Chapter I

Displacing Fixed Gender Identities—

Women in Familial Roles

this we were, ..., and these are the forces they had ranged against us, and these are the forces we had ranged within us, within us and against us, against us and within us.

(Adrienne Rich. "Twenty-One Love Poems")
Introduction

This Chapter attempts to study women protagonists in the fiction of Patrick White and Margaret Laurence in the context of their roles within the family. For the sake of convenience, this chapter has been divided into four sections dealing with different roles of women as daughters, lovers, wives and mothers. This is done to facilitate easy comparison between the characters and the writers. This sort of a division resembles the "Images of Women" approach, the most fertile branch of feminist criticism. Quoting Cheri Register, Toril Moi defines the "images of women" approach as "the study of female stereotypes" and criticises the "creation of 'unreal' female characters" by writers of both the sexes (Sexual/Textual Politics 42-3). Such a study enables critical analysis of the prevalent myths about women in society and, what Rosemarie Tong calls, the "socialization of woman into passive, or feminine, roles" (Feminist Thought: A Comprehensive Introduction 206). However, this approach is used here to study "independent, odd, often difficult women who had defied the expectations of their society as to what a woman's role should be" (Phyllis Edelson. "The Hatching Process" 229). The female protagonists in White and Laurence are "outstanding in intellect and spirit" and "defy, the boundaries of their assigned ... roles" (Edelson 229). The norm breaking is a way by which these women discover their individual selves. By accepting responsibility and by taking charge of their lives, these women approach the ideal of "self-actualizing"
Let us now consider the various roles played by the women protagonists.

As Daughters

The mother-daughter relationship assumes great importance in the fiction of the two writers. In the absence of strong 'father' figures (with notable exceptions like Jason Currie and Grandfather Connor), there is a direct confrontation or reconciliation between the daughters and mothers. More often than not, the socially well-adapted and successful children (who are physically attractive and who make good marriages) are favoured by their mothers. Hence, the protagonists when they assume the roles of daughters, often move away from their mothers. This study will examine their roles as daughters in terms of the differentiation made between the sisters, confrontation with the parent and the successful understanding gained by some of the protagonists.

There are two sets of sister-figures that can be taken up for study. Theodora and Fanny are the two daughters in The Aunt's Story. Mrs. Goodman, the mother, repeatedly points out the differences between the sisters. Instances of this abound in the novel.

Once there were the new dresses that were put on for Mother's sake. 'Oh,' she cried, 'Fanny, my roses, my roses, you are very pretty.' Because Fanny was as pink and white as roses in the new dress. 'And Theo,' she said, 'all dressed up. Well, well. But I don't think we'll let you wear yellow again, because it doesn't suit, even in a sash. It turns you sallow' (AS 27).
Such a razor-sharp criticism is constantly voiced by Mrs. Goodman. Comparisons extend to all spheres. For instance, 'The piano is not for Theodora,' Mother sighed, 'Fanny is the musical one' (AS 28) and while introducing the two girls to Mr. Huntly Clarkson:

'Oh, and this is my daughter Theodora,' Mrs. Goodman had said. 'Of course, you will know my younger girl, Fanny Parrott. At her mother-in-law's. Fanny is a great favourite. With everyone' (AS 99).

Considering Fanny has married Frank Parrott, Theodora's ex-suitor and considering Huntly Clarkson is Theodora's present suitor, this is too harsh a comment on one's own daughter. This also proves that Mrs. Goodman is not able to see beneath the skin of superficialities. Patrick White emphasises the difference in their spiritual selves. Fanny catches the colour of the rose externally in her skin but Theodora is able to take into account the pale grub at the heart of the rose as part of the garden whereas Fanny hates it as 'horrid and beastly' (AS 22). White here places Theodora at the core of existence by associating her with the pale grub whereas people like Fanny remain at its fringes. When the children grow up, Fanny is conventionally married to Frank Parrott and remains frozen at the age of eighteen like Belle Bonner in Voss. In spite of the differentiation, it is Theodora who nurses her mother while Fanny stays at a safe distance writing polite letters.

In his article, "Love and Sex in a Staid Spinster: 'The Aunt's Story'," John Beston makes an interesting comment that Mrs. Goodman's constant criticisms of Theodora deny "her any feminine grace." Further, her father's comment that 'Theo should
have been a boy' prevents her from "attaining a clear sexual identity" (24). Theodora's rebellion against her mother takes the form of consciously rejecting the two suitors, Frank Parrott and Huntly Clarkson. The incidents which effect this will be dealt with in the section on women as lovers. Her stance against her mother also becomes evident when Theodora contemplates to kill her mother with a silver paper knife.

Similarly, in Margaret Laurence's A Jest of God. May Cameron constantly compares Rachel with her sister Stacey, well-married and a mother of four kids. Stacey, like Fanny in The Aunt's Story, stays at a distance from her mother and only writes polite letters. The only difference is that Laurence makes it a point to show the difficulties faced by Stacey in The Fire-Dwellers. Rachel and Stacey maintain a mutual admiration for each other and the distance between them aids this. Rachel, confused about taking a decision about her suspected pregnancy, feels that Stacey would know what to do in Rachel's position. Stacey, on the other hand, faced by all sorts of familial problems, feels that Rachel is clever in avoiding all these entanglements.

Mrs. Cameron, Rachel's mother, is bound by her vanities in costume, appearance and bridge parties. She is also a hypochondriac who cites her weak heart in order to gain Rachel's sympathy and attention. As Clara Thomas rightly points out,

> These and the dependence and servitude of her daughter are all she has, and to them she clings with every ploy that cunning, born of self-indulgence and a real and desperate need ... (The Manawaka World of Margaret Laurence 78).

For instance, on one night of the bridge party, when Rachel decides to go out with Nick, she tries her best to stop Rachel
from going:

'Well, dear, you do what you think best. I'd never suggest you shouldn't go. Only, on a bridge night—well, never mind we'll just have to stop playing while I do the serving, that's all' (JG 100).

Unlike Theodora and Fanny, Stacey and Rachel maintain a remarkable understanding. This is evident in their descriptions of their mother. While Rachel pictures her mother as "a simpering puce-mouthed madonna," Stacey recalls her mother's "whining eyes" and the "long suffering" attitude "that never tired of saying how others ought to be."

If Theodora and Rachel are in perpetual confrontations with their mothers, Mary Hare in Riders in the Chariot has problems with her father. He despises her ugliness. But he hates her more for her insight into things: "he [Mary's father] had forgiven her for the crime of being, it was doubtful whether he would ever forgive her for that of seeing" (RC 36). She understands the mystery of nature though she cannot express it in words. As she herself puts it succinctly,

‘But the truth is what I understand. Not in words. I have not the gift for words. But know.' The abstractions made her shiver. If she could have touched something—moss, for instance—or smelled the smell of burning wood (RC 36. emphasis added).

Her mother understands Mary's position and tries her best to ease the situation. Her efforts to bring together her cousin Eustace Cleugh and Mary is one such attempt. Mary's father understands her, as in the instance when he asks her about "the riders in the chariot." But even here, he despises her for not telling him and thus refusing to share her secret with him.
If Theodora is guilty of contemplating murder, Mary is guilty of murder, though not in a direct way. This occurs, in the novel, when Mary cannot bring herself to save her father who is drowning in the pond. The only explanation that can be given is that her relationship with nature is based more on understanding than her relationship with human beings. As Mary Hare puts it:

‘... I believe in what I see, and what I cannot see. I believe in a thunderstorm, and wet grass, and patches of light, and stillness. There is such a variety of good. On earth. And everywhere’ (RC 58).

This passage about her relationship with nature is transcendental. The only persons with whom she strikes a harmonious relationship are Mordecai Himmelfarb and Mrs. Godbold.

In Margaret Laurence's *The Stone Angel*, Hagar is the only daughter of Jason Currie. As a sister, her targets of contempt are her two brothers, Matt and Dan. She inherits her pride, stubbornness and tough-mindedness from her father whereas her brothers are frail like her dead mother. Hagar thus shares her father's sentiments though she rebels against them and is in direct confrontation with her father. Expanding this idea, Cathy N. Davidson observes that ‘Jason Currie could not respect his "sensitive" sons and lamented that Hagar, the "son" he should have had, was born a girl’ ("Past and Perspective in Margaret Laurence's The Stone Angel" 64). She concludes by pointing out that the love-hate relationship that Hagar has with her father and the "adult ambivalence is a natural outcome of a childhood during which Hagar was praised for her ‘masculine’ qualities but condemned for not being a boy" (Cathy N. Davidson 69). Thus,
Hagar shares the ambivalence of gender roles with Theodora.

