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APPENDIX A

THE CANADIAN QUEST FOR IDENTITY

The word 'Canada', it is believed, comes from two Spanish words 'aca' and 'nada' meaning 'nothing here'. This notion of 'absence' innate in the name has haunted the Canadians throughout its socio-cultural history. Therefore the preoccupation with self-definition and the search for a distinctive Canadian identity has been a central aspect of the Canadian imagination and the discourse on identity is the Canadian discourse.

Although it is more than a century since Canada attained its sovereign status as a confederate country by the British, the search for a national identity continues. What might be called the essential act of 'naming' is (still) incomplete."

After the treaty of Paris in 1763, Britain gained control over most French possessions in the northern New World. Thereafter, for a little over hundred years, Canada remained a colony of the British Empire until it was granted a sovereign status by the British North America Act in 1867. The colonial experience engendered first ambivalence and subsequently ambiguity regarding the self and the other because of the conflicting desires to come to terms with the new reality and the simultaneous nostalgia for the (m) other culture. Since the initial immigrant population was largely from the British Isles, ties with the (m) other culture were deep rooted and tenacious. As a result, the colonial outlook continued to persist in Canada long after the imperial connection was severed.

While earlier it was the British colonial experience that engendered the colonial outlook, it is now the psychosocial and economic colonization of Canada by the U.S.A. that accounts for its existence. Cultural pluralism and disparity contribute to the continuation of the Canadian
enigma of identity. The multiplicity and heterogeneity of Canadian cultures give rise to eccentric attempts to look for regional identities as an alternative to the goal of seeking a homogenous national identity.

The adoption of the multi-cultural approach was a political need at the time of the Confederation. The Quebec Act of 1774 granted Quebec a separate status. Because of the widely spread and heterogeneous population and the presence of a powerful and expansionist US culture south of the border, it was a pragmatic choice to bring about a merger of the various provinces to form the Confederation. This would allow the provincial/ethnic difference to exist in a constitution that sanctioned the maintenance of the cultural or ethnic plurality. With the influx of immigrants from all parts of the world in recent times, Canada has become even more multicultural than before and the increasing multiplicity, owing to the multicultural ethos, confounds the question of a national identity even more.

What engage the Canadian writers’ psyche are the Jungian internal quest and the search for modes of relating oneself to the community and the communal heritage. Besides the colonial outlook and the American presence, its geography and its regional/cultural plurality render the Canadian quest for identity problematic. Vast distances, enormous regional and cultural difference and sparse and heterogeneous population disallow a sense of organic unit and a monolithic identity. “The question of Canadian identity, so far as it affects the creative imagination is not a ‘Canadian’ question at all, but a regional question.”

The French-English divide also constitutes the most destabilizing of all regional and cultural divisions obtaining in Canada. This divide has frustrated the image-projection of Canada as one nation both within and without the national borders. Inspite of being a confederate member of Canada, Quebec, the French-speaking province, has vehemently persisted in stressing its separate identity and has also resisted efforts to bring about a reproachment of a kind that can help obviate or nullify the sense of these being two nations in Canada.

Given such constraints, the Canadian quest for identity assumes a high degree of complexity. For Canadian writers intent on inventing the nation, the problem is:
How do we lift an environment to expression? How do we write in a new country? 

The discourse precipitates most visibly and vociferously in the post 1960’s. Writers seek particular means and modes to resolve the Canadian enigma of identity. The fictional narratives of these writers metaphorically problematize the Canadian quest – motif and their fictive structures, as metaphoric analogues, provide viable strategies to cope with the destabilizing sense of the absence of an adequate identity.

Margaret Laurence, having witnessed the naked effects of colonization through her African experience, is able to better understand her culture’s dilemma of identity consequenced by Canada’s colonial experience. In the fictional quests for self-discovery and self-actualization of her women protagonists, she metaphorically problematizes Canada’s similar quest. In as much as Laurence resolves her protagonists dilemma of identity through the process of their coming to terms with their past, she provides, in fictional terms, a viable mode to resolve the Canadian dilemma which, like that of her protagonists, issues from a fractured and conflictual relationship which is caused by the colonial experience.

Fiction is the form of literature most directly concerned with the image of man in society. An overview of the growth and development of the Canadian novel helps to examine the dialectics of the Canadian quest for identity obtaining in the post 1960s a dialogue with enhanced vigour. The post-1960 period is significant because of the pan-Canadian nationalist sentiment and the unusual literary and cultural ambience. This period marked the new beginnings in Canadian writings – figuratively known as the Canadian “Renaissance”.

Before 1900, there is little Canadian fiction of intrinsic literary worth. Besides Susanna Moodie’s Roughing it in the Bush, Major John Richardson’s novel Wacousta is a powerfully written frontier adventure thriller and a Canadian “gothic” romance. Frances Brooke’s The History of Emily Montagne (1769) has academic and historical interest from the pictures of Canadians’ life of her time.
Other novelists which embodied the grim and dour accounts of rural family life in the prairies are Margaret Laurence, Wiebe and Kroetsch. Among the most noteworthy of the time are Martha Ostenso’s *Wild Geese* (1925) and Robert Stead’s *Grain* (1926). Followed by Sinclair Ross’s *As for me and my House* (1941) W.O. Mitchells’ *Who has Seen the Wind* (1947), And Sheila Watson’s *The Double Hook* (1959).

