Chapter VII
Summing Up

This study has been undertaken to explore the theme of quest for identity in the novels of Margaret Laurence. All the protagonists in the novels have the quest Motif—man’s quest for identity. There are the other quests such as the quest for one’s roots, quest for cultural identity, religious quest and spiritual quest. How far the protagonists succeed in their quests for identity has been discussed in detail.

Quest need not be a physical journey in search of a particular goal. It may be in search of an inner peace, a search into one’s own self. It may be a mental and spiritual journey in order to come to terms with society. It is for a better understanding of the lesser privileged, dispossessed and the oppressed. Laurence’s work is the product or the image of her quest. Her work reflects her own vision.

Laurence’s protagonists undergo certain changes. They not only undergo physical journey but also psychological or spiritual journey. They deal with the class-conscious Manawaka society, the Aborigines, their inner self and mind, the rich and the poor and so on:

Margaret may not have been fully aware of her motivations. She was struggling to stay alive as a writer. Slowly but very surely, her marriage seemed to be smothering that ambition, which had become the corner—
The protagonists of all the Manawaka novels have a similar experience:

The patterns of the protagonist's inner experiences—memories of home and childhood, parental relationship, betrayal in love and marriage, attitude to sex, to men and male dominated world are all similar. The protagonists are women who find themselves in predicaments in which any sensitive woman anywhere in the modern world finds herself suffering the same neurotic states and psychic disturbances which sensitive women, suffer in a male dominated world all over.

Laurence's women characters, after their alienation and suffering, attain spiritual wholeness in the end:

All of Laurence's Manawaka women [...] express a contemporary woman's quest for an authentic sense of personal identity and spiritual wholeness. In this sense, *The Stone Angel, A Jest of God, The Fire-Dwellers, A Bird in the House* and *The Diviners* are examples for what feminist literary critics like Annis Pratt and Carol P. Christ call "novels of rebirth and transformation", in which we follow a central female protagonist on a spiritual quest.
through her experiences of nothingness, awakening, insight (and) new naming.³

Thus the female protagonists become successful in their quest for identity through their experiences of nothingness, insight and awakening, though not in the same order for all the personae.

There is the individual's search for a new sense of personal identity which dominates the novel and the short stories of Margaret Laurence. In each Manawaka narrative, the Metis family of Jules Tonnerre becomes the focus of suffering and death, acceptance and endurance that are integrally related to the experience of each of Laurence's heroines.

In The Stone Angel published in 1964 the French half breeds' oppose the values of the white civilization associated with Hagar Shipley. In The Fire-Dwellers (1969), and in A Bird in the House (1970) the Tonnerres are the victim of those values. Unlike Hagar, or Rachel Cameron in A Jest of God (1966) the protagonists of these later works escape their own neuroses and fears to find a new perspective on their pain through contact with poverty, discrimination and death. These images recur in The Diviners (1974). Laurence develops a member of the Tonnerre family as a central character for the first time. Jules Tonnerre emerges not only as a character whose suffering is a standard by which Morag Gunn can measure her own pain, but also an
embodiment of the acceptance and freedom that are goals of each of
Laurence’s protagonists.

As Hagar Shipley recalls her childhood walks through the
Manawaka cemetery, she reflects on the wild flowers which marred the
graveyard in the eyes of Manawaka’s Presbyterians:

They were tough-rooted, these wild and gaudy flowers, and
although they were held back at the cemetery’s edge, torn
out by loving relatives determined to keep the plots clear
and clearly civilized, for a second or two a person walking
there could catch the faint, musky, dust-tinged smell of
things that grew untended and had grown always, before
the portly peonies and the angels with rigid wings, when
the prairie bluffs were walked through only by Cree with
enigmatic faces and greasy hair. (SA 5)

At the beginning of the novel Hagar Shipley approaches the
threshold of death “rampant with memory”. But at the end of the novel
she is no longer a stone angel but a “holy terror”. It symbolises her
transformation. Hagar being transformed is able to redefine her
relationship with her sole surviving male relative, the despised son
Marvin.