Hagar goes to the Toronto Academy for young ladies in order to acquire all feminine attributes like "embrodiery, and French, and menu-planning for a five-course meal, and poetry, ... and the most becoming way of dressing [her] hair" (SA 42-3). Her father plans all this to make her a good hostess and a good upper-class wife. She rebels against this first by wanting to become a teacher and later by marrying Bram and thus marrying beneath her status.

That these feminine qualities are only superficial becomes evident through another incident early in the novel. When Dan is delirious with fever and dying, Matt wants Hagar to put on their mother's shawl and make death less painful for Dan. Matt asks her to pretend as their comforting mother who is long dead when Dan was only four years old. Hagar refuses by saying,

"But all I could think of was that meek woman I'd never seen, the woman Dan was said to resemble so much and from whom he'd inherited a frailty I could not help but detest, however much a part of me wanted to sympathize. To play at being her--it was beyond me... . I was .... unable to do it, unable to bend enough (SA 25)."

This refusal may be interpreted in two ways: (i) her pride does not allow her (a strong person) to stoop to the level of her feeble mother who died in childbirth; (ii) like her father and most people of his generation, death to her, is a subject which should not be spoken of or confronted directly. Following this, she wishes to maintain a safe distance. Also, she does not want to show openly her mark of weakness (sorrow and tears) and her fear of death. This attitude marks her reactions to the deaths of Bram and John later in the novel. This is also evident in her
reactions to the scene at the dump when Lottie Drieser kills the new-born chicks in an effort to reduce their suffering and the scene where Lottie establishes her strength by touching the dead child at the mortuary. These two instances show Hagar's vulnerability as also her weakness against a mightier power in the person of Lottie Drieser.

In A Bird in the House, Vanessa's confrontation is not with her parents but with her maternal grandfather. Vanessa rebels against his authoritarianism. Instances for this will be taken up in the subsequent sections. Let us consider briefly the kind of model presented to the young Vanessa by the other women in the text. Helen M. Buss comprehensively sums up and to quote her:

While Beth and Edna represent two potentially positive but imprisoned versions of womanhood, the two grand-mother figures can be seen as the two traditional modes by which women adapt and hide their true selves (Mother and Daughter Relationships in the Manawaka Works of Margaret Laurence 57).

The four older women also pass on to Vanessa a "double message" of the female/feminine as beautiful and as strong. Where the former is acceptable, the latter is criticised (Helen Buss 56). Such varying models bring about the conflict in Vanessa's relationships. Inversely, this factor helps in channelising her perceptions into writing. This aspect will be examined in greater detail in the Second Chapter.

Unlike Theodora, Mary Hare, Hagar, or Rachel who face discords in their relationships with their parents, some of the protagonists come to an understanding like Vanessa or some maintain a good relationship with their parents like Ellen in White's A Fringe of Leaves and Morag Gunn in Laurence's The
piviners.

Though Vanessa does not oppose her mother as she does her grandfather, the **moment** of understanding occurs in the story "Jericho's Brick Battlements." When Vanessa protests against her mother selling the MacLeod silver to get her to college, Beth says:

"When I was your age," ... , "I got the highest marks in the province in my last year high school. I guess I never told you that. I wanted to go to college. Your grandfather didn't believe in education for women, then" (BH 203).

Beth hopes to pave a future for Vanessa different from her own. Vanessa understands that not she, but her mother has been the victim of Grandfather Connor's **authoritarianism**. Commenting on this passage, Helen Buss detects the **tigress** in Beth that **the moment of truth** has revealed (55). "Beth has been able to do for her daughter what she was never able to do for herself: stand up to her own father" (Mother and Daughter **Relationships** in the Manawaka Works of Margaret Laurence 62).

Vanessa perpetuates the sentiments of her mother by repeating to her children "the cliches of affection ... inherited from her mother." "**It’s a. poor family can’t afford** one lady. Many hands make light work. Let not the sun go down upon your wrath" (BH 207). Similarly, Vanessa realises that though she "had feared and fought the old man [her Grandfather], yet he proclaimed himself in my veins" (BH 207). Commenting on the fact that Vanessa does not visit her Grandfather's grave on her later visit to Manawaka, Kent Thompson in his "Review of 'A Bird in the House'" makes this perceptive observation that the emphasis "is
not on what he stands for, his ideas, or least of all, his monument. The emphasis is on Grandfather Connor" (in A Place to Stand On 235).

Ellen Roxburgh in A Fringe of Leaves does not face any conflict with her parents even though she is forced to do hard physical labour in order to help the family because her mother is ill and her father takes to drinks. Instead of her parents helping and supporting her, she takes on the role of a protector. This individual, independent spirit extends to her relationship with Austin.

Despite the tough life Ellen leads on the farm (which later helps Ellen in her sojourn with the aborigines), she never hates her mother or father. As is evident in the narrator's comment, it (the farm) was all she knew. (Then she must surely have loved her parents who, with herself, were inseparable from it, the three of them living at such close quarters you could hear one another's coughs, groans, dreams almost anywhere inside the echoing house.) (FL 42).

Such reliance on the physical intimacy almost takes on an incestuous tone. Ellen relates how when she was a young girl, her father would stroke her cheeks "as though to learn the secrets of her skin." On one occasion when she reprimands him he sulks. But her own reaction is more important. "... shame told her she was as much excited as disgusted" (FL 56). This reaction explains Ellen's reliance on and perfect adaptation of the purely physical existence with her brother-in-law Garnet, Jack Chance, the convict and the aboriginal community. Patrick White makes a clear differentiation between Ellen's personality as a daughter and as a wife--i.e., Gluyas and Roxbourgh personalities. It is
the Gluyas personality (daughter) with its *romantic imagination* which enables Ellen to endure life in the aboriginal tribe. It is the combination of the two personalities which later helps her successful re-entry into civilisation.

Another feature of Ellen's personality becomes evident in her role as a *daughter—i.e.,* her highly imaginative mind and its fantasies. Ellen is fascinated by the castle of Tintagel and of a prince who will come to marry her. The dream is only partially fulfilled when Austin offers to marry her and is completed during Garnet's seduction and later during her near idyllic life with Jack Chance.

In *The Diviners*, Morag's life with her parents, Louise and Colin Gunn, is recreated in the novel through six Snapshots. This technique is used by Margaret Laurence to recall the past, which is done through Morag's thoughts about each photograph, about her parents and of herself when she was a child. These Snapshots are included in the first section of the novel entitled "River of Now and Then." As the older Morag says, the Snapshots are *"totems, or contain a portion of my spirit .... I keep the snapshots not for what they show but for what is hidden in them"* (D 6). The Snapshots serve two purposes. One is to re-create the near Edenic existence of Morag with her parents. Second, they show her capacity to imagine and create things, which helps her as an artist. Though the period covered by the Snapshots is very brief, it shows the only time in her life when she has lived within the confining limits of society. The other time, of course, is during her life as Brooke Skelton's wife. In the
period of the Snapshots, she is the only child of respectable parents, her father being a farmer. All other details regarding her father's pleasant and ever-smiling face and her mother's understanding in allowing her to sleep with the dog seem no more real than her creations Rosa Picardy, Peony, Blue-sky Mother or Old Forty-Nine. In her own words:

They [her parents] 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. X remember their deaths, but not their lives. Yet they're inside me, flowing unknown in my blood and moving unrecognized in my skull (D 18-9).

The end of Morag's life on the farm and the beginning of her life with Logans is conveyed through the first Memorybank movie entitled "Once Upon a Time There Was... ." We learn that both Gunns are dead with infantile paralysis. Christie Logan, because of his friendship with Colin Gunn during the war, offers to adopt Morag. Her parents' death shatters her innocent idyllic world and also alters her notions of God as is evident in the narrator's statement: "Morag is talking in her head to God. Telling Him it was all his fault and this is why she is so mad at him. Because He is no good, is why." (D 17).