In the second quarter of the 20th Century, Morley Callaghan and Hugh MacLennan dominated the literary scene in *Such is My beloved* (1934). *They shall inherit the Earth* (1935). *More Joy in Heaven* (1937) and *The Loved and the Lost* (1951), Callaghan explored human relationships of ordinary people in urban environments to produce moral fables. MacLennan’s novels *Barometer Rising* (1941), *Two Solitudes*, and *The Watch that Ends the Night* (1959). Explore the web of human inter-personal relationships against a rural milieu. *Two Solitudes* provides in fictional terms a resolution of the Anglo-French conflict towards acquiring a holistic Canadian identity and embodies the essentially Canadian quest archetype and constitutes an important proportion the Canadian Identity quest.

Sinclair Ross, W.O. Mitchell and Sheila Watson contributed to the evolution of the prairie fictive tradition and moved away in their novels from the realistic to the symbolic modes. This is indicative of the Canadian novel’s progressive growth and development marking new beginnings, which later culminated in the experimental fiction of the post 1960s years.

Significant events occurred in the second half of the 20th century, which helped accelerate the development of Canadian literature. On the political front, Canada broke the British Imperialist connection by the statute of Westminster (1949), thus asserting complete supremacy to its own parliament and adopted a Canadian as its Governor General in 1952. Canadians now acquired a better sense of independence and national pride. The Canada Council was set up in 1957, which later became a significant agency and catalyst to create a body of Canadian Literature. Robertson Davies, Ethel Wilson, Ernest Buckler, Mordecai Richler, Sheila Watson and Adela Wiseman began writing in the 1950s and enriched the evolving Canadian literary tradition.
Thus we see that there were three periods in the literary history of Canada. 1. Pre – 1943 period 2. Post 1943 period period (ending 1968) 3. The post 1968 period.

The 1960s are the most significant and decisive decade in Canadian cultural and literary history. Since the decade saw the centenary year making the completion of the 1867 confederation, there was a resurgence of nationalistic sentiments across Canada. The quest for identity became a national objective. The election of Pierre Trudeau in 1968 provided Canada with a Prime Minister in whom the French-English duality and dichotomy merged and metaphorically provided a hope for an eventual acquisition of a unitary and historic Canadian identity. The Expo’69 at Montreal became a symbol of national greatness.

It was against this background of resurgent nationalism that the Canadian Literary ‘renaissance’ took place in the post 60s. The climate was conducive to the flowering of Canadian literature. Frye, who in his Conclusion to the first edition of Klinck’s Literary History has castigated the critical evaluation of Canadian Literature as “a debunking project” (p.213), had to revise his opinion in the second edition of Literary History and admit that it was now “no longer a gleam in a paternal critic’s eye.”

Two broad patterns emerged in the post 60s to assert the Canadianness of the literature and acquire a place on the literary map of the world. One was to define the innate Canadian identity with reference to some or the other archetypal themes to motifs, experiences and images that in being specifically ‘Canadian’ served to establish a distinctive Canadian identity of the culture as well as literature. The other was to acquire a Canadian ‘Classic’ and thus have recognition for Canadian literature on the world literary map. These ‘longings of the post 60s belonged to a long-standing tradition that sprang from the early beginnings and precipitated more vigorously in the ongoing quest for a Canadian identity in the post 60s. Impelled by the desire to ‘define’ the Canadian identity, “critics of the early seventies, more than ever before asserted Canadian nationality as both the object of critical inquiry and its beneficiary”. It became important to recover distinctive Canadian archetypes Themes and content, rather than modes and methods of articulation became vital indices to establish a
distinctive identity. As a result "thematic criticism"\textsuperscript{7} gained prevalence and credence towards delineating and defining 'proof-typical' Canadian themes to recover an organic sense of a distinctive identity. It was also inevitable in a literature that lacked an adequate sense of an organically evolved and established literary tradition.

The novelists in the post sixties were increasingly concerned with the basic functions of returning over time, of examining the foundation of history, of exorcising ancient guilts and celebrating ancient heroism, of giving spirit to the land.\textsuperscript{8}

Margaret Laurence posits writer specific modes to reckon with the Canadian problematic and at the same time typifies the dominant cultural and literary preoccupations in the post sixties stage of the Canadian quest. In the course of this study, we have seen that Laurence has used viable modes to reckon with the Canadian dilemma of identity at the post 60s stage of the Canadian quest.

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APPENDIX B

THE METIS

A short background to the tragic history of the Metis in Manitoba and Saskatchewan would go as follows: Indians originally provided much of the labour force for the fur trade in the Canadian west. Gradually white traders and voyagers began to marry with the native population principally the Cree the salteaux and Assinibione. The mixed blood population increased and acquired a sense of cohesiveness. When fur traders were discharged, many remained in the North west with their Indian wives and families. Generally the French group was referred to as Metis and the English as half breeds. The Metis were largely migratory or nomadic whereas many of the English half-breed settled down to agricultural pursuits. ¹

For nearly two hundred years prior to 1969, Rupert's land the vast drainage basis of Hudson Bay was ruled like a feudal fiefdom by the Hudson Bay company, the company an incubus which had buried the area in apathy. By 1969, a sizable group of half breeds, French and English, lived in the valley near Fort Garry (now Winnipeg), their livelihood centered on the buffalo hunt, an enormous enterprise.