Hagar being the only daughter of Jason Currie shows her
contempt for her two brothers, Matt and Dan. She inherits her father’s
pride, stubbornness and tough-mindedness whereas Matt and Dan are frail like their dead mother.

Hagar’s quest for identity becomes successful when she shares her father’s sentiments at the beginning but she rebels against them later. She is in direct confrontation with her father. This confrontation that is the love-hate relationship which Hagar has with her father is the natural outcome of her childhood. It was during this time Hagar was praised for her ‘masculine’ qualities but condemned for not being a boy.

Hagar’s father plans to make her a good hostess and a good upper class wife. To attain all these qualities Hagar goes to the Toronto Academy for young ladies in order to acquire all feminine attributes such as “embroidery, and French, and menu-planning for a five-course meal, and poetry, [...] and the most becoming way of dressing my hair” (SA 42-43). She at first rebels against all this. She wanted to prove her worth by becoming a teacher. It is by marrying Bram, who is beneath her status, she shatters her father’s heart. Thus as a daughter Hagar’s identity with her father is completed.

As a wife Hagar is attracted towards Bram for his physical features but years later when she sees him bedridden, her only reaction is the difference in Bram’s outward appearance. She, on the death bed of Bram, thinks of burying him beside the Currie plot to
bring her two heritages together. At the end of her life she remembers Bram and she realises the dire consequences of her pride. Her pride seems to be both a strength and weakness. She calls out to her long dead husband Bram from her hospital bed. This marks the beginning of Hagar’s self-understanding.

Hagar’s pride and inability to be frank mars her relationship with Bram. She is the same even with her sons. By an irrational belief she considers that Marvin, her eldest son is a Shipley while John, her youngest son is a Currie. But it turns out to be the reverse.

Hagar resents the mutual understanding that exists between John and Arlene and the marriage between Marvin and Doris. There is a perfect understanding between John and Arlene. Hagar tries to break the relationship by joining hands with Lottie. They plan to send away Arlene to the East. This in turn results in the ghastly deaths of John and Arlene. She cries for John’s death before Murray Lees, who brings to light the fact that tragedy is universal. Hagar was like a stone unable to weep but is released from bondage when she cries for John’s death.

Hagar’s pride dominates all types of human relationships and even her attitude towards God is abnormal. She likes to adhere to her actions but revolts unconsciously. She tells Mr. Troy that prayer’s has not wrought anything for her. “I’ve never had much use for prayer, Mr.
Troy. Nothing I prayed for ever came to anything [...] If God's crossword puzzle, or a secret code, it's hardly worth the bother, it seems to me” (SA 119). Hagar sees God as somebody who exercises power over human beings. Thus in the cannery scene with Lees, she senses the omnipotence of God. Finally Hagar comes to the realisation that no individual, event or God was responsible for her son's death, for life is determined not by one cause but by many causes.

Laurence views religion as a factor that binds women to conformism. It is much the same way as other social conventions. Thus, the protagonist going against orthodox religion is a sign of liberation of the self. There is an evolution from conformism to orthodox religion. The final outcome of this is to gain a true sense of one's identity. The growth in identity is akin to that of self-realisation.

The moment of realisation is without any feeling of pride or greatness. It is a state of being aware of and giving out love, compassion and understanding. There is an intense awareness but there is no reaction, analysis, evaluation, comparison or argument:

While all the protagonists withdraw from society, their rebellion against social conventions is not a negative phenomenon because it serves as an occasion for the protagonists to understand themselves [...] Almost all heroines of Laurence return to the stage of acceptance.
The inner quest provides an extra dimension to existing reality and offers scope for continual additions to the available experiences. Carol Christ in her work "Diving Deep and Surfacing" points out "that women's quest offers suggestions for social change and looks forward to the realisation of spiritual insight in social reality-integration of spiritual and social quests. Hence individual quest leads to spiritual and social quests.