Along with making the Logans outcasts, Laurence also makes them physically grotesque. Prin, short for Princess, is fat and lazy, eating jelly doughnuts. Christie with his sandy hair, Adam's apple and missing front tooth is the joker for the children of the town. But he also teaches Morag, the advantages of the divining insight. He is, in fact, the first diviner in the novel.
"By their garbage shall ye know them," Christie yells, like a preacher, a clowny preacher. They think muck's dirty. It's no more dirty than what's in their heads. Or mine (D 39).

Commenting on this passage, Clara Thomas compares Christie and Prin to Archipelago and Doree in "The Perfumed Sea" and Godman Pira in "Godman's Master." Thomas observes that Laurence's exaggeration "is a way of demonstrating that all flesh, young or old, ugly or beautiful, is essentially incongruous to the potential of the spirit within" (The Manawaka World of Margaret Laurence 140).

Initially Morag rejects and opposes everything Christie stands for. But it is only by accepting Christie as her father that Morag is able to recognise herself. In a way, Morag’s writing of her novel Jonah aids this recognition. This aspect will be treated in the next chapter. At Christie's deathbed, Morag tells him: "Christie--I used to fight a lot with you, Christie, but you've been my father to me" (D 396). Christie's reply that he is 'blessed' is interesting because it is Morag who has been granted the blessing of looking into her own past. Her insistence on the piper playing "The Flowers of the Forest" at Christie's burial is her way of paying homage to him. (This resembles Vanessa's funeral service for her Grandmother Connor in the presence of the canary). Morag's acceptance of the Logan heritage is also evident in her reply to Dan McRaith that Christie's country is her country and his myths her reality.
As Lovers

Women playing the role of lovers in the fiction of White and Laurence can be classified under three categories. (i) Women, whose love affairs enhance their own understanding like Vanessa McLeod and Rachel Cameron, (ii) Women for whom love exists only in a spiritual level like Theodora Goodman, Laura Trevelyan and E.Twyborn and, (iii) Women, whose love affairs are adulterous extensions of their married lives as in the case of Elizabeth Hunter, Ellen Roxburgh, Stacey MacAindra and Morag Gunn. These categories open up interesting possibilities. Whereas for the first group, love aids in bringing together the body and mind, for the second group, love is supraphysical arising out of fantasy. For the third group, affair helps in distinguishing love from lust. Let us now consider these categories in detail.

In A Bird in the House, there are two instances of Vanessa's love affairs. More than the events themselves, their significance in aiding Vanessa's understanding becomes more important. The first of these affairs occurs in the story "A Bird in the House." Here, her love for an airman when she is seventeen during the World War II parallels her father's love of a French middle-class girl during the War of 1919. Her realisation points out her anxiety to get out of Manawaka which only points out her father's anxiety when he was of her age. Vanessa burns the letter and the photograph of her father's lover in order to prevent any tarnishing of his image.

The second love affair is between Vanessa and Michael, a member of the R.C.A.F. training camp. Her grandfather treats
Michael with the same contempt with which he treated Aunt Edna's suitors earlier. However, it turns out that Michael is married. I hated my grandfather as I had never hated him before. What I could not forgive was that he had been right, unwittingly right, for I did not believe for one moment that he had really thought Michael was married (BH 202).

Yet, this also marks her understanding of her mother and grandfather whose advice, if not anything, comes from their experience of the world.

In A Jest of God. Rachel's affair with Nick Kazlick serves to bring about a turn of events in the novel. Before the affair, Rachel is bound by the morals of Manawaka society represented by her mother, with her repetitions about "a woman's most precious possession" (JG 89-90). For the most part, Rachel mainly lives inside herself and breaks the social conventions only in her dreams which are masturbatory in nature. For instance, in the opening chapter of the novel, Rachel dreams of making love to a handsome prince. The setting is either a distant forest or a beach. The different features of the shadow prince are blurred.

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 (JG 18).

Rachel immediately checks herself by questioning whether she is unbalanced or laughable.

Touch and trust in the physical existence becomes possible to Rachel only during and after her relationship with Nick. As Ronald Labonte perceives, it is only during and after her affair that she "redisCOVERS body and mind as being one and the same" (in John Sorfleet ed. The Work of Margaret Laurence 167). For
instance, when she thinks she knows nothing about Nick, her inner voice sounds her true position: "Yet I've touched him, touched his face and his mouth. That's all I know of him, his face, the bones of his shoulders. That's not knowing very much" (JG 85). George Bowering's comments are perceptive on this point.

But she [Rachel] has to learn that touch can come before and lead towards knowing .... and even that touch touches both ways, both people at once, so that knowing yourself happens from the skin inward ("That Fool of a Fear" in A Place to Stand On 221).

This initial touch kindles in her the desire to know more. "Then I want my hands to know everything about him, the way the hair grows in his armpits, the curve of his bones at the hips, the tight muscles of his belly ... " (JG 104).

Bowering further observes that after her relationship with Nick, her obscure sex-fantasies are replaced by dreams of herself in bed with Nick. She overcomes her initial problem of communication by talking freely to Nick about their families. It is this optimism, according to Clara Thomas, that makes Rachel in a burst of self-confidence that follows her first experience of physical release in love, she voices her need for a child--his child (The Manawaka World of Margaret Laurence 84).

However, CM. McLay views Rachel's plea as her desire to "escape out of herself" and "replace loneliness" ("Every Man Is An Island" 60-1). Nick replies by saying "I'm not God. I can't solve anything" (JG 148). Further, he purposely deludes her by showing a photograph. Though Rachel is hurt beyond reason, at this point, she liberates herself from all possible constraints by accepting the suspected pregnancy and the tumour as jests of God to make fools of human beings. She also understands the confines
within which Nick is operating. **Commenting on the** whole incident, Bowering traces the growth of Rachel. At first, Rachel longs for the **comforting** presence of Nick. But later she cultivates an intimacy with Calla and decides to break away from the control of her mother. "There is confiding and confidence, outside and inside" (George Bowering in *A Place to Stand On* 222).

Unlike Vanessa and Rachel, E.Twyborn's attempts to understand the self through love in White's *The Twyborn Affair* are complicated by his/her sexual ambiguity. Eddie's description of himself as a "**pseudo-man-cum-crypto-woman**" (TA 298) neatly defines the gender confusion in the novel. However, it also helps E. to try out different roles. In the first section, the reader encounters Eudoxia as the 'hetaira' of Angelos Vatatzes, the last survivor of the Byzantine heritage. Angelos fully creates "the aesthetic version" of Eudoxia, that she reflects after Joanie Golson's entry into their world that "nothing of me is mine, not even the body I was given to inhabit, nor the disguises chosen for it--... . The real E. has not yet been discovered, and perhaps never will be" (TA 79).

E.'s adoption of the masculine form in Part II of the novel adds to the complication. Eddie's affair with Marcia Lushington only brings him memories of his unusual relationship with his mother. On the other hand, Don Prowse's rape, threatens his heterosexual identity. E.'s avatar as Eadith Trist, the brothel owner is a "novelette she enjoyed living" (TA 310). Eadith manages quite successfully in creating a facade of an abbey out
of her brothel. This is threatened by Lord Gravenor's love for her. She fears that Gravenor "might have wrecked the structure of life by overstepping the limits set by fantasy" (TA 322).

Eadith's disillusionment that "the reality of love, which is the core of reality itself, had eluded her" (TA 336) and her resignation that "she was fated never to enter the lives of others, except vicariously. To enter, or to be entered: that surely was the question in most lives" (TA 374) clearly explicates the homo- and hetero- sexual ambiguities in her life. To a certain extent, this ambiguity is resolved by Lord Gravenor who offers to accept her in whatever form she appears. His statement that "[m]en and women are not the sole members of the human hierarchy" (TA 426) questions the restriction posed by society. On the other hand, Gravenor's remark—"'Love' is an exhausted word, and God has been expelled by those who know better, but I offer you the one as proof that the other still exists" (TA 426)—equates love with God and is affirmative of the success in future. This, in turn, brings us to what Ingmar Bjorksten rightly identifies as White's preference for "charitable love--agape" over "physical love--eros" (Patrick White: A General Introduction 54) which will be explored in the following pages.