Indian and Metis had common bonds, including languages and both claimed territorial rights as aboriginal people. But the Metis were never accorded legal status by the Canadian Government. Their tragedy "climaxsed and epitomized the whole struggle of red man or brown against white'.³ In 1869 the Hudson Bay Company without informing the people of the area surrendered their Charter and sold the Canadian West to the Government in Ottawa (newly confederated two years before). White settlers had been slowly increasing for half a century and trade between the Metis and the Americans just to the South, was rapidly increasing in the 1860s. The Metis feared for the security of title to the lands on which they lived on the banks
of the Red and Qu'Appelle Rivers, while the Canadians, in central and eastern Canada, feared for the security of Ruperts' land against American encroachment. Louis Riel led the Manitoba Metis first in passive resistance to the Canadian surveyors, and finally in an armed rebellion. His provisional government stopped entry of the Canadian representatives in December, 1869 and seized Fort Garry and composed a list of constitutional demands most of which were made law the next year when Manitoba became the fifth province to enter the Dominion of Canada.

For Riel and his people it was a pyrrhic victory. His provisional government had executed Thomas Scott an Ontario Orangeman, after a court-martial. This act and Riel's unfortunate links with American supporters were largely responsible for the military force which took Fort Garry in the spring of 1870 and forced Riel into exile in the United States. As for the Manitoba Metis some received title to their farms and subsequently lost it to unscrupulous land speculators and white settlers. Ontario settlers (Laurence's ancestors among them) poured into Manitoba in the next few decades and altered its social make-up from a large proportion of French-speaking majority. The Metis were the tragic heirs to centuries of hostility between these groups in Canada.

After 1870, many of the Manitoba metis moved westward to the area of Batoche on the South Saskatchewan, where the Dumont family had lived, and helped lead the buffalo hunt. Between 1870 and 1885 (the second rebellion and the one which sealed the fate of this people). The Saskatchewan group was enlarged by Metis who had lost their land in Manitoba. It was a tortured time for Metis. The disappearance of the buffalo and the inevitable spread of white settlement westward doomed the way of life of Metis who depended on the buffalo for food and other necessities. By the late 1870s and early 1980s the Saskatchewan Metis were in fear for their land rights while pleas on their behalf from white intermediaries and their own petitions went unanswered by Ottawa.

Donald Creighton's two volume biography of Canada's founding father and greatest political leader explains the forces in central Canada which doomed the Metis to extinction as a people for the next eighty years. As a lawyer, Macdonald had played a leading part in the military
trials which followed the 1838 invasion and battle near Kingston; as a politician he had felt the weight of American pressures through two generations. The Metis fell between the Scylla of a vision of a British North America and the Charybdis of American Manifest Destiny.

Laurence’s fiction depicts the general contempt with which Metis were regarded in the latter part of the 19th and the 20th century. In a primitive or frontier society their invaluable abilities won the Metis a fair degree of social acceptance. As the fur trade declined, white civilization spread westward, and the buffalo became almost extinct. Metis’ usefulness to white society declined and with that change came a growing contempt for an illiterate, nomadic group.

The whites saw the Metis as not merely uneducated but improvident. The Metis maintained a strong sense of individual liberty and egalitarian democracy. Woodcock describes the Metis attitude as one of anarchic egoism towards the weak. The “uneducated” Metis could often speak half a dozen languages (French, English, and different Indian languages). They could ride and shoot and were superb hunters, tappers, guides.

In the 1960s the Metis reappeared as an ethnic group in Manitoba. The political climate was favourable to the kind of pressures the group could bring to bear and group cohesiveness could be used to improve conditions for its members. Joe Sawchik, who worked with Metis in Manitoba in the 1970s objects to the kind of social Darwinism that sees European culture as superior to primitive cultures and thus entitled to pre-empty as “inferior” people’s land. Sawchuck speaks of a “white settler mentality” which helped to destroy the Metis sense of self-worth. Laurence’s fiction depicts their struggle against this psychic aggression.

Laurence sees Somalis and Metis as victims of technology in the form of vastly superior weapons. (The use of the gatling gun by Canadians in their suppression of the Metis uprising in 1885 corroborates Laurence’s claim that first successful machine gun ever devised, an American invention was operated in Saskatchewan by Lieu. Arthur Howard of New Haven, Connecticut who used the Metis uprising as a test ground for his weapon [see Joseph Kinsery Howard, The strange empire of Louis Riel swan edition (New York, 1965); its massacre of the remnant that survived belongs to this pattern.]
Laurence's review of Woodcock's biography closes on three main points. Along with the injustice done to Metis and the necessity of redressing that injustice, she stresses their "rediscovered sense of self-worth and the ability to tell and teach the things needed to be known." We have forgotten she says our need to pay homage to the earth and its creativeness. Pre-industrial societies were not ideal "nor can we return to them but they knew about living in relationship to the land, and they may ultimately be the societies from whose values we must try to learn." In *The Diviners* the haunting ballads of Jules Tonnerre, Lazarus and Piquette catch the pain of this prairie people while through Pique child of morag Gunn and Jules Tonnerre, Laurence expresses her belief that white Canadians are inextricably joined to Indians and Metis in Canada's future as in her past.

