Suddenly her watching changes and specific people

come into focus. Morag's clearly focussed return to her past is crucial in order to inform her present narrative. The aesthetization of the street scene disappears so that the drama being enacted on the sidewalk does not become blurred or misread. Simon Pearl and Archie McVitie, both lawyers, come out of their offices and meet Christie right in front of where Morag sits unseen. While Morag struggles to create an identity for herself, she learns from Christie about subversive strategies of survival. Christie's conversation with the lawyers swings between humour and seriousness, and Morag's reactions to this exchange are also contradictory, multiple, and simultaneous:

"Hear you're keeping off Relief so far, Christie," Mr. McVitie says.

"Some are still on," Christie says sullenly, "despite this life-giving War."

Then oh please NO

Yep. Christie goes into his doormat act. Bone-grin, full of brown teeth.

"Och aye, an honest job is all I ask in this very world, Mr. McVitie, and I tell you, sir, that's God's truth. An honest wage for an honest day's work, as you might phrase it."

Mr. McVitie frowns, suspecting dirty work at the crossroads somewhere here but can't put his finger on it. Morag stifles a laugh. But wants to cry. Wants to go out and be there with Christie. Also, wants Christie not to be there, just not to be there at all, and if she had a loaded gun in her hands this very second, would take careful aim and shoot him in the throat. Failing a gun, a stone. Or maybe would shoot McVitie & Pearl, Barristers and Solicitors.

She does not move. (132)

Pique is aligned with Christie as a marginalized figure, while Morag occupies the middle space between the oppressed and the oppressors as she desires to both support and hurt Christie. In this middle space, Morag learns subversion and resistance by performing to excess what people expect and then contradicting those expectations through cleverness of speech. Morag watches as Christie upsets Manawaka's social order by calling attention to the notion that all people are equal in God's eyes. Christie uses the patriarchal authority of God to subvert the patriarchal authority of men. The irony of this situation is that while Christie uses God as an equalizer, Morag (and therefore the

reader) understands that this usage is a strategy and not a belief, for Christie believes that the divinity of garbage makes people equal. This subversion, however, has obviously not been completely successful over time because Pique has experienced racism in the present as Christie and Morag experienced class bigotry in the past.

Pique's search for her own stories, for her own sense of belonging, also recalls for Morag how she needed to hear, and how she subsequently revised, Christie's stories. When Christie tells her "Christie's Tale of Piper Gunn and the Rebels" (143-46), Morag's own commentary supplements Christie's narrative. She is beginning to retell the tales based on her own knowledge and experience. Riel and his supporters are now Métis not halfbreeds, and Morag likes both sides of the story. Piper Gunn and Louis Riel are both heroes to her, and although she incorporates some of her own narrative into Christie's story, she does not silence him. Her telling does not mean the erasure or silencing of another. Instead, she finds ways of telling stories that include multiple voices. She is finding her own identity—one that is modernist in its privileging of simultaneity, revolution, and re-creation. Her revolution is a revolution of blood and language. It is of the body and the mind.

Pique's struggle on the streets informs Morag's personal revolution, which is intimately connected to a public battle, World War II. This next section of Morag's memories is full of the battles of the present and of the past. Stories of World War II are intertwined with Skinner's tales of Rider Tonnerre fighting the "goddamn *Anglais*" (160) and Christie's tale of Piper Gunn and the rebels. Significantly, Skinner refuses to tell Morag a tale of Dieppe in the same way that Pique refuses to tell her a tale of Manawaka. Laurence signals Skinner's silence with a heading that reads,

SKINNER'S TALE OF DIEPPE

? (164).

By using the question mark to signify an absent presence, Laurence reminds the reader again that the silences as well as the stories must be heard. Laurence also asks the reader to connect the damage that occurs on the streets and in the homes with the damage that occurs on battlefields. Whether people are firing guns or hurling beer bottles or flinging words, these destructive actions must stop. By connecting such narratives of struggle and determination, Laurence shows that modernist narratives of change need to be informed by the past.

Morag's Grade Eleven class has a few boys, but the Grade Twelve class has none. They have all joined either the Army or the Airforce or the Navy. Skinner Tonnerre is one of these boys. Skinner is one of the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders, complete with kilt, "Fighting for King and Country" (148). In uniform, men become uniform—and disposable. Before Dieppe, the soldiers—those men and boys in uniform—march through the main street of Manawaka, following the pipers who play "The March of the Cameron Men." Morag hears splendour in that march; it is music that leads to the "ends of the world. It is in fact to the end of their world that most of these men are following the music" (158). The splendour of the march quickly dissipates into the horror of death as Dieppe changes the face of Manawaka and the face of Canada.

The newspaper tells two stories simultaneously, and Morag learns again how fact and fiction work together, how what is true is also untrue: "Morag reads the casualty lists. Column after column, covering page after page, it seems, in the *Winnipeg Free*

Press. Among the men from Manawaka, she looks for those she knows” (158). There are too many men she knows and has known. She is connected to each name, either through association or memory. Each name is a man who had his own stories to tell. Beside the story that is the list of the dead is the story of heroism: “The newspapers for days are full of stories of bravery, courage, camaraderie, initiative, heroism, gallantry, and determination in the face of heavy enemy fire. Are any of the stories true? Probably it does not matter. They may console some” (159). Intent is more important than content. Mourners need heroes for comfort, and the newspaper tries to make heroes of the dead.

Morag wonders about the telling, wonders whether truth is possible. For her “The only truth at the moment seems to be in the long long lists of the dead. The only certainty is that they are dead. Forever and ever and ever” (159). In the repetitive language that invokes the agonizing list, in those alphabetical last names, followed by a comma, followed by a capitalized initial (or two), lies a truth. Later that truth may change, but for now, names present and names absent are the only truths that matter. When Jules Tonnerre returns from Dieppe, he transforms the newspaper’s stories of heroism into another truth. Suddenly, the truth of the list of last names, with Morag’s own bracketed commentary, changes forever. In an instant, “Lobodiak, J. (Mike’s brother John, the handsome one)” (158) becomes a John Lobodiak who died next to Skinner, his guts like a “shot gopher,” his eyes “Like a horse’s eyes in a barn fire” (180). Simultaneously, the name John Lobodiak signifies handsomeness, death, and horror.

The spring before Dieppe, before a list of names becomes truth and untruth, Morag learns another language, a language that pushes boundaries between words and sounds, intellect and body, containment and release. In this spring, this time of rebirth,

Morag learns to live and act in the sphere of erotic life. Berman claims that sexual power is crucial for rebirth (52). If part of rebirth is learning a new language, then Morag learns her lessons well. The language she hears herself uttering is a language of her body, one she feels she already knows, which is now becoming more enriched. This language contains other truths, ones that she discovers with Skinner, now through intimacy renamed Jules. She finds beauty in her own body and in his body. She looks at herself, she looks at him, and what becomes important then is “the need to feel him all over her, to feel all of his skin” (152). In this feeling, in this touching, she discovers this other language that begins inside her body and moves on and out: “The pulsing between her legs spreads and suffuses all of her. The throbbing goes on and on, and she does not realize her voice has spoken until it stops, and then she does not know if she has spoken words or only cried out somewhere in someplace beyond language” (153). This moment recalls Rachel’s glossolalia positively recast. Here the voice of Morag speaks of desire that is realized and pleasure that is voiced. This someplace, somewhere is followed by silence and stroking and smiling, not the fear and embarrassment that follows Rachel’s uncontrollable sounds. Instead of the separation that Rachel feels from her self, this moment brings Morag and Jules together. They are now strangers who know each other, conspirators against . . . Against what? Order. Hierarchy. Division. Racism. Classism. Their skins touch. They enter each other’s homes. They share their bodies, and, later, they again share their stories.

In these sharings, in these tellings, bodies and histories combine. These renderings are living histories that cycle and recycle as long as there is a teller and a listener. Precision and exactitude are secondary. The process of telling is primary, and Jules tells Morag Lazarus’s Tale of Rider Tonnerre: “Well, my old man, he told me this

about Rider Tonnerre, away back there, so long ago no one knows when, and Lazarus Tonnerre sure isn't the man to tell the same story twice, or maybe he just couldn't remember, because each time he told it, it would be kind of different" (159). Heroes remain, but circumstances change, and as Jules and Morag walk along the streets of Manawaka, Rider Tonnerre comes alive bringing hope and heroism and pride and determination on the eve of another battle. Like the hero in Christie's tale of Piper Gunn, Rider Tonnerre motivates his people to fight against the "goddamn *Anglais*" (160), an enemy in common. Piper Gunn and Rider Tonnerre are heroes of the same event, although the stories told and heard about that event are different. The differences are in the tellings and in the listenings—both are true and untrue.