The compassionate love is best expressed in the brief relationship between Mary Hare and her cousin, Eustace Cleugh in Riders in the Chariot. Mrs. Hare tries to make the best use of her cousin's visit by arranging a ball. Mary dresses in silvery white and wears her mother's jewels and a bunch of "frail fuchsia, and rank geranium, and pinks, and camomile" (RC 29).
Before looking into the effect of such an event it is worthwhile to compare a similar dress worn by Belle Bonner in *Voss* which is described as highlighting her golden flesh. But here, though Mary is "dressed to kill, as one young fellow remarked, only it was Mary who was killed" (RC 28). She becomes aware of her own grotesqueness which is further highlighted by the splendid appearance and dance of Miss. Antill. Though discarded and ignored by everyone, one moment in the entire ball becomes significant for Mary and that is when she is the only one to detect that Eustace hates to dance with Miss. Antill. Her complete understanding of his position is evident in the narrator's statement: "He began to tremble. If she had not pitied, she might have been shocked. But there had been moments when she had absolved even her father from being a man" (RC 32). Further, she also considers him more as an individual and a human being like any other creation of God. So, she responds to him as an individual and not as a woman.

Then she touched the back of his hand, and he did not withdraw. Of course her skin told her immediately that she could have been a dog, but she was grateful to be accepted if only in that form. In fact, she would not have thought of expecting more, and mercifully it had never yet occured to her to think of herself as a woman (RC 32. emphasis added).

This submissive attitude is important because it characterises her as a person since she adopts this ‘humility and simplicity’ in her surrender to nature also.

In *The Aunt's Story*, the four lover figures present various possibilities. Whereas Frank Parrott and Huntly Clarkson represent the eros aspect, Gen. Sokolnikov and Moraitis represent
the agape aspect. Theodora rejects the former and embraces the latter and finds a meaningful union with Holstius. Though Mrs. Goodman praises Fanny for her artistic talents and makes out Theodora to be dull, she has insights which are unsurpassed. Theodora's father encourages this aspect of her character as also her ability to shoot straight with a rifle. However, they prevent the possibilities of her marriage to Frank Parrott and Huntly Clarkson. The incident of shooting the hawk begins when Theodora protests against the shooting itself. But Frank fires and misses. Aiming at the hawk as if it was 'her own red eye' she shoots and kills the hawk. On one level, this incident proves Theodora's superiority which seeks to submerge the masculine presence into nullity. On another level, Theodora identifies with the hawk and by killing it she begins the process of destroying herself. "... I shall continue to destroy myself, right down to the last of my several lives" (AS 71). John McLaren rightly considers Theo's killing of the hawk as her assertion of "the freedom of spirit denied her by her bondage to her mother and convention. By killing the bird, she asserts her right to its freedom" (Australian Literature: An Historical Introduction 177).

The incident with Huntly Clarkson begins in the shooting gallery. When offered, other women refuse to take aim. Theodora aims 'at the clay heads of the jerking ducks.' To Theodora, this marks her movement away from the world of Huntly Clarkson and shooting of each duck shatters a secret life. While Theodora experiences the whole incident with a heightened intensity, for the on-lookers, it is 'something mysterious, shameful and grotes-
que’ (AS 119). As far as Huntly is concerned, with each aim and shot of Theodora’s, he moves away from Theodora or that ‘she was separated from them forever by something that their smooth minds would not grope towards, preferring sofas to a hard bench’ (AS 120). While Theodora views the whole incident as a confrontation with the evil in her, for Mrs. Goodman, she (Theodora) has disgraced the prestige of the family in public as well as deliberating spoiled her chances of matrimony: ‘... You, Theodora, will experience a double hell, because you have rejected life’ (AS 121).

The third lover figure in the novel is Moraitis, the musician. Like Laura's experience of the physical realities of childbirth during Rose's pregnancy, Theodora experiences the pangs of childbirth during the birth of her niece Lou. Moraitis' music invokes the physical sensations of love and Lou is the symbolic gift of such a union. The description of the evening of Theodora in Moraitis’ concert is full of sexual overtones.

She watched him take the 'cello between his knees and wring from its body a more apparent, a thwarted, a passionate music.... . She could read the music underneath his flesh. She was close. He could breathe into her mouth. He filled her mouth with long aching silences, between the deeper notes that reached down deep into her body. She felt the heavy eyelids on her eyes (AS 111).

What begins as an individual to individual reaction soon gains a cosmic significance.

And the music which Moraitis had played was more tactile than the hot words of lovers spoken on a wild nasturtium bed, the violins has [sic] arms. This thing which had happened between Moraitis and herself she held close, like a woman holding her belly (AS 112. emphasis added).
Although, she is neither a musician who could reply him in his own medium nor a mother to give birth to a product of such union, "her contentment filled the morning, the heavy, round, golden morning, sounding its red hibiscus note. She had waited sometimes for something to happen. Now existence justified itself" (AS 112. emphasis added). The blissful existence of Theodora as a result of this meeting is shown in her contentment in the morning. Her existence is placed within the ‘round, golden morning’ which emphasises the mandalic symbol. The emphasis on the colour ‘red’ here and in the incident of the shooting of the hawk brings in connotations of carnal, physical existence.

The fourth lover figure is Sokolnikov of the Jardin Exotique section. What begins as the physical with Frank and Huntly and reaches an indirect yet physical symbolism with Moraitis reaches a culmination of the fantastic in Sokolnikov. As J.F. Burrows points out,

> The essential vitality of Sokolnikov, ..., lies in his unique blending of worldly disillusionment with a continuing dependence upon the illusory, of a mostly tolerant scepticism with an irrepressible joy in life ("Jardin Exotique: The Central Phase of The Aunt’s Story" 97).

Apart from addressing Theodora as his mate Ludmilla, Sokolnikov builds a strong relationship with her by talking to her incessantly to the point of boredom. One thing that this relationship stresses is that "[t]hey were, in fact, that complementary curse and blessing, a relationship" (AS. 199). Such a statement, however, can be extended to almost all the figures of the Jardin Exotique section: "... the faces, whether Katina Pavlov, or Sokolnikov, or Mrs. Rapallo, or Wetherby, only
slightly different aspects of the same state" (AS 179-80). The fire at the hotel destroys all the images Theodora has of herself but Sokolnikov is the only exception: "Sokolnikov was deathless" (AS 250). In this respect, the lover-beloved relationship extends beyond the Jardin Exotique section to the final section of the novel. Holstius completes Theodora's vision of various selves. Holstius is the first person with whom Theodora has a physical contact but the cloth on the legs of Holstius had the familiar texture of childhood' (AS 277-8). The emphasis on the importance of physical existence is stressed in the following paragraph:

Resistance had gone out of her as she lay, her head against the knees of Holstius, receiving peace, whether it was from his words, and she was not altogether sure that he spoke, or from his hands. His hands touched the bones of her head under the damp hair (AS 278. emphasis added).

John Beston points out how Holstius puts an end to Theo's "wrestlings with her problems of love." Beston perceives Holstius as "a recreation of [her] father" "endowed with the articulateness of the Man Who Was Given His Dinner" ("Love and Sex in a Staid Spinster" 27).

The relationship between Voss and Laura is different from the rest of the relationships between lovers. The love relationship between Laura and Voss in White's Voss also presents a combination of eros and agape with a stronger emphasis on the latter. Voss and Laura meet only for four times but the bond they establish between themselves is remarkably strong. The communication between them which is carried through letters, dream sequences and telepathic communication seems stronger than actual words spoken between them. This aspect of their relationship will
be dealt in the section on *Women as Wives.* The *first meeting* between Laura and Voss occurs when the latter comes to *meet* Mr. Bonner, the financier of the expedition. Since the Bonnors are away at Church, Laura is obliged to entertain their guest. However, what *seems* a very superficial conversation between them, reveals peculiar insights in Laura's later conversation with the Bonners over dinner. For instance, she acts as *Voss' defence and tells Mr. Bonner and Tom Radcliffe: "'He does not intend to make a fortune out of this country, like other men. He is not all money talk'" (V 28). By stating that Voss is not afraid of the country and that he is possessed of understanding, she places him above the level of the Sydney society. By further pointing out that the country "is his [Voss'] by right of his vision" (V 29), Laura foretells the future and the rest of the novel is but an explication of this.