NOTES

4. ibid., p. 21.
7. Margaret Laurence, *Heart of a Stranger*, p.211.
8. Ibid., p. 212.
9. cf. The symbolic union of English and French Canada suggested by the marriage in Hugh Maclennan's *Two Solitudes.*
APPENDIX C

THE CONCEPT OF WILDERNESS

When the first Europeans came to Canada in the 16th century, they confronted an alien landscape of silent forests in what is now Quebec and Ontario. Inevitably those first European responses were male ones recorded through the accounts of explorers and trappers, soldiers and missionaries. Canada was a hostile terrain with an implacable climate and filled with hidden dangers from indigenous Indians and wild beasts where the European settlers felt their existence to be a heroic struggle for survival against multiple natural threats. The male response was either one of fear and recoil or an adventurous challenge to the unknown in journeys of exploration and later colonial exploitation and settlement. The Canadian myth of wilderness as alien and 'other' is the male myth of wilderness but if we analyse women's writings as in Laurence's writing, there are important differences in female versions of the wilderness reflecting their very different experiences of colonization. Small numbers of European women came to Canada in the 17th and 18th centuries (Frenchwomen as early as 1604 to Acadia and 1617 to Quebec) and they came as military wives, settlers, temporary visitors or in the case of some French – women as missionary nuns. Laurence's fiction consists of stories of settlements as she rewrites male pioneer myths from the women's points of view. The differences in many respects conform to stereotype gender difference, focusing on women's domestic and private experience as they tried to establish homes for their families under harsh pioneer conditions. Her fictions record the facts of settlements with its dangers and their responses to the challenge of the wilderness. There is an interesting doubleness of response to the wilderness. For the vast Canadian solitudes, provided precarious conditions of existence where women were forced to redefine themselves and where the self was discovered to be something far more problematical than feminine stereotypes. The wilderness of environments seems to have evoked a corresponding awareness of unknown psychic territory within, so that the facts of settlements provided the conditions of unsettlement as the
wilderness became a screen on to which women projected their silent fears and desires. The wilderness as the pathless image beyond the enclosure of civilized life was appropriated by women as the symbol of unmapped territory to be transformed through writing into female imaginative space. It provides the perfect image for the ‘wild zone’ the ‘mother country’ of liberated desire and female authenticity.

Hence we see that right from the time of the earliest Canadian creative writing up to the present time, a female character type can be found in English-Canadian fiction. By virtue of her historical origins, this character type is labelled “The Pioneer Woman”, since her creation was in fact grounded in the actuality of the pioneer experience, and on details of the experience that were reconstructed and reinterpreted in fiction, often through a moralistic or idealistic filter. The pioneer woman has made the transition from being a “mythical concept”,1 evident in the work of the pioneer writer Catharine Parr Traill as in her The Backwoods of Canada (1836) and The Canadian Settler’s Guide (1855), to being an accepted and essential aspect of female characterization in Canadian fiction. The longevity of the pioneer woman as character type in English-Canadian fiction and her recurrent use as a metaphor for Canadian femininity indicates that the character appeals to some common perception of a woman’s role in Canadian society and that the role for women proposed by the early emigrants was indeed an appropriate choice for the Canadian frontier.

The direct antecedents of the pioneer as literary character were the real pioneers who settled in Upper Canada during the early nineteenth century and who created a new life and a new social mythology for themselves. Pioneering in Canada must have been a disorienting experience for the nineteenth century female emigrants. Far from Home, separated from friends and family, such emigrants as Catharine Parr Traill who documented her pioneer experiences in The Backwoods of Canada and The Canadian Settler’s Guide faced daunting new tasks in a strange and occasionally dangerous environment. In order to cope with their situation, women were forced to learn new domestic skills and to redefine their feminine role within the family unit and within the society around them. Virginia Rouslin defines Canadian pioneer women as “heroines”,2 drawing attention to a small group of highly educated and articulate settlers – Susanna Moddie, Mary O’Brien, Catharine Trail and Anna Jameson –
women who were able not only to cope with their new environment but also to provide suggestions for others. Drawing upon her academic background and upon her social training as an English gentlewoman, each woman outlines a new role for women, a role suited to "a new land who had not yet had the time to make social prescriptions as who should do what".3 The picture of the typical pioneer woman which emerges from these is of a self-assured confident woman, one who adapts cheerfully to adverse circumstances, one who is capable and active in an emergency, one who plays a vital role in pioneering. In the course of their pioneering endeavours, women like Traill and Susanna Moodie outlined a new feminine ideal, 'the Canadian Pioneer Woman.'

Traill becomes one of the single most important contributors to the creation of this new Canadian concept of women in both an historical and literary sense; in The Diviners Laurence's heroine Morag has extensive conversations in fiction such as Canadian Crusoes (1852) as well as non-fictional works such as The Backwoods of Canada and The Canadian Settler's Guide.

In the latter two non-fictional works, Traill was very accurate in her depiction of Canadian settlers, life because she was attempting to help other emigrant women to master the difficulties encountered and develop the skills required in the course of the pioneering experience. Yet Traill offsets her basic pragmatism with a strong moral bias and obvious tendency to colour real events with a cheerful idealism. She transposes the highly idealized figure of the Canadian pioneer woman resulting from the combination of realism and idealism into her fiction and creates a new fictional character type. Traill's pioneer heroine in Canadian Crusoes is a mixture of fact and fancy, an idealistic reinterpretation of real life on the frontier of nineteenth century Upper Canada.