Familial history and experience are one context in which heroes are made. These tales subvert patriarchal histories that foreground battles where those in power are always heroes, no matter who lives or dies. In this way, the status quo is maintained, and power structures are unaffected. As Christie reminds Skinner before he leaves with the Army, "It's never the generals who die, you know. Don't let the buggers on either side get you" (148). Like Wolfe, contemporary generals may be immortalized. There are enemies and heroes on both sides. On all sides. It depends upon where a person stands. It also depends upon who is doing the telling.

Morag learns these lessons through first-hand experience when she works for the *Manawaka Banner*, the local newspaper. Morag writes and rewrites articles, such as obituaries, town council meetings, and news. Lachlan MacLachlan and Jock MacRae teach Morag how to read proof and to write in newspaper style. Lachlan also teaches Morag about experience as knowledge, about language as power, about pride as bigotry:

“if you think your prose style is so much better than theirs, girl, remember one thing. Those people know things it will take you the better part of your lifetime to learn, if ever. They are not very verbal people, but if you ever in your lifetime presume to look down on them because you have the knack of words and they do not, then you do so at your eternal risk and peril.” (170)

Morag looks at him, only partially recognizing herself in his description. He warns her against perpetuating in herself what she detests in others. She will not become an oppressor.

Instead, Morag will tell stories of the time in which she is living, as a participant and a protagonist. She will try to tell her own stories and the stories of those who could never, or can no longer, speak. Sometimes she will accept knowledge from others. Sometimes she will be afraid that language will fail her. Sometimes the language of a visual image is not translatable into words. For instance, when she tries to write about Botticelli’s Venus, she is afraid that verbal language is not enough. It is not enough for her: “There have to be words. Maybe there are not. This thought is obscurely frightening. Like knowing that God does not actually see the little sparrow fall” (172). Since she does not believe that God sees all sparrows or all people, she crumples her words, and accepts silence as another language.

Morag’s first assignment as a reporter is to report on the fire at the Tonnerre home that kills Piquette and her two children. When Morag bears witness to the tragedy of Piquette’s death and tries to tell some of Piquette’s history in her obituary, Lachlan “deletes it, saying that many people hereabouts would still consider that Old Jules back then had fought on the wrong side” (176). Morag’s inclusion and Lachlan’s deletion teach Morag that not everyone wants to hear both sides of a story. Morag’s first story that includes silenced voices is silenced, and through this act, Morag learns that silence

as language can be either imposed or respected. Silence is a signifier whose plurality of meanings invokes fear and frustration as well as privacy and respect.

5.3 “This city the end”

Back in the present, Morag is not writing but looking at the river: “Getting started each morning was monstrous, an almost impossible exercise of will . . . and it had to be begun on faith” (185). It is not faith that impels Morag to write, however; it is a postcard from Pique which reads, “This city the end. They like to classify people here. Matthew Arnold clash by night right on with this place. Gord and I do not relate so why fight it? Am okay, so no dramatics. Tell Tom seagulls fabulous” (188). Like the note that Pique wrote when she left to go west, this postcard uses imagery created by a male author, which she transforms into a language that speaks of her own experience. The ambiguity of the language recalls for Morag her own letters back to Prin and Christie after Morag leaves Manawaka to go to university. If the first note constructs Pique as a floating signifier and the phone call signifies silence and struggle, then this postcard signifies classification and ambiguity. Furthermore, Pique has again placed Morag in a liminal position between oppressed and oppressor, between Prin and Christie, and Brooke Skelton.

Morag’s remembering and tellings constitute her as a woman in process. She is constantly creating and recreating herself, both alone and in conjunction with others. Her process and her stories are a testament to the interconnectedness of people and place, present and past. Morag, at nineteen, goes to Winnipeg to attend college. This move away from Manawaka is one she has anticipated for a long, long time. She finds,

however, that away is always somewhere else, and the landscape and its cyclical rhythms are always a reminder:

The Canada geese are flying very high up in their wide V-formation, the few leaders out in front, the flock sounding their far clear cold cry that signals the approaching frost. Going somewhere. Able to go, at will. Last year she saw them and thought *This time next year I'll be away too*. Now she is away. Away is here. Not far enough away.

Morag watches, angrily grieving and loving, until the geese have passed over. (193)

Morag grapples with a feminist modernist position of occupying a contradictory space in which she is both grieving and loving. She still looks both ways—forward and backward—without being satisfied with where she presently stands.

Morag's position of being contradictory, of looking both ways, of occupying a space between binaries, is a position she also encounters in her own fiction writing. Morag shares this space with her new friend Ella Gerson, with whom she shares a passion for writing. When Morag and Ella read each other's work, "Morag longs to snatch it back. But longs even more to know what Ella thinks of it. It concerns a young farmer during the drought, who nearly gives way to despair, but who finally determines to stay alive and stay with the land" (197) in order to save the father's life. While fiction, Morag's story is also truth—a prairie tale that will be told over and over.

When Ella asks Morag if she ever knew of anyone like that, Morag sees how the story is "not based on anyone real," and at the same time, must be based in the real:

She sees the distortion and sees why the story had to end this way. The child, in some way, although without realizing it, saving the father's life. The father going on living. Could it have ended any other way, the story? No. Anyway, the child isn't her. She realizes almost with surprise that this is true. The child *isn't* her. Can the story child really exist separately? Can it be both her and not her? (197)

Morag's story shifts the power structure from parent to child. The ambiguity surrounding the gender of the child is both irrelevant and revealing. The signifier *child*

signifies saviour, ambiguity, and the future. The child is both Morag and Pique, and neither of them.

Ironically, while Morag writes of masculine spaces, she finds herself in a strong women's space in Ella's home. The death of Ella's father has left the Gerson home without a father figure; it is now a matriarchal space where Mrs. Gerson and her three daughters embody multiple possibilities of subjectivity. Anything is possible in this space where "Mrs. Gerson believes in God and Marx simultaneously, and is not dismayed by her daughters' suggestion of disparity in such a dual faith" (199). Mrs. Gerson shows her daughters that simultaneous beliefs and ways of being are not only possible but potentially valuable. It is Mrs. Gerson who first introduces Morag to Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Chekhov, Turgenev. While Ella's sister Bernice gives Morag a new hairdo, Ella's mother arms Morag in another way: "Morag Gunn sets a tentative and cramped toe inside the Temple of Beauty at the same moment as she first truly realizes that English is not the only literature" (203). Beauty and knowledge are both possible for Morag; she does not have to choose the temple of knowledge over the temple of beauty.

Morag and Ella share a carefree and troubled existence. When Ella's poem is published, Morag is both glad and depressed, and even Ella feels as though her life "is not exactly one huge barrelful of chuckles" (205). Together, however, they act carefree, "singing, not caring who hears":

There'll be a change in the weather
And a change in the sea,
And most of all there'll be a change in me,
'Cause nobody wants you when you're old and grey—
There'll be some changes made Today
There'll be some chay-ay-anges made. (205)

Like other jingles that appear in the Manawaka novels, this one is linked to the present apparently liberating moment and to the unknown possibly oppressing future:

They cannot imagine ever becoming old and grey. Simultaneously, they live every day with the certainty of this fact, and with the fact of their own deaths. They seldom discuss this strange presence. There is no need. They know it from one another's writing. It is the unspoken but real face under the jester's mask.
(205)

On this one page, Laurence cleverly gestures back to the other Manawaka novels and heroines. There is “old and grey” Hagar, jesting Rachel, and masked Stacey. The jingle also points to the possibility of a sea-change. As Pique takes Morag back to her youth, Laurence takes the reader back through the novels, reminding the reader of the interconnectedness of narratives.

There is a space between what is spoken and unspoken, what is real and unreal. If people wear masks and shed skins, then Morag recognizes that both surface and depth—what is revealed and what is hidden—are both important and meaningful. In the liminal space lies possibility and hope for the unknown. This feminist modernist position is possible and apparent because it is undefined, unnamed, and uncategorized. It does not belong to a patriarchal realm. Rather it creatively displaces patriarchal narratives and opens the space to include the multiple selves in women and between women.