During the second meeting at a picnic, they move a little closer. Laura loves *'the shape of his [Voss'] words'" (V 63). But as between any true lovers they had *'departed from that natural level.'* However, there is a secrecy in their silent understanding of love and a physical dimension also: "Air joining air experiences a voluptuousness no less intense because imperceptible" (V 63). Having begun their secret life "'[b]oth the man and the woman were lulled into living inwardly, without shame, or need for protection" (V 69). There is a mutual understanding and participation by Laura and Voss. Such an understanding and the emphasis on *eros* and agape alike *differentiates* the Laura-Voss relationship from being blatantly sexual and physical like the relationship between Rose Portion and Jack Slipper. Another
important feature about the relationship is that they, ‘the man and the woman were of equal stature’ (V 69). It is this equality that makes them question each other's validity instead of blindly following one's opinion. Belle-Radcliffe relationship belongs to the latter category. It is this quality that makes Laura describe Voss' expedition as ‘pure will’: "'you are not going to allow your will to destroy you,' she said rather than asked. Now she was very strong" (V 69. emphasis added).

The third meeting between Laura and Voss takes place when the Bonners give a party to the members of the expedition. This meeting forms the climax since this is the meeting when there is actual physical touch (though very minimal), understanding of one another (not through silence but through speech) and discussions regarding various subjects including God. They run into each other when they go to the garden for some fresh air. Voss is curious to know about the lives of the domesticated women and Laura describes their high imaginative capacity: ‘An advantage we insect-women enjoy is that we have endless opportunity to indulge the imagination as we go backwards and forwards in the hive’ (V 86). Answering his query as to what she thinks of him, she reads his character with a high degree of accuracy.

‘You are so vast and ugly,’ .... ‘I can imagine some desert, with rocks, rocks of prejudice, and, yes, even hatred. You are so isolated. That is why you are fascinated by the prospect of desert places, in which you will find your own situation taken for granted, or more than that, exalted... . But most flattering, I think, when you experience it, is the hatred, or even the mere irritation of weaker characters’ (V 87-8. emphasis added).

She is also sincere and true to accept her fascination for him
and says: 'You are my desert!' (V 88). This metaphor of the desert is important since it points to the simultaneous journey of Voss across the landscape and of Laura into her mindscape.

Talking about God, Voss reiterates his hatred for the God of humility. This brings to mind the statement of the Moravian priest that Voss hates God because He is not in Voss' image. However, Voss' pride awakens Laura's compassion and she shifts from her original atheistic position to saying that she will pray for him. In a way, this is a turning point since Laura resumes her faith in God.

The fourth and the last meeting occurs on the morning the expedition leaves from Sydney. They do not speak to each other but there is a wordless communication. "For an instant their minds were again wrestling together, and he experienced the melancholy pleasure of rejecting her offered prayers" (V 112. emphasis added). There are two important things to be noticed in this passage. The term 'melancholy pleasure' hints at a subtle, may be unconscious shift in Voss' position from his original pride. It is this 'offering of prayers' by which Laura teaches Voss the value of Christian humility.

The domination of eros is seen in the adulterous affairs of Elizabeth Hunter, Ellen Roxburgh, Stacey Cameron and Morag Gunn. In White's The Eye of the Storm, a number of sexual infidelities are attributed to Elizabeth Hunter, but only two of them are mentioned. One is Elizabeth's lifelong attraction to Arnold Wyburn and the other is her triumph over her daughter, Dorothy, in capturing the attention of the Norwegian scientist Edvard Pehl. But more important than the affairs themselves is
Elizabeth's realisation about her polygamous nature. Also, the incident with Pehl on the Brumby Island during the eye of the storm offers Elizabeth her moment of illumination which will be examined in the Third Chapter.

During her stay at Van Dieman's Land, Ellen Roxburgh (A Fringe of Leaves) is seduced by her brother-in-law, Garnet Roxburgh. Though she openly accuses Garnet, Ellen's reaction is of a deeply sensual nature.

... she felt remotely related to Ellen Roxburgh, or even Ellen Gluyas; she was probably closer to the being her glass could not reveal, nor her powers of perception grasp, but whom she suspected must exist nonetheless (FL 82).

Once, riding rashly on the spur of the moment, Ellen, predictably is seduced by Garnet. She realises to her shame that she is the least affected, for she has taken part in "an experience of sensuality she must have awaited all her life, however inadmissible the circumstances in which she had encouraged it" (FL 103). The description of the entire seduction scene is full of sexual overtones:

She was again this great green, only partially disabled, obscene bird, on whose breast he was feeding, gross hands parting the sweeping folds of her tormented and tormenting plumage; until in opening and closing, she might have been rather, the green, fathomless sea, tossing, threatening to swallow down the humanly manned ship which had ventured on her (FL 102-3).

This passage clearly reveals the blurring line of demarcation between the victimiser and the victim. This increases her sense of guilt.

Ellen's relationship with Jack Chance assumes near idyllic happiness. In her article, "Escape with a Convict: Patrick
White's *A Fringe of Leaves,* Elizabeth Perkins sees Ellen's relationship with Jack as "an acceptance and an expiation of adultery with Garnet" (267). However, the expiation is over during her harrowing experiences with the aborigines. With Jack Chance, she starts life afresh. Ellen experiences sensual depths in her relationship with Jack. They live more by instincts than by reason. As Jack says, "two bodies that trust can't do hurt to each other" (FL 268). Jack helps in rejuvenating Ellen's spirits and inculcates a sense of renewal in her.

She raised her arms. It was love, whether selfless or sensual, which had restored the youthful skin to her breasts, the hollow in a smooth, leaf-patterned flank; the tendrils of her hair singed off ritually by her black mentors were again stirring in the armpits. Her face she was unable to see, unless she turned it towards him, and it became reflected in his (FL 284).

In the last days of their relationship, Jack, her saviour, becomes Ellen's child. He is not only racked by the memory of the cruel penal laws and punishments but also begs her forgiveness for committing the murder of his wife, Mab, for her infidelity. Apart from comforting him, she actually experiences the role of Mab.

In a discussion of the role of Jack Chance in the novel, Manfred Mackenzie compares him to *Dimmersdale* in Hawthorne's *Scarlet Letter.*

Hawthorne's New England heritage dictated that it should be a pastor who should complete the old puritan errand into the wilderness. By contrast, in *A Fringe of Leaves,* tradition is imperial, penal, scarcely theological at all. It is appropriate, then, that its georgic taking possession of a continent should be completed in its heroine's relationship with a miscreant and convict, Jack Chance ("Tradition and White's Individual Talent" 165).

Further, Jack's role serves to point this difference from Ellen.
His is an initiation away from society whereas Ellen is initiated into society.

In Margaret Laurence's *The Fire-Dwellers*, Stacey's affair with Luke Venturi takes the form of a brief affirmation of physical existence in an otherwise tedious routine as wife and mother. The already existing misunderstanding between Stacey and Mac is widened by Buckle Fennick's lie about taking Stacey to bed. Buckle, as the reader understands, is concerned about arousing his own sexuality and not in sharing it. But Stacey is not able to make Mac understand this. Buckle's homosexual tendencies become evident to both only after his death. This unfair accusation of Mac offers an excuse for Stacey's affair with Luke who appears youthful and fresh and a welcome change to her after Mac. Her inquisitiveness is expressed much earlier in the novel: "I want some other man, someone I've never been with. Only Mac for sixteen years. What are other men like?" (FD 15).

The affair with Luke is just an answer to this. She knows that she has not been deprived sexually, but Luke is "like the rain in a dry year" (FD 174). More importantly, and as Clara Thomas points out, Luke sees Stacey "exclusively as a woman" and so, she is momentarily "freed of the kaleidoscopic wife-mother-housekeeper roles" (*The Manawaka World of Margaret Laurence* 123). In her own words, her intercourse with Luke is uncomplicated and uncontaminated by the din of everyday life. I'd like to start again, everything, all of life, start again with someone like you—with you—with everything simpler and clearer. No lies. No recriminations. No unmerry-go-round of pointless words. Just everything plain and good, like today, and making love and not worrying about unimportant things, and not trying to change each other (FD 176).
Stacey's affair with Luke also serves as a substitute for her reminiscences about her love-life as a young girl in Manawaka. This affair also helps her to gain a foothold and re-enter her marriage with a newfound freshness. Above all, Stacey learns "through her brief affair with Luke that he is no less complicated than Mac is and that he offers no magical solutions to life's problems as she had hoped he might" (Miriam Packer in John Sorfleet ed. The Work of Margaret Laurence 129).