Through the quest for self-realisation the protagonist struggles to be free. For Laurence, to be free or freedom means: the individual coming to terms with his own past and with himself, accepting the limitations and going as from there, however terrified he may be [...] This kind of inner freedom has been a continuing theme."6 Thus freedom is not merely an escape from assigned roles but a kind of inner freedom which is spiritual and psychological. Laurence also stresses humility, simplicity and suffering as essential for self-realisation.

Another characteristic feature of the quest for identity is an instinct for survival. Survival does not mean physical survival but the preservation of some human dignity, some human warmth and "the ability to reach out and touch others."7

Hagar Shipley in the end sheds her obstinacy and pride which she has so carefully nurtured and cultivated during the ninety years. She becomes an affectionate grandmother for everyone, crossing the
barriers of age, race culture and nation. She finally understands that love and humility are more important in life than pride. She gets ready to face death happily. Hagar is destroyed—but not defeated.

In *A Jest of God* Rachel, the school teacher is worried about what her mother and her relatives would think of her activities. She is an introvert and is not able to express her feelings. But the experience with Nick transforms her so much that there is a change in her outlook and way of life. She no longer cares for the society’s criticism but takes a positive step in new ventures.

Nick Kazlik, son of a Ukrainian immigrant to Canada, suffers from an identity crisis. Ukrainians are marginalised in the Scots-dominated Prairies. Nick wants to be rid of his past. He tells Rachel, in the manner of Prophet Jeremiah:

> I have forsaken my house—I have left mine heritage—mine heritage is unto me as a lion in the forest—it crieth out against me—therefore have I hated it. (*JG* 110)

Ironically for Nick, what he thinks he has hated and forsaken, proves to be an integral part of him. It becomes an inseparable part of his personality. Though Nick abandons Manawaka and starts living in Winnipeg, he keeps coming back to Manawaka. His love for Rachel and his ultimate rejection of her relationship is one way of hitting back at the Scots, who were biased against the Ukrainians. The Scots had
propriety and they were “almightier than anyone” (JG 65).

Rachel faces another type of fear. She does not want to be identified as a stereotyped school teacher. She is scared of being imprisoned in one role. This is very clear in the beginning of the novel when she comments. “Am I beginning to talk in that simper tone, the one so many grade school teachers pick up without realizing? At first they only talk to the children like that, but it takes root and soon they can’t speak any other way to anyone” (JG 2).

Rachel attains self-realisation at the end of the novel. It is through the children that she understands the truth. The children are what she was. She realises her inability to possess her children (pupils) permanently—a trait which is seen in all mothers. With the shift to Vancouver, Rachel has a ray of hope and in the end she realises that her relationship will be more objective and less possessive. In short Rachel learns an important lesson in life, that is, that “one simply had to go on” and take one step after another.

Coming to terms with her past, enables Rachel to prepare herself for the present in a better way. Though her affair with Nick serves as an initiation to her self-realisation, it is only at the specific moment in the hospital when she is undergoing surgery for a benign tumour does she finally come to terms with herself, her surrounding and her relationships.
Rachel is realistic about her future. She does not fantasise about whether she may or may not marry, may or may not have children. Light heartedly, she pictures herself as an old spinster wearing outlandish costumes and whom Stacey's children will call 'Aunt'. She feels light-headed, afraid of even going mad. Her ironic jest to God ends the novel.

The novel *A Jest of God* reinforces the Jungian concept of the need to accept one's own dark side in order to realise the self. Rachel's life is like a pendulum, her life oscillating between the world of social conventions and her inner fantasy. She clings to her persona provided by her roles as spinster, daughter and school teacher for the fear of transgressing the norms of Manawaka society. Rachel even suspects Calla as a lesbian because Calla kisses her. Later when Calla offers a positive support to Rachel during her supposed pregnancy she changes her attitude towards Calla. It is this true friendship which makes her realise that she is a fool.