In the narrative present, Pique's postcard arrives at the same time as the morning paper with Brooke's picture in it. Pique's naming of the city as the end and the people within the city as people who like to classify others corresponds with Brooke's ideology of clearly delimited spaces and people. Morag initially believes that she also desires such definition, but Laurence is careful to point out the unreliability of such categorization. On the one hand, Brooke Skelton represents the enemy to both Scots and

Métis. He is “English (from England, that is)” (205, 221). Whether they are “redcoat swine” or “goddamn Anglais,” men from England represent the imperial enemy, the colonizer in both Christie’s and Skinner’s tales. On the other hand, Brooke is also the first man to validate Morag’s writing, to recognize her imagination as something of value. Even his name contains modernist contradiction: he is both transformative water and lifeless bones.

Morag is drawn to his otherness, to the image of him being from the upper-class with his “impressive accent . . . [and] a fine-boned handsomeness that gives him an aristocratic look, or what Morag imagines must be aristocratic” (205). This initial attraction quickly dissipates as Morag finds him appealing because she believes he can transform her from her lower-class status. Significantly, Brooke is a seventeenth-century scholar who teaches *Paradise Lost*, ““He for God only; she for God in him”” (208). Unlike Pique who uses male narratives as mimicry, Brooke uses such narratives as master narratives to perpetuate his own power. He sees Morag as his own creation, a woman who exists only for him, and he is careful to delimit her experience.

Born in India, the son of a Headmaster at a Church of England boys’ school, Brooke continues his father’s legacy of educating the colonials. When Morag confides to Brooke that she feels as though she doesn’t have a past, “As though it was more or less blank” (211), Brooke finds this “mysterious nonexistent past” immensely appealing because it is “as though [she is] starting life now, newly.” When Morag asks him what he likes about her, he replies that she has “a kind of presence” (212). The presence he is drawn to, however, is her apparent absence, her “genuine innocence” (213). He likes the illusion that he will be the one to formulate her experiences. Morag, on the other hand, “wants to know everything about him, about his previous life, so that she will know all

of him” (233). Brooke’s erasure of Morag’s past and Morag’s yearning to hold all of Brooke are both impossibilities, impossibilities which they try to make possible.

When Brooke and Morag are married and move to Toronto, the city frightens Morag (232), and as Pique suggests, the city is the site of the end. The end, however, is dangerously close to being the end of Morag’s subjectivity as she begins to lose control of her voice and her body. Her “voice comes out like a croak” (219), and images of inhabitation repeat themselves throughout Morag’s relationship with Brooke (218, 237, 246). Morag views her union with Brooke as joyful, while the reader sees these images as sites of loss. Simultaneous with the moment of their first love-making, Morag’s “innertalk passes . . . And he goes off deep deep inside her herownself and she is inhabited by him at last. Afterwards, when they are their own separate selves once more, they are not separate” (218). Brooke and Morag are becoming one; they are cloning each other, or rather, Morag is so entwined with Brooke’s needs and desires, that she sees their union as eternal: “Nowadays, when they make love, they almost always come at the same time, and often sleep the night in each other’s arms, still joined. Sometimes in the morning he is still inside her, and they separate slowly, reluctantly, but their inhabitation of one another never really ceases and never will” (237). Taken alone, this passage can be read as a moment of mutual pleasure where orgasm is achieved simultaneously, where lovers are equal in their desire and satisfaction. However, Laurence complicates this image of inhabitation by showing how it can be both comforting and damaging, how it can be both a joyful union and a dangerous erasure of self.

I read Brooke’s inhabitation of Morag’s body as an occupation by the conqueror, who wants to mold his subject into his own image. In contrast, Manawaka inhabits

Morag's body as a site of belonging. Manawaka helps create not erase her identity, as Brooke threatens to do. Morag's memory of Manawaka fills her mind as well as her bones and her flesh: "the town inhabits her, as once she inhabited it" (246). Morag is influenced by Brooke's occupation of her body, by his longing to create her in his own image and by his way of living in only present and future tenses. While Brooke's habitation results in Morag suppressing her language, Manawaka is Morag's way back to voice and writing.

Morag's resistance to Brooke's insistent urgings to forget her past originates when she begins writing her first novel, *Spear of Innocence*. Through writing, Morag gains strength to question her past assumptions and her position in her relationship with Brooke. Suddenly, her submission to Brooke is intolerable, although she also feels indebted to him. When Brooke wants to go to a movie, Morag smiles and agrees even though she would rather return to Chapter Three of her novel:

Unfair to Brooke. Who is, after all, supporting her while she bashes away at the typewriter. And who loves her. And whom she loves. Morag thinks of her smile. The eager agreement to go out. How many times has she lied to him before, or is this the first time? No, it is not the first time. She never thought of it that way before. It never seemed like lying. Now it does. (245)

Morag's realization that she has been lying both to herself and to Brooke signals a change in Morag's interpretation of events in her life. She creates another version of her self while she simultaneously creates a character in her novel. Morag's fiction writing parallels a new way of writing her self into the world.

Morag urges Brooke to explore these possible spaces with her. To Brooke, being vulnerable to external forces is to be weak. For Morag, the meeting of external and internal is full of potential: "Brooke—listen. We hardly know a thing about one another.

I mean, not really. Even after nearly five years. It's necessary that we find out. . . . I'm not the way you think I am. And you're not the way I thought you were, either. . . . We've got to find out a lot more" (248). Morag recognizes the necessity of change, of transformation, but Brooke refuses her urgings. Significantly, Morag refers to her novel's heroine, Lilac, for guidance after Brooke chooses sleep over conversation: "How much of Lilac's childhood remained with *her*? *All*. It always does" (248). Morag uses her writing and her imagination to make sense of the meeting between present and past in her own life and in the life of her heroine. This process recalls Cixous's notion that subjects know one another and begin anew "from the living boundaries of the other" ("Laugh" 883). Morag knows Brooke and begins herself anew from the borders of his skin against hers. Morag also presses herself against Lilac's fictional skin and is therein able to invent another way of living that does not rely on being subordinate to or fully inhabited by Brooke. This notion of beginning anew from the living boundaries of another is an enabling structure that resists categorization while insisting on interconnectedness.

5.4 "going out"

Pique returns halfway through *The Diviners*, looking the same. Indeed, when Morag asks her if she is "okay, really?" (252), Pique laughs and tells Morag to relax: "Sure, I'm all right. Really. Can't you see?" (252). Pique's comment implies that the surface of her body contains evidence of her well-being. However, in the very next moment, Pique also talks about how easy it is to sense what lies beneath surface:

'Some times weren't so good. They hate kids hitching, some places. They'd really like you to be dead. Really *dead*, for real. It's the anger that scares me.'

‘Yeh. Me, too.’

Because they don’t know it’s there inside them,’ Pique said. ‘They think they’re sweet reasonableness, and it’s *you* that’s in the wrong, just by being, and not being like them, or looking like them, or wanting their kind of life. It’s the anger you can feel, even if they don’t lay a hand on you. It’s, like—well, visible. You can see and taste and smell it. You know?’

‘I can guess. I’ve seen it, under other circumstances, when I was a kid.’

‘I wondered about that,’ Pique said, in between mouthfuls of sandwich, ‘when I went to Manawaka. I guess it’s changed a lot, on the surface. Underneath—well, I dunno.’ (252)

Although Pique begins by speaking about an ambiguous “they” who hate kids hitching, she soon reflects on the anger present in people who refuse to accept difference, including racial difference, gender difference, and class difference. When Morag asks if Pique is “okay, really,” Morag reveals that she knows that skin as surface can be misread. Pique picks up on Morag’s use of the word really and uses it to connote both degree of feeling (“really *dead*”) and literalness of action (“really *dead*, for real”). Pique is not speaking metaphorically. Her fear is as real as the anger she senses. Her fear is also exacerbated because what is clearly visible to her is invisible to the person who embodies the anger. Pique’s body sees and tastes and smells what lies beneath surface. While most others read only surface, Pique recognizes what exists beneath surface. Pique sees what others refuse, as do Christie and Morag and Jules. She, too, is a diviner. In this section, Pique signifies friction, with its plurality of meanings including touch, resistance, and conflict.