In The Diviners, "roles and selves converge in the Laurentian cosmology, as personal identity which is directly a function of gender... Morag uses sexual behaviour to manipulate sexual identity" (John Moss. Sex and Violence in the Canadian Novel 76). There are four men in Morag's life apart from her husband Brooke Skelton. Among these, two assume importance through what they contribute to Morag's self-awareness. Jules Tonnerre, through his songs of the Metis past, contributes to the acceptance of a distinctly Canadian heritage and past to Morag. Dan McRaith helps in inculcating the sense of family in Morag.

In the first place, Jules offers Morag the freedom to walk out of her sterile marriage with Brooke. She is also free to have the child she earlier wanted and to contribute more time to her creative writing. Morag's acquaintance with Jules dates back to their schooldays. She shares her virginity with him in Grade Eleven. Their first intercourse takes place in the Tonnerre shack. "They smile, then, at each other. Like strangers who have now met. Like conspirators" (D 138). This sort of a relationship continues between them till the death of Jules.
Morag's relationship with Harold, a sad man in love with his former wife and Chas, a bully, are brief and temporary. Clara Thomas describes these figures as "two-dimensional" portraits and adds that "neither in fact nor in her memory did Hank Masterson, Harold or Chas have any depth-quality to Morag, though Chas is closer to a presentiment of evil personified" (The Manawaka World of Margaret Laurence 158). Through these encounters, Morag learns about her own latent powerful sexual drives.

Morag's relationship with Dan McRaith, an artist, serves to show the importance of her Canadian past and the sense of family. A forty-seven year old man with seven children and a wife, Dan is essentially a 'homebody' who would never be hers. He also points out the importance of the sense of place.

"It's not big enough," ... "but it's my place. You might not think anyone could work here. How is it I can't work anywhere else? .... It's the place that's important to me. The surrounding circumstances--well, they have happened and they are here" (JD 388. emphasis added).

In a way, such a thinking influences Morag's ideas about her past. She tells McRaith that she does not intend to go to Sutherland which she earlier imagines to be her ancestral place.

Through all their love affairs, Elizabeth Hunter, Ellen Roxburgh, Stacey MacAindra and Morag Gunn come to a common realisation. This is very well expressed by Amy Parker in White's The Tree of Man after her adultery with Leo, the wandering salesman. "Lives, she realized, can only touch, they do not join."
As Wives

Very few successful marriages are portrayed in the fiction of White and Laurence. White credits the marriage of the mind and spirit as in the case of Laura and Voss. On the other hand, Laurence offers only partial success. This section attempts to examine the roles of women as wives in the descending order of success.

The symbolic marriage of Laura and Voss in White's Voss offers a good example of a successful marriage. The four meetings between Laura and Voss have already been discussed. However, in this section, a note on the sexual nature of these meetings will be discussed. For example, during their second meeting at Point Piper, the entire sexual union is expressed through the archetypal images of wind, fire and water.

The gay day of wind and sharp sunlight had pierced the surface of her sombre green. It had begun to glow. She was for ever flickering and escaping from a cage of black twigs, but unconscious of any transformation that might have taken place. This ignorance of her riches gave to her face a tenderness that it did not normally possess .... There was now distinctly the sound of sea (V 59).

The gleaming quality of the day makes the radical change in Laura take place in a smooth manner. The image of the sun piercing the sombre green vividly suggests the secret spiritual union of the two as well as the cosmic nature of such a union.

The first step towards their union occurs when Voss writes to Laura proposing to marry her. She writes to him saying that only on the condition that he accepts to "pray together for salvation" (V 186), can their alliance be effected. By a clever semantic twist of the word Zussammen (together) to Samen (seeds),
Voss creates an **emblematic** association.

But together. Written words take some time to thaw, but the words of lilies were now flowing in full summer water, whether it was the water or the leaves of water, and dark hairs of roots plastered on the mouth as water blew across. Now they were swimming so close they were joined together at the waist, and were the same flesh of lilies, their mouths, together, were drowning in the same love-stream (V 187).

This brilliant passage marks an elemental link between Laura and Voss and hints at a kind of *consummation*. That she has an upper hand in their relationship is seen in her making him accept her conditions as also in her emphasis on the inherent superiority of a woman: "you are in no position to accept. It is the woman who unmakes men, to make saints" (V 188).

Voss' second letter to Laura addresses Laura as ‘dearest wife.’ Throughout Voss' journey, the happy marital bliss and mutual care and understanding continue. The culmination of all this is the birth of Mercy. However, there is a reference to some sort of a union, which is spiritual. This is when Voss diagnoses Laura's illness as 'celibate paralysis' and the remedy suggested is that he will "administer this small white pill, which will grow inside you to gigantic proportions" (V 2 69). However, Voss immediately feels nauseous about the 'flesh proportions.' He considers himself as ‘One’ who cannot be divided and he throws the pill on the ground. "But she continued to smile her inexorable smile, which signified they had been married an eternity" (V 269). Voss expresses this sentiment to Laura in his last letter where he states that theirs "is the true marriage."

Their marital relationship continues and Voss begins to enjoy the rewards of the symbolic wedlock. For instance, when he
feels guilty of killing his dog, she comforts him. "Until the continuous lovers felt for each other's hand, to hear the rings chatter together. Truly, they were married" (V 267). She also acts as his guarding spirit when Voss goes to the caves: "The man in the cave should have felt wet, and aching, and cold, but the woman's smooth, instinctive soul caressed his stubborn, struggling spirit" (V 275). In one of his dreams, Voss realises Laura's superiority and his need of her company.

He was, after all, a man of great frailty, both physical and moral,... . She, however, was quite strong and admirable in her thick, man's boots... . Yet, her face had retained the expression he remembered it to have worn when she accepted him in spite of his composite nature (V 285).

As a truly understanding wife, Laura gives all possible help to Voss. Even though Voss knows he is beaten, he tries to put up a fight. Laura tries to persuade him against the fight: 'I will think of a way to convince you,' she said, after a time, 'to convince you that all is possible. If I can make the sacrifice' (V 367). As an ultimate sacrifice, she is even ready to part with Mercy. It is at this stage that their bond becomes so strong that it cannot be broken for years to come.

... their understanding of each other had begun to grow... . Leaves were in her lips, that he bit off, and from her breasts the full, silky, milky buds... . So they were growing together, and loving (V 383).

Later, Voss is truly humbled and the routine of matrimony sets in, with Voss explaining to her the scientific wonders all along the way. With his death, she realises that her ordeal and suffering are over. As well as pointing out the "unnecessary literalisation" of the fruit of the marriage, David Tacey, in his article "Patrick White's Voss: The Teller and the Tale," points
out how the symbolic union between Laura and Voss highlights "the tremendous gulf between sexuality and love in White's world" (257).

In Riders in the Chariot, Mrs. Godbold's roles as mother and Mother archetype are more important than her role as wife. One significant feature, however, is her caring for her husband who is a drunkard. She tends him when he is helpless and bears the burden of daily chores uncomplainingly.

'Oh, the husband comes and goes. On several occasions he has, hit her, and once he loosened several of her teeth... .' 'Why doesn't she leave this husband?' 'She considers it her duty to stay with him. Besides, she loves him' (RC 68).

This idea of doing one's duty as a wife unmindful of the worthiness of the husband has its echo in the Laws of Manu. "Though destitute of virtue, or seeking pleasure elsewhere, or devoid of good qualities... . If a wife obeys her husband, she will for that reason alone be exalted in heaven" (quoted in Ananda Coomaraswamy's The Danse of Siva 82).

In spite of the surfacing differences, Elizabeth Hunter, Ellen Roxburgh and Stacey MacAindra maintain partially successful relationships with their husbands.