Rachel's final moment comes when her quest for identity is revealed in her midnight visit to the funeral parlour of Hector Jonas. In this visit, Rachel learns to confront death which is another taboo in the Manawaka society. In the figure of Hector Jones, Rachel confronts her own father whom she had not understood fully when he was alive. This lifts the final veil which blinds her vision. Rachel has alienated
herself from any living thing, thus leading a dead life. This incident offers her the strength to accept her supposed pregnancy, and she decides to have Nick's child even after Nick leaves her. When she realises it to be a benign tumour she accepts her foolishness. But in a reversal of roles with her mother, she accepts her own motherhood. She comments “I am the mother now”. This comment depicts that it is Rachel's rebirth in finding a new self.

In *The Fire-Dwellers* Stacey is overcome by meaningless anxieties and fears. Inspite of enjoying a comfortable life, she still feels a vacuum in life. She finds that her life is isolated, empty, amorphous and confined to her home. Nagging her mind is the constant quest for identity. Stacey asks herself, “Who is this you? I don’t know” (*FD* 159). Luke rescues her from such turmoil and makes her see the realities. Stacey reconciles with herself and her family. She realises that life is full of ups and downs—a mixture of good and evil, of happiness and sadness. She learns that life should be lived with adjustments and compromises.

Bevan in his brief introduction of the novel, comments on Stacy’s identity-crisis. He states:

*The Fire-Dwellers* is a searching novel about life in the mid-twentieth century as seen through the eye’s of a middle-aged, middle-class, ordinary sort of a woman who
needs to remind herself that she should have an identity of her own, other than that of wife and mother. Another renowned critic Clara Thomas goes to the extent of calling Stacey as the anxious, donkey-on-a-treadmill stereotype, the housewife-and-mother of our time.

Stacey's identity is marked in her role as a housewife and mother. This is evident in her remark early in the novel. Nancy Bailey states the following passage in her essay “Identity in The Fire-Dwellers”:

I can't go anywhere as myself. Only as Mac's wife or the kids' mother. And yet I'm getting now so that I actually prefer to have either Mac or one of the kids along. Even to the hairdresser, I'd rather take Jen. It's easier to face the world with one of them along.

Then I know who I'm supposed to be. (FD 90)

The search for identity, particularly female identity was a major subject for fiction throughout the fifties and seventies of the Twentieth Century. The Fire-Dwellers is in keeping with this dominant theme for Stacey the protagonist embodies the dilemma of identity. Stacey is depicted as a person for whom it is very difficult as a person, especially as a woman who is a wife and mother to maintain her sense of self in the face of culture, which fragments the personality. She does not
want to be somebody's wife, somebody's mother, daughter or sister. She, in fact, has forgotten who she is.

As a mother, Stacey has her identity trapped between generations. But apart from her role as wife, mother, sister, daughter, her sense of herself is shadowy. She even dreams that she is carrying her own severed head, symbolising the severance of her essence from her existence.

Stacey's identity is split like Rachel's "Help, I'm schizophrenic" (FD 106), she exclaims. Her dilemma of identity is signified by her names. Stacey means short for "Anastasia" (FD 90) from a Latin word "Stasis" which means stability. This is ironic, because Stacey is kinetic, not static, though she does not provide any stability around her. In the end she realises that she does not want to run away from her responsibilities. Her decision, "I have to go home" (FD 209) marks the turning-point in her resolution of her identity crisis.

_A Bird in the House_ is a semi-autobiographical collection of eight stories. Vanessa the young protagonist reveals her artistic talent as a writer. She makes her mark as she matures both as a writer and as a person. The stories trace Vanessa Macleod's growth to maturity, depicted as an understanding of herself and her heritage.

Vanessa the narrator and protagonist in the eight stories in _A Bird in the House_ is in her teens in the "The Sound of the Singing", a
third year student in Jericho's Birick Battlements. Though the women are portrayed as trapped and motionless birds, they are invested with the spirit of rebellion. Vanessa's mother encourages Vanessa to carve the distinct identity of her own within the traditional family structure. The people around Vanessa are representatives of her experiences and the death of her father is more ironic and sad than tragic. The narrative voice throughout includes the past and the present, but makes no attempt to merge them. Vanessa is identified with boyish characters. Her behaviour is like the behaviour of a mischievous boy of her age even as her interests are unlike a girl's. For instance when once Chris asks her what it would be to be a traveller her immediate response is, “That's what I'm going to do someday” (BH 131).