When Pique is in Manawaka, she senses how surface and depth do not always refer to the same reality. She recognizes the friction between surface and depth, how surface can both disguise and display what lies beneath. People and places contain both past and present, and Pique confronts all of these—people, place, past, present—in order to embody the future. When Pique returns wearing her father’s belt around her waist

and carrying his songs in her bones, she embodies her Métis history both outside and inside. She is marking her body to signify her heritage. However, Pique also begins to see more clearly how her relationship with her father is separate from the relationship that Morag has with Jules. Morag admits that Jules phoned her when Pique was away. Pique questions Morag about why he called, and Morag responds:

‘I think he really phoned to tell me he’d seen you and you were okay. He always thought I was kind of—’

‘What?’

‘Bourgeois. Square.’

‘*Square*. I love your idiom Ma. It’s like an old dance tune from the forties.’

‘Brat. You wait. Yours will be passé, too.’

‘Well, *were* you, like, *square*?’

‘It all depends where you stand,’ Morag said. ‘To him, I suppose I was, at least in some ways. He thought I wanted things that he didn’t care about. I did, too, but then, later, I didn’t.’

‘What things?’

‘Oh—respectability, wall-to-wall carpets and that.’

‘Did you really? Poor Ma.’

‘Indeed. But it wasn’t all that bad. It wasn’t like that at all, really. I can’t explain.’ (253)

Pique questions Morag’s subject position and offers a critique of Morag’s language because Pique has been given another language through her father’s songs. From where Pique stands, it is Morag’s language that is old. From where Jules stands, Morag is bourgeois, yearning for a way of being in the world that transcends her lower-class background. To Jules, the transformation that Morag once desired is unimportant. The younger Morag’s version of modernism paid homage to a capitalist structure, even if it criticized patriarchy and imperialism. Jules believes that moving out of one’s class position is not as important as remembering and recreating familial and communal culture. Indeed, as previously demonstrated, voice in storytelling is what initially brings

Jules and Morag together. Both of them embody a fierce determination not to have their stories erased. This determination is also apparent in Pique.

Both Pique and Morag search for ways of representing their realities through language. Morag, however, is torn between her pleasure that Pique has received the songs from Jules and her jealousy that Jules has songs to give:

Could you hand over a stack of books to someone? Only to someone who wanted to read, presumably. Maybe Pique would read Morag's out of curiosity when Morag was pushing up daisies. But *songs*. And he had been singing them so long ago, long before everyone in sight began going around singing their own songs. Lucky bugger. God knows he'd had a rocky road, withal, though. (254)

Morag admires Jules's fortitude, his authenticity, his belief in his voice—and his ability to teach all this to Pique, as though songs are a medium of language that has more value than words on the page. Perhaps Jules's songs *do* have more value, at least for Pique. His songs connect to an oral tradition that retells the stories told by his father and his father's father. Jules's male family history, which connects to a prairie Métis history, is given to Pique. If Jules gives Pique Métis tales, then Morag teaches Pique how to include a woman's voice in these male stories, although neither Morag nor Pique understands Morag's teaching. Morag does not feel she can offer Pique this sense of belonging to a larger community because it is not yet something Morag owns for herself.

Morag's struggle with how to make words work for her is frustrating for both Morag and Pique. While Pique yearns for the stories, Morag struggles with ways of telling. Pique echoes her mother's frustration at being unable to explain her needs:

'Gord couldn't see how important it was to me. He thought it would be just the same if you listened to a record and picked up anybody else's song that way. I couldn't explain. It was kind of strange to see him again, my dad. Did you love him?'

Morag sat with her hands around the coffee mug. Thinking. How to reply and get across that much complexity in a single well-chosen phrase? Impossible.

‘I guess you could say love. I find words more difficult to define than I used to. I guess I felt—feel—that he was related to me in some way. I’d known him an awfully long time, you know. I mean, at the time when you were born, I’d known him an awfully long time *then*, even. I’m not sure *know* is the right word, there.’

‘Who cares about the right word?’ Pique cried. Then, suddenly, the hurt cry which must have been there for years, ‘Why did you *have* me?’ (254)

Morag is again faced with the task of making the invisible visible, making the complex simple, finding a way to order the chaotic. When Morag replies that she wanted Pique, Pique accuses Morag of being selfish, of not thinking of “him, or of me” (254). The friction between Morag and Pique is represented by silence and bridged by Pique’s hand touching Morag’s hand. This gesture, this touch across the table, both acknowledges the unsayable and resists complete separation.

When Pique’s boyfriend Gord interrupts this moment, Pique in frustration lashes out at him: “‘I’m going *out*. And don’t follow me, either, *see?*’” (256). Pique’s leaving reminds Morag of how leaving the house, in another time and place, enabled resistance and escape. When Morag is still married to Brooke, her novel *Spear of Innocence* is published, and her wordless state of inhabitation, of joyful union, becomes something else: “She strokes the skin of his shoulders and back. Then they make love, and it is fine, except that at one time it seemed an unworded conversation and connection and now it seems something else. An attempt at mutual reassurance, against all odds” (282). She knows now that she does not want to stay with Brooke, but she does not know how to leave him. Her dissatisfaction leads her to go out of the house and wander the city, a flâneuse, like Stacey, searching for a way out.

Feeling “separated from herself” and “blind inside” (284), Morag finds her way out when she meets Jules in the street. The friction produced when their bodies touch is

a friction that enables Morag's escape from Brooke. When Morag and Jules are in bed together

she doesn't expect to be aroused, and does not even care if she isn't, as though this joining is being done for other reasons, some debt or answer to the past, some severing of inner chains which have kept her bound and separated from part of herself. She is, however, aroused quickly, surprised at the intensity of her need to have him enter her. She links her legs around his, and it is as though it is again that first time. Then they both reach the place they have been travelling towards, and she lies beside him, spent and renewed. (292-93)

When Jules and Morag are joined, Morag compresses time and space by returning to their prairie past. She finds strength in that time and place and is able to connect again to her self in order to transform and transcend her current confinement. Jules reminds her of her personal and communal prairie past, and "She wants only to touch him, someone from a long long way back, someone related to her in ways she cannot define and feels no need of defining" (288). The relationship between Jules and Morag is based on a collective past that they shared as children and adolescents, and on marginalization. Regardless of where they travel, Jules and Morag will always have the prairie and each other in their bodies.

5.5 "back and forth"

Pique's safe return and her movement out of the Morag's house coincide with Morag shedding her wife skin and growing her mother skin. Now that Pique is home safely, Morag's memories incorporate Pique's birth and childhood. It is as though when Pique was away, Morag could see herself only in Pique's travels; she could not figure herself as mother. In addition, Pique's proximity to Morag brings space and time closer together. The present and the past are interspersed in the narrative on a more regular

basis, and the resulting stories are characteristically shorter in length. The past is catching up to the present.

Furthermore, if the structure of the novel is conceptualized as a bowtie, or a sideways X, with Morag's narrative as one line and Pique's as the other, then this moment in the novel is the place where those two lines cross and the order reverses. Indeed, Morag herself says, "These kids [Pique and Dan] reversed the order of life, staying up all night and sleeping most of the day. *Order*. For heaven's sake. It flowed in Morag's veins, despise it though she might. What possible differences did it make if the kids wanted to turn the days around?" (307). The answer to this question is what finally ends the novel: "She had known it all along, but not really known. The gift, or portion of grace, or whatever it was, was finally withdrawn, to be given to someone else" (477). The difference is that Pique and her stories are the future. Pound's modernist mandate to make it new is made new when it is given to the next generation.

To return to the narrative present that I began discussing at the opening of the last paragraph, this moment of narrative reversal is a moment when Pique recognizes that it is time for another change, time for her to move out of her mother's house. Significantly, she repeats a gesture that signals understanding across difference. When Pique and Dan approach Morag about living at the Smiths' on the other side of the river from Morag, there is "Silence. Then astonishment. Pique had taken one of her hands and Dan the other" (310). This gesture of joining hands among three people constructs a triangle, half of a bowtie. Pique says, "'We'll be back and forth a lot'" (311), and she means that they will be back and forth across the river, back and forth between their new home and Morag's place. Pique and Dan will be travelling across the current of the river; they will be resisting its pull from both ways, creating their own order. In this

section, Pique signifies a reversal of order and the creation of a new order, which causes Morag to name Pique, “*harbinger of my death, continuer of life*” (312).