In The Eye of the Storm, Elizabeth Hunter's relationship with her husband is not dealt with in detail. Her roles as a domineering mother and an affluent lady assume more importance. However, there are certain things which require attention. Even though she chooses to live away from her husband, she goes back to him on receiving the news about his illness and nurses him till his death. Her first reaction on receiving the letter is
anger, "because the charming filigree of her life had been hammered without warning into an ugly, patternless entanglement" (ES 187). However, as she realises "her ill-natured dismissal of some of his more tender advances" (ES 187), she begins to nurse him out of the guilt that she "had failed to recognise this gentleman, her husband" (ES 188). She stays at Kudjeri, nurses Alf, learns to give him injections, reads Stendhal with him, plays the game of ‘Do you like ... ?’ with him. This creates an affectionate tenderness between them and is almost like a "sere honeymoon of the hopeful spirit" (ES 192). Each of them wants to comfort the other. As Alf grows weaker, Elizabeth's love changes to pity and Alf becomes her child. She feels a maternal as well as an emotional need "to merge herself with this child who might have sprung in the beginning from her body, by performing for him all the more sordid menial acts" (ES 195).

These acts of Elizabeth serve to balance her character as a whole. Pity, which is the ruling emotion when she tends Alf shows her to be human and not the fierce rival of her daughter Dorothy in capturing the attention of Edvard Pehl in the Brumby Island, For once she moves beyond the physical expectations and shares a spiritual bond with Alf.

She began to realise that the brief, exquisite phase when she had been able to speak to her husband in words which conveyed their meanings was practically past; from now on, they must communicate through their skins and with their eyes. It was a climax of trustfulness; but of course they had nothing left to lose (ES 197).

Another fact to be taken note of is her realisation of herself as an individual. Though the realisation here is brief and is developed only in her experience of the eye of the storm, it is
significant because it saves her from being an unfaithful wife. At his death, she realises that "[s]he was involved in a mystery so immense and so rarely experienced, she functioned, ... by reverence, in particular for this only in a sense, feebly fluttering soul, her initiator" (ES 198). It is unfair to describe her as having no affection for Alf because she accepts her guilt and works to expiate it:

For the time being she was neither widow, nor wife, not even a woman... . For a moment or two she dipped her toes in hell, and made herself remember the bodies of men she had dragged to her bed, to wrestle with: her 'lovers' (ES 198).

This is the point when she first steps into her path of self-awareness. She also understands and accepts her own sensuality. Against such textual evidences, A.P.Riemer's criticism, that Elizabeth nurses Alf out of 'intensive pride than through any pity she might have for him' seems incorrect ("The Eye of the Needle: Patrick White's Recent Novels" 259). However, Veronica Brady, in her article "The Eve of the Storm," clearly perceives Elizabeth's position as one in which she becomes aware of "her inadequacies and failures as a wife of a man whose gentleness made him so terribly vulnerable" (64).

In *A Fringe of Leaves*, there are four men in Ellen's life. They are Austin Roxburgh, her husband, Garnet, Austin's brother who seduces her, Jack Chance, her convict lover who helps her escape from the aborigines and Mr. Jevons who proposes to her at the end of the novel. Her relationships with them vary from conventional love to coarse sensuality, to spontaneous blissful love, to an acceptance of the social norms with an open eye.

Austin Roxburgh, who comes to the Zennor farm in order to
re recuperate decides to marry Ellen. As a bride, her mother-in-law takes it as her duty to mould Ellen. She is asked to maintain a firm hand with the servants, to maintain a journal and the like. Ellen dutifully obeys them:

To please and protect became Ellen Roxburgh's constant aim; to be accepted by her husband's friends and thus earn his approbation; to show the Roxburghs her gratitude in undemonstrative and undemeaning ways, because anything else embarrassed them (FL 67).

She keeps up social norms and so keeps quiet in strange houses unless spoken to "for fear of what may jump out of [her] mouth" (FL 65). However, one journal entry shows that Ellen is the stronger one and her later experiences with the aborigines are but tests to prove this strength:

... I would like to see my husband as perfect. I will not have him hurt. I am better able to endure wounds, and wld [sic] take them upon myself instead. Women on the whole are stronger because more knowing than men, for all the knowledge men lay claim to. We also learn to numb ourselves against suffering, whether of the body, or the mind... (FL 67).

However, she is unable to prevent Austin's death which is unexpected and full of action for a person who considers death as a "literary conceit." In his effort to save Purdew, Austin gets speared and killed. Ellen's grief over Austin's death is heightened by her guilt about her seduction by Garnet.

At the end of the novel, the reader encounters Ellen on the verge of accepting Mr. Jevon's proposal. However, this does not imply Ellen's failure to sustain her illumination (as Phyllis Fahrie Edelson and other critics make it out to be). It points to Ellen's state of understanding and human compassion. In the last scene, Jevons who tries to serve tea for Ellen tumbles and falls
down and White describes him as a croaking ‘bull-frog’ \( \text{(FL 365)} \). This description serves as an inversion of the popular myth of the Prince Charming in the guise of a frog. Here, Mr. Jevons is no fantasy prince but an ordinary fallible human being. It also marks the distance travelled by Ellen from her original position of waiting for a dream prince from Tintagel.

When we first encounter Stacey and Mac in Laurence's *The Fire-Dwellers*, they are in the sixteenth year of their marriage. Their relationship takes the form of changeless routine. Even love-making is a swift, ritualistic act of necessity. In his article "Wise and Gentle," Phyllis Grosskurth vividly sums up Stacey’s condition:

Mac seems to have something to say to her [Stacey] only when he reproaches her for spoiling the children. He seems to notice her only when he reminds her to get her hair done before an office party (in *A Place to Stand On* 228).

If Laurence had described just this aspect of their relationship, the novel will not hold so many connotations or sustain so much of the reader's interest. By providing an insight into Stacey’s mental processes, Laurence enriches the whole narrative. For instance, Stacey is in an age group which is not as old as her parent's generation nor as young as her daughter's. But she understands very well the bluntness that results from any relationship held for a long time. When they argue over some problem concerning Mac's official career, Mac says, by way of ending the argument: "You do, eh? You really think you do?" \( \text{(FD 37)} \) Stacey is immediately reminded of her own parents in a similar situation. When her mother tries to stop her father from drinking too much, he uses the same words as Mac. There are times when she
even thinks of walking out of the marriage. Her reaction expresses the first questions about women's liberation and economic independence.

_How could you walk out on him,...? You couldn't, sweetheart, and don't you forget it. You haven't got a nickel of your own. This is what they mean by emancipation (FD 104. emphasis added)._

However, some of Stacey's arguments show her to be mentally liberated. For example, she questions the validity of Mac's accusation about her alleged sexual encounter with Buckle Fennick. She further questions the one-sidedness of the whole argument by pointing out Mac's relationship with his secretary, a young girl. "We go on this way and the needle jabs become razor strokes and the razors become hunting knives and the knives become swords and how do we stop?" (FD 139).

This is the reality which she faces in her day-to-day life. In order to escape the daily grind of life, she tries to have fantastic dreams or a brief affair. But in the end, through the turn of various events, she realises that she has to face reality with all its restraints and limitations.

Two relationships which break down beyond repair are those of Hagar and Bram Shipley in _The Stone Angel_ and of Morag and Brooke Skelton in _The Diviners._

**The Stone Angel:**

Whatever anyone said of him, no one could deny he [Bram] was a good-looking man. It's not every man who can wear a beard. His suited him. He was a big-built man, and he carried himself so well .... if only he'd never opened his mouth (SA 69-70).

The predominant emotion in the **Hagar-Bram** relationship is physical passion. As Hagar puts it: " ... we'd each married for
those qualities we later found we couldn't bear, he for my manners and speech, I for his flouting of them" (SA 79-80). Whereas Bram accepts his physical existence entirely, Hagar refuses to do so. Initially, she tries to gloss over it through some fantastic ideas as to "how Brampton Shipley prospered, gentled, learned cravats and grammar" (SA 50). Bram matches her stubbornness and remains, if not worsens into a further degenerate state (one such is the act of relieving himself on the steps of the Currie store).

From the beginning, Hagar is the only one who sees something admirable in him.

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 (SA 45).

Both Lottie Drieser and Hagar's father endorse the view that Bram is "common as dirt" (SA 47). It is sad that Hagar, in order to escape her father's authoritarianism falls a prey to another form of oppression. The main point to be noted about Hagar as wife is that, in a puritan fashion she tries to negate the physical pleasures on which Bram lays so much importance. "His [Bram's] banner over me was only his skin, ... " (SA 81). As Linda Hutcheon remarks in her essay "Pride and Puritan Passion": "Hagar fails to connect her innate sensuality with her sexuality, either in the past or in the present" (58). Yet, years later, when she sees him bedridden, her only reaction is the difference in Bram's outward appearance.
How had he [Bram] grown so small? The broadness of him was gone. His shoulders were stooped, and his wide spade-beard had become only a tufted fringe along his face... . And I, ... was doubly shamed recalling how I'd thought of him at night these past years (SA 171-2).