In the story A Bird in the House Vanessa unlike her grandmother Mrs. Connor and her own mother Beth, cannot be docile and submissive like a cage bird. She wants to escape by revolting against the conventions. Moreover she resists the temptation to yield to Chris and Michael. Vanessa, wants to protect her grandma, aunt Edna and her mother from the taunts and laughs of her grand father. She is attached to her native place. For it is seen that Vanessa returns to Manawaka, her native place twenty years after her marriage, to have a last sight of it. “I remembered saying things to my children that my mother had said to me, the clichés of affection, perhaps inherited
from her mother" (BH 190). This reveals the kind of role played by her mother in her artistic growth.

Vanessa’s artistic growth is slightly affected by the failure of her love affair with Michael which she herself admits later. She is disappointed when she hears from Mavis that Michael was married. At first she is not able to accept the truth but later she comments:

As it happened, she was right on all counts. I did not at the time believe her. But after a while it did not hurt so much. And yet twenty years later it was still with me to some extent, part of the accumulation of happenings which can never entirely be thrown away. (BH 186)

She has realised that it has become a part and parcel of her life.

Vanessa tries to create fiction out of her own life and tries to understand her life through the fiction. This two-way process has its own advantage and disadvantage. The tragic circumstances of life kindled the understanding and creative talents in Vanessa. Finally at the end of the novel, what happens is reliance upon and understanding of, her own self. As a young child, Vanessa states:

I could not really comprehend these things, but I sensed their strangeness, their disarray. I felt that whatever God might love in this world, it was certainly not order. (BH 61)

Vanessa undergoes a considerable experience in order to realise
the chaos of the world and the hidden order amongst the apparent chaos. It is this understanding that gives her the identity which is strengthened by her artistic experience.

Morag of *The Diviners* solves her doubts and uncertainty about life through her creative spirit of writing. It is this creative writing that provides her the much needed calm. It also opens new vistas of life. Morag, finally, comes to terms with her past, her ancestors and accepts Christie as her father. Her quest for roots and identity is fulfilled. Through the creative power Morag has found a serenity to accept the things which she cannot change. She has found the courage to change the things she can and the wisdom to discern the difference.

Morag and Ellen undergo a lot of trials and tribulations. Their right to voice their real feelings and emotions are denied. They suffer the colonial imperialistic attitude of their spouses. They succeed in the physical and psychological journeys which they undertake towards emancipation. They understand through their experiences the virtues of kindness and compassion.

The present, past and future are different but are all connected by the forward and backward movement of the river. Morag and Pique’s relationship is compared to the forward and backward movement of the river. Morag is unable to understand Pique’s search for identity which infact she herself is after. Pique is also unable to
accept certain views of Morag But later Pique accepts her Metis inheritance and has an identity of her own. Morag too succeeds in her quest. When for the second time Pique visits her Metis relations, Morag gives Pique a warm send off and appreciates her for her favour and independence. Inspite of the differences between them love remains constant and like the river that seemed to be flowing both ways.

Morag acquires various identities in this novel. The specific instance which brings out Morag's realisation is that when she accepts Christie Logan as her father she thus accepts the heritage. She realises that Christie, the Manawaka scavenger apart from bringing her up, has given her a more true and real heritage than what history has to offer. Christie's funeral scene is one of the most touching scenes in the entire novel. Morag arranges the funeral as Christie has wished, to be buried along the side of Prin in the Nuisance Grounds which played a key part in his life.

When her identity is revealed Morag as a writer, accepts the limitations of the power of the word. This knowledge she gets when she observes Royland the water-diviner. She has been thinking all along that words cannot do magic or sorcery. Royland humbly accepts his loss of divining powers. He, as an elder of the tribe can pass it on to somebody else. Morag finally realises that all types of divining whether
for water, words or heritage may be passed on and does not become extinct.