Now that Pique has returned from the coast, Morag remembers her own time there, pregnant with Pique and without Brooke. Her new novel *Prospero's Child* rewrites *The Tempest* from Miranda's point of view, thus usurping the power of the male artist and passing it on to his daughter. This provides another example of the necessity of creating a new order of being and another way that the signifier *child* represents the future as a critique of the present. Notably, this section also represents the initial meeting between Pique and her father. Jules shows five-year-old Pique a picture of herself at two-months-old, a snapshot he keeps in his wallet. On the back of the picture, Pique's name is written: “*Piquette Gunn Tonnerre. In that order*” (362). Ordering and naming, like storytelling, vary according to the subject position of the namer or the speaker. Pique moves between the names Gunn and Tonnerre depending upon who is doing the naming. How Pique decides to name herself is still undetermined. Pique begins to learn from her father her Tonnerre heritage. Through songs, he teaches Pique the tales that he told Morag. And at night, when Pique is asleep, Jules and Morag “make love urgently, both equal to each other's body in this urgent meeting and grappling, this brief death of consciousness, this conscious defiance of death” (365). Jules teaches Pique how to creatively displace stories that do not include her Métis history, and together Jules and Morag corporeally defy death through their love-making and through the life of their child, who will live to tell their stories in her own way.

5.6 “west again”

Pique’s identity is fluid and therefore connected with the river that flows both ways. Pique’s movements back and forth between Gunn and Tonnerre are an example of the potential embodied in her multiple subject positions. Indeed, Pique experiments with new ways of signifying her hybrid identity. She marks her body so that she has control of her narrative beyond the level of skin. She wears her father’s brass-buckled belt, and she wears her hair in braids. When Morag asks her why she is wearing the braids, the following rather lengthy conversation takes place:

“Cooler. Keeps it away from my face in this weather. Also, I’m part-Indian—it’s suitable, isn’t it?”

“I don’t think I’m hearing you very accurately. What’re you trying to say?”

“I don’t know,” Pique said. “I don’t want to be split. I want to be together. But I’m not. I don’t know where I belong.”

“Does it have to be either/or?”

Pique’s eyes became angry.

“I don’t guess you would know how it feels. Yes, maybe it does have to be either/or. But I was brought up by you. I never got much of the other side.”

Once again, the reproach. Not to Jules; to Morag. When Pique wielded that particular knife, it always found its mark, as she very well knew.

“I told you what I could.”

“Sure,” Pique said. “But that wasn’t much, was it? I never knew what really happened. There was only that one time, when my dad was here—when I was fifteen, eh? And he said a lot of things. And the songs—I’ve got those. And he said some more, when I saw him in Toronto, this time. But some of those stories you used to tell me when I was a kid—I never knew if they happened like that or not.”

“Some did and some didn’t, I guess. It doesn’t matter a damn. Don’t you see?”

“No,” Pique said, “I don’t see. I want to know what really happened.”

Morag laughed. Unkindly, perhaps.

“You do, eh? Well, so do I. But there’s no one version. There just isn’t.”

“Maybe not,” Pique said, dispiritedly. “I’m sorry, Ma, going on like this. It’s part of things which are worrying me.” (373)

Part of what is worrying Pique is the feeling that she needs “to go west again” (375) to find out where she belongs. At this point, Pique believes that belonging is related to

place and that identity can only be one side or the other, connected to the mother or to the father. Pique feels that in order to determine her own identity she needs to go home, which is the prairie place of her ancestors. In this section Pique signifies home, which includes issues related to belonging and ancestry.

Pique's need to "take off again" (376) brings her boyfriend Dan Scranton to Morag's door for explanations about why Pique has to leave and why Morag seems not to like him. Pique's leaving and Dan's desperation lead Morag back to her past connection with another man named Dan and to her acceptance that "the whole town [of Manawaka] was inside my head, for as long as I live" (376). With this statement, Morag displaces both the land and the individual as singular heroes. Instead, each is connected to the other. Place exists in the bodies of its inhabitants because the inhabitants lived upon the land. Home is people, not place. Dan recognizes this as soon as he sees Pique (378), but it takes Morag until Scotland to understand that home is located in the bodies of people.

When Morag finally goes to Scotland with her lover Dan McRaith, she comes to the realization that she does not need to go to Sutherland to see the place from which her people came. She says, "The myths are my reality" (415). This affirmation of narrative refers to all of Pique's questions about what is real. This privileging of story does not mean that the land is erased, however. Instead, Morag acknowledges that the land of her ancestors is "Christie's real country. Where I was born" (415). Again, this use of the word *real* connotes one of the ways of reclaiming modernism as formulated by Charles Taylor: the search for individual authenticity while remaining connected to one's past. When Morag refers to Christie's real country, Canada, she defines home as the place where one is born. This complex interrelationship between home as place and as people

deconstructs the either/or binary that Pique both clings to and dismisses. Since the land cannot be separated from the body of the individual or the community, feminist modernist narratives defy destruction as long as there are stories to pass on and people to listen.

5.7 “to ride yourself”

Reclaiming a modernist sensibility does not mean the loss of individual subjectivity. On the contrary, it is crucial to celebrate an individual’s distinct identity. Indeed, an individual cannot connect with others until she is at home with her self. Pique’s fierce individualism is connected to her desperation for a history or a symbol that defines her seemingly divided identity. When Dan Scranton buys a palomino as the first horse in his stable, Pique says, “I think you just wanted him to ride yourself” (434). Morag reads Pique’s criticism as envy of Dan’s freedom and his contentment. Pique is a subject in motion who has been in one place for too long, and Morag recognizes this:

What of Pique? She was not settled here. Maybe never would be. Committed to Dan, but how much? Having to move on, hit the road? For how long?

Pique picked up her guitar and began to sing. Around her, there was an area of silence, as though all of them, all in this room, here, now, wanted to touch and hold her, and could not, did not dare tamper with her aloneness. She began to sing one of Jules’ songs, the song for Lazarus. Her voice never faltered, although she was crying. (436)

The singer, like the storyteller, is an individual who is both separate from and connected to her audience. When Pique sings her songs, she opens a space that is called silence even though it is filled with the sound of her voice. She signifies aloneness, even though she is surrounded by people. She signifies pain through weeping, even though her voice does not falter. What she signifies most fully in this section is sorrow. Her songs and

Jules's songs are lamentations for lost ancestors. Pique defies their deaths by keeping their stories alive with her voice.

Pique's tears take Morag back three years to another time when songs and stories accompanied weeping. When Pique is fifteen, Jules comes back and sings Pique more songs about her Tonnerre history. He sings to her of victories and tells her stories of deaths. By sharing with her the past, he resists a repetition of it. When Pique begins crying, Jules shows her the one tangible possession of his that once belonged to Lazarus. The section is pivotal because Pique finally obtains proof that she can touch, which connects her parents. Pique bears witness to the exchange between Morag and Jules as Morag receives the plaid pin and gives the knife to Jules. This exchange signifies the end of Morag's memories in the novel. Laurence brings the Manawaka novels full circle when Morag adopts the Currie crest and war cry. When the next section begins, Morag's narrative is all in the present, although it gestures to the future.

5.8 "the river . . . like voices"

The final section of the novel opens with Pique finally telling Morag about her visit to Manawaka. Order is reversed as child and mother switch places as storytellers. Indeed, the body of the novel ends with Morag setting down the title of her finished narrative, while the Tonnerre songs extend beyond Morag's title. When Pique tells Morag about going into the valley to see the Tonnerre place, she says, "It seemed I really knew then that all of them had lived there, once. . . . It was very quiet. I could hear the river—it's really more a creek, isn't it? It sounded kind of like voices" (461). Pique hears the sound of voices in the river and writes a song about how the "valley and the mountain hold [her] name" (465). Morag's acknowledgment that place exists in the

blood of the people and Pique's song about how the names of the people are embodied in the landscape speak profoundly to the interrelationship between people and place. There is silence after Pique finishes singing, and then there is the familiar gesture of reaching out and touching hands as Pique and Morag connect across the space that exists between them.