Various versions of the pioneer woman have appeared in English-Canadian fiction throughout the hundred years following Traill's development of the character type in the middle of the nineteenth century. By the end of the nineteenth century, frontier days in Canada were rapidly coming to an end and the pioneer woman as she had been identified by Traill, was becoming a figure from the past. The time of the century, then, constitutes a turning point of the sorts in
the settlement of English Canada. Yet, the pioneer woman continued to appear in such English-Canadian fiction as Sara Jeanette Duncan’s *The Imperialist* (1904) and Ralph Connors’ *The Man from Glengarry* (1901) and *Glengarry School Days* (1902). They document the period of transition from frontier to civilization in their fiction. Consequently, their novels echo back to the past in featuring pioneer women who cope with a new type of frontier environment, one grounded in social and personal concerns rather than in the physical landscape.

The longevity of the pioneer woman as character type is further demonstrated in the twentieth century fiction of Margaret Laurence. The frontier here is an internal, personal one. The protagonist of the first of Laurence’s Manawakan novels, Hagar Shipley of *The Stone Angel*, is the daughter of Manitoba pioneers. Hagar is torn between two opposing views of her self and her social role and she is unable to reconcile them. On the one hand, Jason Currie wishes to recreate in his daughter a model of femininity which is appropriate to a Canadian frontier context, whether that frontier territory is the physical wasteland encountered by Hagar’s mother or the emotional wasteland that Hagar creates for herself. On the other hand, following the example set by her pioneer father, Hagar epitomizes the New World freedom and strength of mind which is common to Canadian pioneers. During the period in which she cannot see her frontier, Hagar behaves inappropriately and cannot begin the pioneering process. When she is dying she finally identifies her frontier “Pride was my wilderness”.

Rachel Cameron of *A Jest of God* has the introspective power that Hagar must learn, but she lacks Hagar’s ability to act, to speak out and to make decisions. Hagar’s wilderness is her false pride; she must learn humility and with humility comes freedom. Rachel’s wilderness is her uncertainty, her lack of pride and self confidence; she must learn to act decisively and with the ability to act comes a sense of true humility. Rachel identifies her wilderness: ‘that fool of a fear’ and the recognition of the frontier leads to the protagonists’ ability to act correctly on the frontier; she learns to act decisively and competently in order to effect change and improvement.
Similarly Stacey, Vanessa and Morag are all pioneers. Morag Gunn of The Diviners is a 20th century pioneer woman in fiction. As Morag reviews her life, this protagonist achieves a level of self-awareness and self determining activity. On the one hand, Morag faces a personal crisis which causes confusion; the departure of her daughter Pique is the event which forces Morag to re-examine her past decisions and actions in an attempt to understand her present confusion.

The term “pioneering process” used in connection with Trail’s fiction, refers to the pioneer woman’s interaction with a real, physical place. In the later fiction, such as that of Duncan and Connor the pioneering process also becomes a metaphor for social and religious conflict. In the contemporary fiction of Margaret Laurence, the pioneering process is internalized referring to a personal dilemma to be solved by the protagonist. Despite the shifting nature of the frontier territory, however, the pioneer woman as character type remains readily identifiable. Certain essential qualities are retained; the ability to act decisively and quickly in cases of emergency and the strength to accept adverse circumstances on the frontier combined with the courage to attempt an improvement of these frontier conditions.

Laurence’s protagonists in her Manawakan fiction are contemporary versions of the pioneer woman. The frontier has been recreated as a state of mind rather than as a place. Laurence’s ideas echo back to Traill’s concept of the dual nature of the interaction between the frontier and the frontier woman. Although the pioneer woman must accept adversity with equanimity, humility and pragmatism, she must also begin immediately to improve her situation. The positive results of the successful tackling of the frontier (whether that frontier is expressed in the physical context of Traill’s nineteenth century Ontario Backwoods or in the metaphoric context of Laurence’s twentieth century existential angst) are numerous. The pioneer woman may discover a previously hidden or unexpressed sense of independence, a feeling of freedom from fear, restraint and social criticism, a sense of pride in her accomplishment of distasteful or difficult tasks. While none of Laurence’s protagonists is an ideal character, there is an awareness of some elusive ideal towards which each is working. The recognition of this frontier and the successful tackling of the process of pioneering on that frontier lead to the protagonists’ discovery of her own strengths and help her to move closely to approximate
that ideal of femininity defined as the pioneer woman. As she pursues her new activities, each of these contemporary pioneers, discover hitherto unguessed reserves of strength and courage.

In Margaret Laurence’s prairie town of Manawaka the wilderness is there as a feature of environment and available as metaphor or symbolic space for the exploration of female difference. In Laurence’s Manawaka, the enclosed community defines itself against the surrounding wilderness; the edges of town signalled by the spots where the sidewalks and streetlights cease to provide the wasteland occupied by the more marginal members of the community and by the public rubbish dump. Laurence’s heroines are brought up in such borderland territory and they retain their doubleness of vision in their adult lives. Their perceptions that the wilderness as place or state of mind is not something that can be entirely shut out are written into their stories resulting in those moments of instability where cracks open in the realistic surface to reveal dark secret places within social enclosures. Her stories look like mosaics of secret alternative worlds that co-exist with ordinariness as everything presents a double image of itself. This kind of doubleness exists for Morag Gunn in The Diviners, where coming to terms with the past as an adult involves a journey through the wilderness of memory to a homecoming in a log farmhouse in Ontario far from the prairie town where she grew up. As Laurence knows wilderness living should be updated to fit the needs of women in the late 20th century. Her fictions do not aspire towards androgyny but rather towards the rehabilitation of the feminine as an alternative source of power. Wilderness provides the textual space for such imaginative revision.