Moreover Morag understands that the Great Blue Herons are threatened with their extinction. Like these Herons, the Metis community are threatened with the fast extinction of their heritage. In the vision of the heron, Morag sees the perfection that she has been seeking in her life and art—that of serenity, certainty, and mastery. The heron symbolises wholeness—the cycle of life and death. Pique not only accepts this fact but also decides to go back and work for the welfare of her people in the Galloping Mountains. Morag has progressed a long way from her initial frustration to being Christie’s ward.

Knowledge of sex and death is revealed to Morag in varying shades. Her sexual behavior seems to determine her sexual identity as is seen in her relationships with Harold, Chas, Brooke, Jules and Dan McRaith. Her encounters with Harold and Chas touch the fleeting nature of such unions.

In her unhappy marriage to Brooke, Morag tries to overcome her inability to have his child by turning to creativity. Brooke fails to support this attempt. Morag’s frustration with Brooke, and her walkout is supported by her three week affair with Jules. This leads to the birth of their daughter, Pique. Finally Morag’s encounter with Dan McRainth makes her realise the importance of family life and place.
The protagonists of the Manawaka novels undertake the quest for identity in order to realise their self. Women in these fiction are frustrated and dissatisfied with their roles in the society. The protagonists undergo a spiritual quest which involves the breaking of long standing habits, especially that of trying to please their husband, friends, children but never themselves. Thus they are isolated and alienated. The quest for identity for self-realisation is an attempt to understand one's self. This quest enables the protagonist to understand others. Hence in the quest for identity they try to develop the invaluable qualities like compassion, love, simplicity and humility.

Moreover the protagonists undergo a plethora of suffering before gaining a vision. But they consider the suffering as a positive feeling. This attitude strengthens the individual and also provides self awareness.

Laurence deals with the past and about the Metis and she gives importance to Landscape. Nearly all the protagonists gain their illumination amidst natural surrounding. Landscape is used to analyse and probe the mindscape of the individuals. Many other writers use landscape in their works. In novels of Patrick White, landscape is raw, and uninhabited. It remains the same, though each individual perceives different aspects of it. Many of Hardy's novels deal with landscapes. R.K. Narayan's use of Malgudi is much like Laurence's
Manawaka. It grows and changes.

As for the structure of the novel The Stone Angel it has a cyclic as well as a zigzag movement. The structure consists of two parallel narratives—one which is about Hagar's confrontation with old age and the other is a series of flashbacks representing her past life in Manawaka. Hagar remembers her childhood, her marriage, her relationship with her son John and his death. The link between the past and the present is very subtle, intricate and complex. Moreover the events are in a chronological pattern, the present depicts the last days of Hagar's life while the flashbacks reveal the course of her life as it appears in her memories. Thus this mingling of the present and the past narratives reveals the cyclic movement of life.

In The Fire-Dwellers Laurence combines the first person narrative with the third person narrative. This is Laurence's most striking innovation. The characterisation of Stacey is so complex that Laurence has to adopt this technique.

The internal monologues convey the themes as well as Stacey's consciousness. They reveal Stacey's toughness of character, her ability to laugh at herself, her sense of identity and survival. The treatment of time and the handling of the narrative voice are the two important aspects in The Fire-Dwellers. The protagonist Stacey interlinks the past and future with the present through flashbacks and present
In *A Jest of God* Laurence uses first person narrative and present tense. But in *The Diviners* she uses a third person or external narrative. The purpose of using this technique by Laurence is to describe Morag and to present her thoughts from an external perspective. Moreover Laurence aims at creating an illusion. Morag’s past is presented by means of “Snapshot” method with each snap shot revealing a part of her past. The memory bank movies encompass the whole of Morag’s life up to the present. Besides in “Snapshot”, Laurence uses a rich variety of narrative techniques such as memory bank movies, newspaper, articles, dreams, songs and letters. These provide the structure of the novel to move in a zigzag pattern.