**“I am slowly learning, sometimes
returning to where I started and beginning
to learn again,
not to ask,
but to lay my body down, like a river.”**

**—Melanie Cameron
untitled, from “Floating Ophelia”**

6. CONCLUSION: HER BODY, A RIVER

The literature of a nation represents people's lived experiences and the places where those experiences occur, and Margaret Laurence's Manawaka novels represent the struggles of many Canadian women to come to voice. By contextualizing the Manawaka novels—*The Stone Angel*, *A Jest of God*, *The Fire-Dwellers*, and *The Diviners*—as works that contribute to a revisionist Canadian literary modernism, the reader sees that the novels are revolutionary in the ways that they reimagine the nation out of repressive social structures through the liberated female individual. Each protagonist struggles to define her own individual identity within her communities. It is not until Morag in *The Diviners*, however, that a protagonist reaches past her individual history to touch several communal histories which strategically reconstruct an imagined community out of complex immigrant and Métis mythologies. When all four novels are considered together, the community of Manawaka becomes visible, even if the individual protagonists are not quite certain of their places in that community. The imagined community that appears is a timeless and timely place grounded in the mythic and the local, a place of both return and regeneration.

The primary protagonists of the Manawaka novels—Hagar, Rachel, Stacey, and Morag—embody different aspects of a feminist modernist struggle to find an identity that represents both individual and collective unity and difference. In order to acknowledge her complex identity, each protagonist must reconcile her contemporary individualism with her communal past to imagine an alternative future. Each

protagonist voices feelings of separation and isolation as she contemplates her relationship to the landscape and to the people that are part of her community. One aspect of this past relates to the dynamics between the protagonists' ancestors, the Scots-Irish settlers and townspeople, and their neighbours, the Ukrainians and the prairie Métis peoples. Each protagonist makes visible the conflicts and communities that exist between lower-class and middle-class, rural and urban, young and aging, desire and regret, women and men, Métis and white.

This dissertation posits a feminist Canadian modernism that is a revolutionary movement which challenges hegemonic ideologies and represents a society that is unified in its diversity. It is important to understand some of the main historical events that inform the creation of this particular strand of modernism, including the second wave feminist movement in Canada, the federal policy of multiculturalism, and the nationalist climate surrounding Canada's centennial year. It is also important to note that government strategies, which were implemented to respond to the concerns of the people, did not adequately represent the complex concerns surrounding issues of gender, race, sexuality, ethnicity, class, and region. Recalling Nietzsche's placement of aesthetics above politics, it follows that artists, and especially writers, are the ones to represent the complexity of Canadian identity while offering a critique of the structures upon which that identity is based.

I have already looked quite closely at some of the reasons why feminist modernist liberatory strategies of creative displacement and corporeal defiance need to address issues of language and body, of coming to voice and of embracing sexuality. I have also examined how each of the primary protagonists in the *Manawaka* novels addresses at least one of these issues in a moment or repeated action that expresses

simultaneously the ephemeral and the eternal. Each transformative moment is an expression of protest against a dominant ideology. I began each chapter with the image of a train and an analysis of what the train represents in each novel. In general, the train is a modernist man-made way of ordering and mastering the landscape. The train's movements are always linear, even when the parallel lines are curved, and primarily forward. To conclude this dissertation, I will argue against the train as a primary modernist image of order and posit the river—or water—as another way of ordering time and place. Waterways organize the landscape as part of the geography, and the movements of the water are quite ambiguous. As Laurence says, the river flows both forwards and backwards.

The Manawaka novels are revolutionary in how they re-vision Canadian identity beyond a dual French-English identity and beyond patriarchal social structures. Each novel focuses on an individual who struggles to transcend the limitations placed upon her by patriarchal society. Together these novels create a community of women who resist the status quo by transgressing the boundaries of past and present, memory and forgetting, reality and imagination. Through these transgressive moments, the women offer subversive strategies that promote social change. Manawaka becomes a place of return and regeneration as each protagonist remembers her prairie past and transforms that past into a hopeful future for the nation. Each protagonist's timeless moment contributes to the creation of a fluid historical pattern that is a fleeting and immutable story which becomes part of an identity.

6.1 Transgressions and transformations

Hagar's transformative moment is a moment when she names and then conquers the wilderness that is both an external and an internal landscape. Before Hagar can perform her fish-cannery transformation, however, she must traverse and conquer a wasteland by the sea. She is a questing hero who needs to survive trials in the wilderness before reaching her destination. In order to make her way back to the fish-cannery from the beach, Hagar must climb a forested hill:

Walking is difficult. I skid and slide on brown pine needles that lie thickly over the ground. Crashing, I stumble through ferns and rotten boughs that lie scattered like old bones. Cedars lash my face, and my legs are lacerated with brambles. . . . And then I do fall. . . . I grow enraged. I curse like Bram, summoning every blasphemy I can lay my hands on, screeching them into the quiet forest. Perhaps the anger gives me strength, for I clutch at a bough, not caring if it's covered with pins and needles or not, and yank myself upright. There. There. I knew I could get up alone. I've done it. Proud as Napoleon or Lucifer, I stand and survey the wasteland I've conquered. (190-91)

Hagar reaches back into both her prairie past with Bram and into a historical and literary past with Napoleon and Lucifer and summons enough strength to conquer the wasteland and stand on her own, both literally and metaphorically. In this moment, Hagar recognizes her individual strength and also realizes that her connection to literal and fictional pasts has helped her be strong in the present.

Significantly, Hagar also alters the role of a male hero, such as Napoleon or Lucifer or Faust. Instead of attempting to conquer the wasteland in order to change it, Hagar sits down and enjoys her time in "this green blue-ceilinged place, warm and cool with sun and shade . . . Perhaps I've come here not to hide but to seek" (192). In this moment, she sees herself as a questing and questioning heroine who changes herself

rather than changing the landscape. Indeed, a reciprocal touching occurs between Hagar and the landscape: “Beside me grows a shelf of fungus, the velvety underside a mushroom color, and when I touch it, it takes and retains my fingerprint” (192). She leaves her mark on the wilderness, but this action is not creative destruction. This action is an acknowledgment of her own identity, a simultaneous marking and being marked.

Rachel is the only Manawaka protagonist who still lives in Manawaka, so instead of using memory and imagination to incorporate her prairie home into her present, Rachel uses her imagination to take her away from what she believes is a confining space. Rachel is also the only protagonist who reflects upon the connection between the train and the water, and this reflection builds community across space because the memory causes her to long for her sister (173). However, she also takes refuge in places of confinement. As they are with Hagar, for Rachel, the forest and the water are transformative places:

—A forest. Tonight it is a forest. Sometimes it is a beach. It has to be right away from everywhere. Otherwise she may be seen. The trees are green walls, high and shielding, boughs of pine and tamarack, branches sweeping to earth, forming a thousand rooms among the fallen leaves. She is in the green-walled room, the boughs opening just enough to let the sun in, the moss hairy and soft on the earth. She cannot see his face clearly. His features are blurred as though his were a face seen through water. She sees only his body distinctly, his shoulders and arms deeply tanned, his belly flat and hard. He is wearing only tight-fitting jeans, and his swelling sex shows. She touches him there, and he trembles, absorbing her fingers’ pressure. Then they are lying along one another, their skins slippery. His hands, his mouth are on the wet warm skin of her inner thighs. Now—

I didn’t. I didn’t. It was only to be able to sleep. The shadow prince. Am I unbalanced? Or only laughable? That’s worse, much worse. (25)

Like the landscape that retains Hagar’s fingerprint, the skin of Rachel’s imaginary lover absorbs Rachel’s touch. By touching and being touched, Rachel breaks out of closed systems of thought and action. Rachel’s imagination takes her out of her bedroom and

into an outer room, a room in the forest that anticipates the place where she will eventually have sex with Nick, where her imaginary lover becomes tangible. In this masturbatory scene, Rachel brings herself to orgasm and then questions her motives as though pleasure cannot be a motive, as though pleasure for a woman without a man makes her laughable.

Rachel's concerns with balance and stability continue throughout the novel as Rachel ruminates on her view of the world:

Nothing is clear now. Something must be the matter with my way of viewing things. I have no middle view. Either I fix on a detail and see it as though it were magnified—a leaf with all its veins perceived, the fine hair on the back of a man's hands—or else the world recedes and becomes blurred, artificial, indefinite, an abstract painting of a world. The darkening sky is hugely blue, gashed with rose, blood, flame pouring from the volcano or wound or flower of the lowering sun. The wavering green, the sea of grass, piercingly bright. Black tree trunks, contorted, arching over the river.