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3. Ibid., p. 328.
CONNECTIONS BETWEEN CULTURAL NATIONALISM AND WOMEN’S LIBERATION

In Margaret Laurence’s fiction connections between nationality and gender in her fiction have produced a literature that is distinctive. There are interesting similarities between the search for visibility and identity very characteristic of Laurence’s Manawaka fictions and the Canadian search for a distinctive cultural self-image. The works of Margaret Laurence are paradigmatic of the concerns of all Canadians, male and female. The search for an individual identity is paradigmatic of the constant search for the elusive ‘Canadian identity’, the alienation and fear of domination of a woman in a patriarchal society is paradigmatic of both Canada’s residual colonial legacy and Canada’s fear of social, military and cultural domination.

Laurence’s ‘partiality’ for her own sex also appears in her particular view of woman. Woman, she presents, essentially as both a victim and a survivor – a dual aspect. Attitudes in the victims range from acceptance of their victim role to consciousness that salvation lies inside the self and outside traditional and recognized society patterns for the female. The victims range from those who remain locked into their victim role to the survivors.

Laurence, is more emphatic on women’s difficulty in asserting herself in a man’s world. At the beginning of the 20th century, although the battle for emancipation had started a few decades earlier, women were still maintained in a state of dependence, especially in such small prairie towns as Manawaka. A middle – class girl received such education that could teach her “good manners”, “how to look smart” how to dress and behave like a lady. That education taught her the Victorian cult of the true women who loved domesticity and
prepared her for the acceptance of the "woman's sphere" to which she was to be confined apart from the bustle of real life.

However, things have changed for women over the years covered by the narratives. Laurence's purpose however, is not to advertise the progressive improvements of the Canadian woman's condition nor to call for more; her approach is neither sociological nor political but purely psychological; her intention is to present the survival process in a human being, more particularly in a woman, who might have been born to be a victim, but in fact, was born a survivor.

There are close parallels between the historical situation of women and of Canada as a nation for women's experience of the power politics of gender and their problematic relation to patriarchal traditions of authority have affinities with Canada's attitude to the cultural imperialism of the United states as well as its ambivalence towards its European inheritance of English and french language and culture is complicated by the multiple origins of the Canadian population as a result of multi-ethnic pattern of immigration and settlement. While Canadians have strong loyalties to racial and cultural origins outside Canada, they also have a strong sense of marginality in relation to those cultures which have disinherited them as immigrants. So a question of inheritance frequently becomes a questioning of inheritance in Margaret Laurence's fiction, where attempts at revision are problematized by the knowledge that self-definition can take place only within the very traditions that are being questioned.

The colonial inheritance of a postcolonial culture like Canada's includes an 'inescapable doubleness of vision', Given the parallels, it seems entirely appropriate that Laurence should choose a woman as subject for her meditation on the Canadian psyche.

The colonial mentality and Canada's recent emergence from it have close affinities with women's gendered perceptions of themselves for the revivification of the feminist movement since the 1960s has created the conditions for a change in women's consciousness as they struggle to find their own voices through which to challenge traditions which have marginalized and excluded them from power. Looked at from the outside there is a strong connection between the preoccupations of nationalism of women's fiction. The ideological
coincidence coupled with the fact that women’s stories provide models for the story of Canada’s national identity makes Laurence’s Canadian novels meaningful. The feminine resistance on a need for revision and a resistance to open confrontation or revolution might be said to characterize Canada’s national image at home and abroad while women’s stories about procedures for self discovery which are as yet (as always?) incomplete may be seen to parallel the contemporary Canadian situations.

Canadian arguments for co-existence and national policies that take into accounts its own multicultural diversity may be translated into the arguments of feminism, for the power politics of imperialism and of gender have much in common. The nature of power relationships between the sexes and the social and literary consequence of this have been brought to the forefront of public attention by the feminist movement. Margaret Laurence is aware of herself as an inheritor of a female literary tradition which includes both European and Canadian predecessors.

Laurence’s Canadian fictions are in no sense theoretical statements about feminism though they are all written out of a conviction of the worth of women and the necessity for women to be critically conscious of their own roles in conventional social structure. Novels and short stories do what theory cannot do, for they deal with particularities of individual experience problematizing theoretical issue by writing in the instabilities which are the very conditions of knowing. Laurence’s stories about the lives of girls and women between the 1950’s and the 1980’s are concerned with exploration and survival, crossing boundaries, challenging limits and glimpsing new prospects. Yet these stories do not sound like male heroism but like uneventful private lives. The main reason for this difference is that heroism is redefined in her fictions for these are stories about inner adventures which are often invisible to other people. The limits they challenge are cultural and psychological and their discoveries are of no importance to any body but the characters themselves. Two of her novels have women writers as protagonists engaged in a struggle with language and inherited literary conventions to find more adequate ways of telling about women’s experience, fighting their way out of silence to project more authentic images of how women feel and what they do.
In her Manawaka cycle, Margaret Laurence uses the ancient doctrine of the four elements and their corresponding humours to illuminate in mythical terms the life journeys towards self-knowledge of women of widely various types. Hagar the earth-bound in The Stone Angel, Stacey the fire-threatened in The Fire Dwellers, the airily insubstantial Rachel in A Jest of God, and fluid Morag in The Diviners, present an elemental pattern of Canadian life in all its aspects. In her final novel, the reconciliation comes through relationships of Morag (water) with her three lovers, the evasive Brooke Skilton (air), the earthy painter of rocks Dan McRaith, and the fiery Metis Jules Tonnerre, whose own sister was burned to death in the kind of combustion that Stacey MacAindra feared for herself and her children. Fire and water coming together to produce the ultimate reconciliation of the elements are shown in the child, Piquette born of the union of Moreg and Jules, the novelist and the singer the two truly creative beings in Margaret Laurence’s vast gallery of characterizations.