In Laurence’s Manawaka works, she deals with women of her own ancestral Scots-Presbyterian background, their stifled existence in the small-town community as she had felt in Neepawa and their emergence as survivors, if not victors. Hagar in *The Stone Angel* escapes from her domineering father and from her incorrigible husband, and during her last days, from her son and daughter-in-law who try to confine her in the nursing home; Rachel in *A Jest of God* through a long process of conflicts, encounters and doubts, develops courage to move out of the Manawaka community. Stacey in *The Fire-Dwellers* struggles to be free of the demands of her family which stifle forwards.
her identity, but finally, settles down in recognising it as her ultimate destiny. Vanessa in *A Bird in the House* escapes the confines of her grandfather's brick battlements and finds an identity through her art. Morag in *The Diviners* escapes first from the narrow-minded discriminating society of Manawaka and then from the 'tower' that imprisons her in the form of her marriage to Brooke; and Pique escapes to the west in quest of her own identity. A chronological study of Laurence's works reveals a steady development in her vision with each protagonist moving: “One step along a spiritual continuum”⁹, culminating in Pique, who symbolises a racially and culturally synthesised Canada. On an analysis it is found that Laurence's characters experience a great deal of suffering, understand their own past but finally emerge triumphant.

Laurence use of imagery is remarkable for the intricacy and efficacy with which it drives home the theme. The titular image of the stone angel, the dominant image of stone and snow, symbolises the story and proud nature of Hagar. The images of the wheel, teeth, knife's edge, corpses, clowns, fools and jesters symbolises the insecurity and passivity of Rachel. The dominant image of fire portrays the precarious predicament of Stacey. The images of the bear, battle, brick house and lawn-mower symbolise the inhibitions forced on Vanessa by the patriarchal, mechanical world order, while the images of bird,
horse and song symbolise her longing to be free. The recurrent imagery of birds in flight reveals Morag’s free spirit and the image of water stands for “creativity and renewal.”

Laurence uses myth in her novels in order to give an account of the past whether the myth is historical, fictional or mythic. It all depends on the manner of telling and writing of the events and the personal experience of the narrator. Moreover ‘time’ dominates the novels of Margaret Laurence. She makes use of time-past, present and future in her novels. The Stone Angel, A Jest of God, The Fire-Dwellers and The Diviners illustrate the diversified treatment of time.

Laurence in her novels presents the superficial bourgeois norms of the Manawaka society. She makes Manawaka a living community. She has created a dynamic town like that of R.K.Narayan, William Faulkner, Stephen Leacock, Robertson Davies and Alice Munro. In creating such a magnificent town, she emphasises the role of place as an identity marker. Although Laurence finds faults with the norms of Manawaka she seems to rely more on the need to adapt and reappropriate the existing norms. Laurence's treatment of the Metis in her Manawaka novels is one such example. Hagar reveals the Manawaka society's view about the Tonnerres who live on “the wrong side of the tracks” of the town. In A Jest of God, Rachel echoes the distinction between natives, settlers and immigrants implying the
difference between her and Nick. For Stacey in *The Fire-Dwellers* and Vanessa in *A Bird in the House* there are brief moments of questioning of norms in their relationships with Val and Piquette respectively.

In the Morag-Jules-Pique relationship, there is a culmination of the need for unity and communication between the settlers and the natives. At the initial stage there is the difference in the use of language between Hagar and John, Bram and Lazarus Tonnerre. But in the end, Morag accepts the songs and tales as her heritage. Through the tales and songs, Laurence creates an identity specifically Canadian and regional.

**Scope for Further Study**

The quest for national identity or the post-colonial search can be one of the few possible topics for further research. The Narrative techniques, her use of Language, Myth, Imagery, Landscape Vs Mindscape are the possible areas for further research. Laurence in her works also attempts to explore and illuminate the past of her people in order to bring a sense of dignity and continuity to the lives of men and women in the present. Margaret Laurence in her entire body of work is concerned with the identity of her protagonists. She does not allow them to be liquidated by the pressures of society but they emerge triumphant with confidence and faith. Indeed they are not passive victims but positive victors.