Only Nick's face is clear. Prominent cheekbones, slightly slanted eyes, his black straight hair. Before, it seemed a known face because I knew the feeling of it, the male smell of his skin, the faint roughness along his jaw. Now it seems a hidden Caucasian face, one of the hawkish and long-ago riders of the Steppes.

I'm dramatizing. To make all this seem mysterious or significant, instead of what it is, which is embarrassing, myself standing gawkily here with no words, no charms of either kind, neither any depth nor any lightness. (91-92)

Rachel's vision—her absence of a middle view—reflects her inability to live in the present moment. She questions her way of viewing the world, claiming that she has neither words nor charms while she simultaneously creates an apocalyptic modernist aesthetic that is both horrific and beautiful. The wounded sky hovers over a sea of prairie grass. Contorted trees twist over the river. Rachel's internal geography is apparent in the way she translates the prairie landscape. It is in this act of dramatization that she transforms herself from an embarrassed virgin into an imaginative lover.

This landscape in which she stands with Nick is also the landscape of her imagination. Time and space compress as Nick's clear face becomes the blurred and

unrecognizable face of a mythical hero, the “shadow prince” who visits her in the night. The forest of her fantasies is the place in which she now sits, and Nick defines this forested space by the river as “neutral territory” that is neither the town nor the farm. Rachel interprets this definition as a place that is “neither one side nor the other” (93), a place that does not follow the division in the town, which the people have created and the train tracks have made visible. The river is the middle space, the neutral territory; it is the transformative place where anything can happen.

When Rachel returns from the river, she has changed from a person who has no middle view to a person who exists in a middle space: “There are three worlds and I’m in the middle one, and this seems now to be a weak area between millstones” (100). Rachel sees this middle area as now seemingly weak because it is complex and because it contains ambiguities and contradictions. She is not yet able to fully see complexities, ambiguities, and contradictions as sources of strength and liberation, although she verges on this realization. This middle world might be characterized as the present world, the one that exists between past and future. It may be a world that exists between birth and death. Regardless, this is a world that reorders a binary system that posits only two options. Rachel has gone through a prairie version of a sea-change down by the river. She has transformed the prairie grass into the sea and has seen that the enclosed Manawaka may also be changed into a place that contains another option beyond the either/or binary of self and other, the structure upon which Manawaka resides, according to Rachel.

Rachel’s first thought after she returns home from the river and settles her mother into bed is, “I wish I could tell my sister” (100). Rachel understands that Stacey would celebrate this change. Like Rachel, Stacey is also going through a sea-change.

Rachel needs to touch her self and live in the present, while Stacey needs to touch her past in order to transcend her present. Rachel's transformation and regeneration occur through imagination and dramatization, while Stacey transforms herself through imagination and memory. Both protagonists perform these acts beside the water, and both acts are related to recognizing and celebrating the body as a site of pleasure.

Like Hagar's, Stacey's transgressive moment occurs while she is running away. Also like Hagar's, Stacey's leaving is an escape. Stacey MacAindra, who used to be and still is Stacey Cameron, needs to escape from the hands and voices in her house, especially the hands and voice of her husband, Mac. The night before she escapes "he makes hate with her, his hands clenched around her collarbones and on her throat until she is able to bring herself to speak the release. *It doesn't hurt. You can't hurt me.* But afterwards neither of them can sleep. Finally, separately, they each rise and take a sleeping pill" (150). However, it is not the damage done to her body that leads to her leaving. What finally leads to her leaving is that Mac tells her to leave him alone, after she asks him whether they could "just talk about everything I mean like everything" (154). Stacey yearns for verbal as well as corporeal communication. Like Rachel's broken bones, Stacey's wounds are present but not visible.

Mac's father, Matthew, touches these invisible wounds and predicts Stacey's sea-change. As usual, Matthew comes over for Sunday lunch and shares the text of the sermon with Stacey: "*Save me, O God, for the waters are come in unto my soul*" (152). Stacey goes upstairs, locks herself in the bathroom, and cries, releasing the waters. However, in order to complete the sea-change, Stacey must escape the house that is the place of her confinement. Indeed, she flees not only her house but all houses, symbols of isolation. In modern society, houses separate people from each other. Walls are built

to keep people in and to keep neighbours out. Cities are structured to enclose individuals rather than to create communities. Stacey transgresses the boundaries of separation and drives to the water.

Stacey sees the city as a wasteland that she must conquer and escape in order to transform herself:

She heads into the city along streets now inhabited only by the eternal flames of the neon forest fires . . . Then through the half-wild park where the giant firs and cedars darken the dark sky, and across the great bridge that spans the harbor . . . Along the highway that leads up to the Sound, finally and at last away from habitation, where the road clings to the mountain and the evergreens rise tall and gaunt, and the saltwater laps blackly on the narrow shore, and the stars can be seen, away from human lights. (154-55)

The city, for Stacey, is a place of hopelessness, a place where there are “a few old men with nowhere to go or youngsters with nothing to do” (154). It is a place that arranges shacks beside “garden-surrounded houses” (154-55). It is a place where neither the young nor the old, neither the impoverished nor the rich, touch or speak to each other.

Finally, Stacey gets past the houses to the beach: “She walks slowly, brushing aside the thorned tendrils of blackberry bushes, past the dwelling half-concealed in the undergrowth, the light glowing uncertainly from one window. She makes her way slippingly to the shore” (158). This stumbling journey and subsequent rest upon a log recall Hagar’s quest in the forest, as though each heroine must survive the trials of a journey before reaching her destination. Whereas Hagar’s log in the forest retains her fingerprint, Stacey’s log “is only slightly damp on the surface, although sea-soaked at its core” (158). The sea-soaked log upon which Stacey sits reflects Stacey’s own watery condition, where the surface of her body reveals only a trace of her inner condition. This beach as destination contains both the fleeting and the eternal as Stacey is

connected to Hagar and Rachel through their translations of and interactions with the landscape, which reflects their modernist conditions.

As do Hagar and Rachel, Stacey regards the water and the sky and sees that they embody contradictions, for they are both calm and rough, proximate and distant, intimate and alien:

In front of her, the black water dances lightly, glancingly, towards the shore . . . Out deeper, the water is more rough, breaking in wind-stirred crests. No night clouds, and the sky is as black as the water, but shot through with stars which one instant look close, earth-related, lights provided for us, small almost cozy night-lights to keep us from the dark, and the next instant look like themselves and alien, inconceivably far, giant, and burning, not even hostile or anything identifiable, only indifferent. (158)

Dancing is one of Stacey's strategies for resisting the confinement of her present condition (125), and she sees the water echoing this strategy. Stacey also sees the water containing aspects of both lightness and depth, qualities which connect back to Rachel's identity and vision. Stacey also shares Rachel's manner of seeing the landscape—in this instance the stars—in two ways: both intimate and comforting, and distant and indifferent. For both sisters, the outer landscape encourages inner contemplation and a return to a regenerative and liberating moment. For Rachel this moment occurs in her nightly masturbatory fantasies, while for Stacey this moment occurs in her memory.

Time and space compress when Stacey's memory takes her to Diamond Lake, first as a ten-year-old and then as an eighteen-year-old. At ten, the voices of loons fascinate Stacey because they are voices "that cared nothing for lights or shelter or the known quality of home" (159). These voices mock the confinement of home and speak to Stacey of alternative ways of living. At eighteen, Diamond Lake is a place where she questions her limits, tentatively with her mind and confidently with her body:

She was a strong swimmer, and when she reached the place where she could see the one spruce veering out of the rock on the distant point, she always turned back, not really accepting her limits, believing she could have gone on across the lake, but willing to acknowledge this arbitrary place of reference because it was further out than most of her friends could swim. . . . Stacey, swimming back to shore . . . thinking already of the dance she would go to that evening, feeling already the pressure on her lake-covered thighs of the boys (161, no end punctuation in original)

Stacey places her beliefs beside her actions, using the landscape and her friends as points of reference. She believes she can go beyond the limits, but she does not put this belief into action. Instead of pushing past her self-imposed limits she nudges against them, always turning back. However, this fleeting moment of memory, which is eternally accessible, enables Stacey to finally “Crash. Out of the inner and into the outer” (161) as she transgresses limits she has internalized.