Laurence’s novels are centred on a series of striking individuals, and if they are not strictly Bildungsromans, tracing the development of the central figure from youth to maturity, they resemble them to the extent that they show the central characters at some crucial time in their lives coming to terms with their pasts and in doing so moving out of ignorance and indecision into awareness and confidence. Sometimes the moment of self-recognition comes at the end, as it comes to Hagar Shipley a brief time before death and sometimes it comes when there is life ahead in which to apply it, as happens to Rachel Cameron in A Jest of God, but whenever it does arrive, it brings, not an assurance of happiness, but a possibility of serenity unknown before.

Women readers of the Manawaka works feel a special gratitude for Hagar, Rachel, Stacey and Morag. As Margaret Laurence has often said, in America, Hagar was considered the archetypal North American old woman, in Canada she was everybody’s Grandmother. Out of the Manawaka background, common to many of us and within the imaginative range of all of us, is a timespan of almost a century, each of these women is battered by events, but also moves of her own free will towards self-recognition, self-acceptance and the awareness of a limited freedom. They are all intensely and introspectively aware of themselves, but the
demons of self-dramatization, self-pity and the sentimentality do not obscure their vision or block their progress. They endure and they grow, gradually shaking off debilitating guilts and fears and learning to accept themselves as well as others with tolerance and love. That same journey is, of course, the necessary primary foundation of any individual’s liberation.

These women do not come through as larger-than-life mythic figures or as tragic heroines, elevated and distanced from our ordinary experience. All of Margaret Laurence’s women are strong and strongly maternal. They also feel the imperatives of emotion, of guilt and desire and individuality that all women share. And they live, as we do among the tensions set up between their individual, inner need and the demands that society imposes on them from the outside. They achieve only the precarious balance that might conceivably issue from their temperaments and their situations. But they do issue as individuals and as members of the human race with dignity and potential, rights and responsibilities, which are insistently shown to be equal to men’s. Margaret Laurence’s great gift to us is that they come indomitably through the pages, with laughter, with bravery and with reassurance — our ancestors, our sisters and our friends.

Laurence made a radical change in the whole literary tradition by re-telling from a woman’s point of view traditional and archetypal feminine life patterns that have been portrayed hitherto by male authors only. Laurence ‘revisions what it means to be a woman’ and her heroines are ‘changing the very structure of characterization, in world literature’.  

In depicting her woman characters Laurence’s first muse is “psychological realism”, the largely twentieth-century infatuation with writing towards the individual experience and the rarefield moments of self-awareness. One of the aesthetic dictates of this fictional form is its demand for absolute honesty to character. All fiction is built from a character, an event and an idea about how the two fit together. The idea of psychological realism is its fusion of character with event, so that the character increasingly becomes the event.

The extent to which Laurence applies this idea is testimony to the “psychologizing” of society to which her generation of the 1950s were first witnesses. Theories and therapies
previously little known outside of university departments swept out into the public conciousness. Psychologists, began outpacing most other professionals in the growth of their prestige, their incomes and the power of their explanations of the human condition. Under the shadow of a nearly terminal war, the 50s became a time to turn inwards, to grasp the structure and meaning of the inner experience and begin documenting the murmurs of the stream-of-consciousness voice. For a neophyte writer, character assumed a new primacy. Fiction increasingly existed less as plot and narration moved along by the device of character and more as the exegesis of character accomplished through a skillful minimization and manipulation of plot.

There were many psychological theories vying for public acceptance in the post-war era. One especially appealed to Laurence’s upwardly mobile, educated and socially critical generation: humanist psychology, later referred to generically as the human potential movement. This movement, with its powerful individualistic philosophy, can be considered Laurence’s second muse, and its influence on her writing is primarily evident in her concept of character, the way in which she constructs personality.

Laurence portrays personality as a constant movement towards a unity of an individual’s two halves: self as subject and self as object. The whole Manawaka mindscape is about the characters’ abilities to wrench themselves free from the prison of the self as object, the self as experienced only through the perception of others. Laurence recognizes the social origin of this “existential cleavage” (what Durkheim called ‘anomie’ and what Fromm called ‘alienation’) and progressively documents the landscape of past ties, conditioning and circumstances that accounts for our acting the way we do. With each Manawaka novel the “outside” world becomes larger and more forceful, the women become more feminist in their awareness, and the reader is thrown deeper into her or his own volatile memories.

Yet even as Laurence does this, she does not exploit fully the social consequences of such a process. Solutions remain personal, even though the problems might originate in “social” time and place – mutual and social – fixed firmly, within their skulls. This is consistent with humanist psychologist’s epistemology, their “theory of mind”. Despite its personally
liberating potential, there is a very conservative element permeating the humanist model of mind and personality: the belief that people everywhere and anytime can, indeed, self-actualize and attain their full potential, if only they can identify and transcend the barriers within themselves that stand in the way of their bridging their dual nature. Social conditions that may impede this process are either ignored or considered irritating but trivial diversions. Laurence, perhaps partly a result of her individualist-oriented Presbyterian background, and certainly because of the pervasiveness of individualism in North American culture which the human potential movement merely enshrined as psychological theory, incorporates this view in constructing her characters. Mind is posed as the greatest and final liberator of the human quandry; it is that which allows us to divine our own paradoxical essence.