Stacey finally pushes past her inhibitions, the confinement of both house and society, by returning to her body as a source of pleasure and resistance. Stacey meets Luke Venturi there by the water and he names her “merwoman,” confirming that he “look[s] at things from some very different point of view” (164). This point of view, however, is one that Stacey understands, although for her it has always meant isolation rather than connection. Luke is someone who understands the importance of speech and imagination to such an extent that Stacey asks him, “You’re real? You’re not real. I’m imagining” (165). She cannot quite believe that this outer world can contain imagination and conversation. She is “unable for the moment to believe the easiness of his words” (166). Like Hagar’s and Rachel’s, Stacey’s hiding becomes a seeking as Luke encourages her to “Come out. From wherever you’re hiding yourself” (167). And Stacey does come out from hiding. This initial accidental visit is one of conversation only. The next time they meet Stacey intentionally seeks Luke.

A transformation occurs when the accidental becomes the intentional, when hiding becomes seeking, when beliefs form actions. When Stacey goes back to see Luke, she is the first one to touch the other. Stacey's body responds to and searches for pleasure through dancing and through sex: "She reacts as she once did to jazz, taking it as it was told to her unverbally, following the beat. Luke takes her hand and puts it on his sex. The surge in her own sex is so great that she presses herself hard against him, urging him" (186). By connecting to dance as the pleasure of her prairie past, which is contained in her body, Stacey reorders time and space through memory and action. This modernist re-creation strategically regenerates Stacey as she returns to eighteen at forty, as she escapes the chaos of the city to find pleasure by the water.

This recognition of the landscape's order and transformative qualities occurs in several places and in many ways in *The Diviners*. The mountain and the valley provide a basis for Pique's identity, while the "river of now and then" orders the novel and serves as an image of both return and regeneration for Morag. This river is an appropriate sign for a feminist Canadian modernism rooted in the prairie because it contains the "apparently impossible contradiction" of being able to exist in both the past and present while simultaneously signifying a geographical space that is both here and there, both McConnell's Landing and Manawaka: "The river flowed both ways. The current moved from north to south, but the wind usually came from the south, rippling the bronze-green water in the opposite direction. This apparently impossible contradiction, made apparent and possible, still fascinated Morag, even after the years of river-watching" (11). By watching the river, Morag returns in memory to the prairie and these memories form the basis of her regeneration and her creation of communal narratives. These narratives interweave memory, history, and story—both Tonnerre and

Gunn/Logan family history. As an adult, Morag chooses to live by a river, acknowledging the personal history of the settlers like Catharine Parr Traill who first lived in her home and her district, and reflecting on the communal present that is forming around her.

The “river of now and then” flows into the Wachakwa River in Morag’s memory. As with Hagar, Rachel, and Stacey, the landscape mirrors Morag’s inner conflicts and contains the outer contradictions apparent in a modern condition. The way in which each protagonist interprets the landscape reveals how she views her self in relation to people and place:

Hill Street, so named because it was on one part of the town hill which led down into the valley where the Wachakwa River ran, glossy brown, shallow, narrow, more a creek than a river. They said “crick,” there. Down in the valley the scrub oak and spindly pale-leafed poplars grew, alongside the clumps of chokecherry bushes and wolf willow. The grass there was high and thick, undulating greenly like wheat, and interspersed with sweet yellow clover. But on Hill Street there were only one or two sickly Manitoba maples and practically no grass at all.

I didn’t see it in that detail at first. I guess I must have seen it as a blur.
(36-37)

Morag remembers the vision of her youth to be blurred. In hindsight, Morag acknowledges the difference between the landscape of the valley and the landscape of Hill Street. She sees the valley as a lush place in contrast to the stark street upon which she lives. This reflects Morag’s inner geography as she constructs her condition as one of lack. Morag’s youth is the wasteland that she must conquer and re-vision. She achieves this clarity and detail from both spatial and temporal distances when she recognizes that Manawaka and its people are “inside [her] head, for as long as [she] lives” (376). The river of now and then is an analogue to the prairie river that flows timelessly in her blood.

Hagar, Rachel, Stacey, and Morag all strive to change their present conditions by overcoming feelings of loss or lack. They succeed in their endeavours by beginning with imagination and memory and then continuing the process through acts of intimacy with another person. If one of the primary objectives of modernism is to transform both self and community through art, then Morag has gone the farthest in initiating social change through human action. Morag's relationship with Jules Tonnerre creates an alternative paradigm for the myth of Canadian identity. Morag and Jules's counter-hegemonic voices unite to resist an imperial ideology that posits a Canadian identity founded on "two solitudes." That this model emerges from the prairie also resists a model of Canada where power is located in the east, primarily Ontario. It is also crucial that the relationship between Jules and Morag is sustained and cherished from childhood to adulthood, regardless of the large gaps in time that separate their meetings. With Jules, Morag learns new languages and new stories that she transforms from the male-centred Tonnerre and Logan narratives into tales that speak of women's experiences and desires.

David Harvey discusses Martin Heidegger's rejection of universalizing myths claiming that Heidegger "proposed, instead, a counter-myth of rootedness in place and environmentally-bound traditions as the only secure foundation for political and social action in a manifestly troubled world" (35). The Manawaka novels, and *The Diviners* in particular, create a counter-myth based on community and diversity within community. This Manawaka myth-making also transcends time and space because it is accessible through memory and story. The prairie myth exists in the bodies of its inhabitants, regardless of where they stand. This is how the prairie and the nation become timeless places of return and regeneration.

The final image of the river in *The Diviners* is a modernist image because it contains contradictions and ambiguities, beauty and horror, destruction and creation:

How far could anyone see into the river? Not far. Near shore, in the shallows, the water was clear, and there were the clean and broken clamshells of creatures now dead, and the wavering of the underwater weed-forests, and the flicker of small live fishes, and the undulating lines of gold as the sand ripples received the sun. Only slightly further out, the water deepened and kept its life from sight. (477)

Frank Davey in his article “Representations of Silence in *The Diviners*” reads this image as “one that operates to unify all the disparate and conflicting elements of *The Diviners* within a single universally accessible sign” (40). He goes on to say that what is implicit “is not conflict but complacency . . . [where] the overall result is finally offered . . . as mere beauty . . . whose meaning transcends social contradiction and human action” (42). I read the river as a fluid sign that represents unity and diversity. It does not erase difference. It contains both the eternal and the fleeting as the currents change the configuration of the river at any given moment while the river itself keeps flowing. Within this image are “creatures now dead” as well as “small live fishes.” The river contains both surface and depth, and while the river close to shore is readable, not far out, life is kept from sight. This is not complacency but is recognition that all stories are not accessible to all readers or to all storytellers. For example, while Morag can imagine what is contained in the depths of the river, as she can imagine the stories that Pique embodies, Morag can neither see nor tell any more than what Pique chooses to share. As the titular image suggests, *The Diviners* is a novel that explores the mysterious and perhaps sacred task of finding water, of finding a fluid and potentially transformative element.

6.2 Beginning another cycle out from Manawaka

Mainstream modernist narratives construct an archetypal Faustian hero as a lone individual on a quest for change that relies on creative destruction. Feminist modernist narratives creatively displace narratives of destruction and replace them with stories of transformation in which the individual, the community, and the landscape are transformed. Laurence makes the connection among novels explicit when she thematically and semantically connects each primary protagonist to another. Communities and cycles, like the ones created in the Manawaka novels, dismantle the hierarchical binary that is part of Canada's founding myth. Canada is not constructed out of two founding nations or languages. The complex construction of Canada as a colonial and arguably postcolonial nation is made more visible when issues surrounding cultural diversity are examined. The divisions in Manawaka between town and farm, between Scots-Irish and Ukrainian, between hill and valley are made visible and then disregarded when Hagar marries Bram, when Rachel and Nick are lovers, and because of the connection between Morag and Jules. That Stacey embodies this prairie attitude of resistance is apparent when she has an affair with Luke. The English-French identity that is Canada's myth is problematized by making the diversity of the nation visible within the microcosm that is Manawaka. Through memory and imagination, hope and determination, Hagar, Rachel, Stacey, Morag, and Pique create a community that extends beyond the confines of space and time and re-visions the nation to include the voices and desires of women. That Pique is part of this pattern begins another cycle out from Manawaka and into the mountain where another landscape adds to the complexity

of identity, where another set of eyes re-visions the future, where another voice creates an imagined community.

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