Paradox, in turn, figures prominently in Laurence's writing, particularly in *The Diviners*. It is also a feature that distinguishes humanist psychology from most other psychological theories. Not surprisingly, many of Laurence's writing peers who utilize other epistemologies in their characterization - e.g., Blais, with her transformational electicism; Munro who uses what can best be called a "behavioural/learning" model; and Atwood, with her developing feminist consciousness - are notably less enamoured with the transcendence of apparent opposites. These later models allow the authors to explore the social world more exhaustively than does Laurence's model. They allow for irony, distance, objectivity: those very things that Harlow, for one, found lacking in *A Jest of God*. There is, and can be, little irony in Laurence's characterization. Instead, there is a constant knot of ambiguity which her characters attempt to unravel. There simply is no distance from her characters' intense mental struggles. Laurence's first-person voice, while effectively placing us in her characters' reality, also constrains us to the singularity of one person's perception of events. The first-person chronicle is hand in glove with the psychological paradigm: the internal resolution of social experiences and contradictions.

Viewing her theme, structure and characterization as an out-growth of the humanist "idea" gives some understanding of why - despite Laurence's increasing interest in social, as well as personal, intercourse and her use of multiple narrative tones and devices to accommodate - her fiction always reads like a first-person monologue. It also clarifies why the fiction works
best when the reader reciprocates the process of the characters. It is dull, voyeuristic and unrewarding to watch someone in the throes of a primal scream; it is cathartic and moving to join the person in the scream. The strength of the human potential movement is its focus on individual process; its weakness lies in its intellectual and social superficiality. The same can be said of Laurence’s novels.

The incompleteness we experience with Laurence’s writing comes from the fact that her characters remain so adamantly self-reliant. Their awareness of their contradictory essence is kept locked up within themselves, because Laurence places the resolution of that contrariness within the individual psyche rather than in the dynamics of social interchange/change. The experience of these “opposites” is potentially revolutionary, allowing the characters and ourselves to see in simultaneous sharp focus the antithetical beliefs our society creates for us all, and particularly for women. But as the English critic John Berger once wrote, such revolutionary consciousness when confined to the self becomes madness. Laurence’s characters, within their fictional world, do confine that part of their consciousness to themselves. They are also, in varying degrees, “mad”, both in the extent to which they rebel against and try to alter their own experiences of the fictional reality, and in how they perceive the way in which they are seen by other characters.

This madness, this “fear of the fool”, diminishes with each new character that Laurence creates from the fulminating Stacey to the uneasily fulfilled Morag. Each novel demonstrates a movement away from the conservative personality model Laurence first adopted, becoming ever more articulate of the particular events and social phenomena that create the character. Laurence herself has described her work as an attempt “to try and get down some of the paradoxes of the human individual with everything that has gone to influence their life: their parents, the whole bit about history, religion, the myth of the ancestors, the social environment, their relationship with other people and so on...”

The unfolding Manawaka world is a tribute to the rigour with which she pursued that objective. It is also an artistic expression of the human potential movement itself, as it railed progressively against its own limitations in explaining the human drama, and slowly expanded
from a narrow solipsism to a broader social definition. Neither Laurence nor the human potential movement, however, took their last step out of the individual mind and into the collective social consciousness. Both have become arrested in a milieu of paradox, unable to leap over that final philosophical wall dividing the individual from the social mind. In their own fashion, their works are, in turn, more ambitious and unsuccessful, as Laurence and humanists both progress towards a social analysis while retaining an almost Hegelian-like individualism.

Yet Laurence's characters never really surrender to that individualism; they do not succumb fully to their personal madness. It is this feature that can be considered to be Laurence's artistic achievement and the answer to the question: why can such traditionally constructed stories be so evocative and moving? Indeed, it is the very traditionalism of her story-telling form, her enslavement to her first muse of psychological realism - with its emphasis on creating real characters, women and men who assume an identity independent of the writer's conscious intent - that allows Laurence to construct a world rich in its humaneness. Her characters are intensely alive; they are more than mere soap-boxes for a psychological theory. They strain against the confining personality models from which they were cast, just as Laurence herself struggled to reconcile a limited theory of self with her own experiences of broader truth, i.e. that the social is personal and the personal is social.

Perhaps what silenced her muse's voice are the insurmountable differences between Laurence's idea of character and her actual creation of character, one stemming from a psychological paradigm, the other from an artistic form. But it is these differences that have created the most delicately disquieting fiction in Canadian Literature.

NOTES

2. Ibid., p. 36.
3. Ibid., p. 3.


6. Ibid., p. 55.


8. In the apathetic and downward-spiralling seventies, this epistemology ultimately mutated to become the new psychological school of victimology; the art of holding victims responsible for their repressive social conditions. Laurence may not approach character in this way, but it is inherent in her construct of personality: cf. William Ryan, Blaming the Victim, (New York: Vintage Books, 1978).


10. For discussion on Laurence’s theme and structure, cf. Laurence, Gadgetry or Growing: Form and Voice in the Novel, and Judy Kearns, Rachel and Social Determinism: A Feminist Reading of A Jest of God, both in JCF p.27.