Later, Hagar describes Bram "as an ancient child" (SA 183). These descriptions resemble the descriptions of Alf by Elizabeth Hunter in The Eye of the Storm. Both Bram and Alf are no longer husbands with equal or more power over their women, but helpless children to their wives. Where this moves Elizabeth into compassion and realisation, it fails to make any impact on Hagar. The only thing she thinks of doing, on his death, is to bury him beside the Currie plot and thus bringing her two heritages together. Though Hagar walks out of her marriage, towards the very end of her life, she realises the dire consequences of her pride and calls out to Bram from her hospital bed. This marks the beginning of Hagar's self-understanding.

However, in The Diviners, Morag's relationship with Brooke Skelton is the least successful. She loses both ways: by not being allowed to have his child and by not being able to improve her creative talents. In a way, her success as a writer marks the failure of her marriage which eventually breaks. How her life with Brooke is allegorised in her novels, will be examined in detail in the section "Women as Artists" in the Second Chapter.

Brooke's picture in the newspaper and the news about his promotion as President of the University sets Morag thinking and the readers are acquainted with her first meeting of Brooke as her professor, her life with him and their subsequent divorce in the fifth chapter of the section "Halls of Sion." From the
beginning, the reader realises that the relationship between Brooke and Morag is one where both are acting out each other's fantasies. Morag’s "mysterious nonexistent past, ‘her genuine innocence’" (D 195-6) are the things which attract her to Brooke. Morag desperately tries to tell him that it is not her true side. "She wants to tell him she is not like that, either. She also has lived too long for that. The state of original grace ended a long time" (D 196). He wants her to be a blank sheet on which he can work out his own fantasies. In the sexual sphere, this is one reason for his assumption about her virginity. On the other hand, for Morag, Brooke offers an escape into a world of freedom away from Manawaka and from all the heritage she gets from Christie and Prin.

This fantasy soon wears out and she quickly gets bored and frustrated about the role-playing that goes on between them. In the same way as Nora in Ibsen's A Doll’s House, Morag resents Brooke calling her 'child' or 'little one.' Brooke refuses to allow her the freedom necessary to grow as an individual. This is reflected in his attitude to sex. He considers himself as the giver and Morag as the passive recipient. "Have you been a good girl, love?" Brooke asks. It has become his game, his jest, before going into her, and indeed before permitting his arousal or hers" (D 245). Morag begins by taking it as a joke but ends up resenting this whole game of rewards and punishments. In this respect, her relationship with Jules offers her more freedom. That Brooke always avoids or postpones any talk about having a child is another area of tension in their marriage. The reasons
he gives range from nonsensical ones like the small space in the flat to non-committal ones like asking her to consider if the world is the right place for bringing forth children. Her growing frustration and resentment find the last straw in his open insult of Jules.

As Mothers

The theorization of the theme of motherhood has generated several shifts even within feminist thought. On the one hand, radical and socialist feminists including Simone de Beauvoir, Shulamith Firestone and Juliet Mitchell "foreground the oppressive aspects of motherhood" (Paulina Palmer. Contemporary Women’s Fiction: Narrative Practice and Feminist Theory 95). On the other hand, theorists like Nancy Chodorow and Dorothy Dinnerstein focus on the pre-Oedipal bond between mothers and children and treat "motherhood as a source of pleasure and ambiguous power" (Paulina Palmer 96). Emphasizing the pre-Oedipal bond, Helene Cixous links the "ecriture feminine" to the mother's voice and Julia Kristeva detects in "maternal jouissance," the potential for disrupting phallocracy (Discussed in Toril Moi's Sexual/Textual Politics 113-9; 167-8). Using the pre-Oedipal bond, Adrienne Rich makes a distinction between motherhood as an institution and as an experience. While the former "highlights the control which patriarchy exerts on women's reproductive capacities," the latter affirms "the potential for pleasure and self-fulfilment" offered by motherhood (Paulina Palmer 97).
In their roles as mothers, the protagonists meet with partial and complete success as also total failure. It is interesting to note that Adrienne Rich's categories are used by the writers to distinguish between Good and Bad Mothers: Mothers who selflessly support their children and those for whom "[m]otherhood is more a biological than an emotional fact" (Ingmar Bjorksten. Patrick White: A General Introduction 36).

Patrick White has captured varying nuances of motherhood in his portrayal of mother figures in his novels. In an interesting article entitled "'Mother, I won't never go drovin'; Motherhood in Australian Narrative," Delys Bird points out the concept of the Good and Evil Mother in Riders in the Chariot. Mrs. Godbold refers to the former and Mrs. Flack and Jolley stand in "oppositional textual relation" to her (43). But a closer examination of the novels reveals numerous variations of these concepts. Mrs. Goodman, along with Alex Gray becomes the dissatisfied mother, while Amy is the possessive one. Laura's concept of motherhood is more mental and psycho-spiritual than real. Mrs. Godbold is the ideal mother. Where Elizabeth Hunter holds a rival relationship with her daughter, Eadie Twyborn proceeds from a distressing position to an understanding of the sexual ambivalence of her son/daughter. Only the roles of Mrs. Godbold, Elizabeth Hunter and Eadie Twyborn are taken up for detailed analysis. One reason is their centrality in the respective novels. Even though Alex is a central character, her trial with her various selves is more important in the novel.

In Margaret Laurence's fiction, the mother figures are distinctive and different from one another. Hagar's
discrimination between her two sons resembles Mrs. Goodman's in The Aunt's Story between Theodora and Fanny and Amy Parker's in The Tree of Man between Ray and Thelma. Rachel does not go through the various experiences of motherhood, but realises what it means to take on the role and responsibilities of a mother. Stacey, like Mrs. Godbold in Riders in the Chariot, is a good mother who cares for and worries about her children. But unlike Mrs. Godbold, she is a modern housewife who has problems of coming to terms with her own sexuality and with external reality. Further, there is no symbol like the chariot in Riders in the Chariot towards which her realisation can be directed. Morag’s relation with her daughter, Pique, is an ideal relationship, well-understood by both mother and daughter.

Let us now examine the roles of the protagonists as mothers in the descending order of success.

Mrs. Godbold in White's Riders in the Chariot and Morag Gunn in Laurence's The Diviners are good examples of successful mothers. In Riders in the Chariot, Mrs. Godbold is described as being "[s]trangled by the arms of a weaned child, she was seldom it seemed without a second baby greedy at her breast, and a third impatient in her body" (RC 66). This being the real picture of Mrs. Godbold, her "life sentence of love and labour" continues, in her nursing of the other riders. Mrs. Godbold does her work uncomplainingly. But as Delys Bird puts it:

She exemplifies the sanctity and sanctification of motherhood.... As the portrayal of Mrs. Godbold lapses into sentimentality, its overblown sanctity .... encourages the intervention of a reading suspicious of the cliché of the ideal of motherhood (44).
At the end of the novel, she becomes the timeless figure of the Earth Mother who is compassionate and gives freely. This is seen in the care with which she nurses Mary Hare when the latter is down with pneumonia, Alf Dubbo when he vomits at Khalil's brothel and Mordecai Himmelfarb after his mock-crucifixion. Mrs. Godbold also provides a contrast to Mrs. Flack and Jolley. For instance, Mrs. Jolley relates her identity to her motherhood.

With her impossibly white teeth and her corsets, her baking of pink cakes and her sentimentally superficial Christianity, above all in her wincingly ladylike manner, Mrs. Jolley parodies middleclass Australian motherhood (Delys Bird 43).

Mrs. Jolley along with Mrs. Hare, Mrs. Flack and Mrs. Rosetree are figures who reinforce White's satiric comments on the suburban values of the Sarsaparilla society.

In The Diviners, Pique is the daughter of Morag and Jules Tonnerre. Morag, as a true and concerned mother, constantly worries about her daughter. In fact, the novel opens with Pique's disappearance from home and Morag worrying about this. Morag is also concerned about the kind of heritage Pique will receive from her.

Would Pique's life be better or worse than Morag's? Mine hasn't been so bad. Been? Time running out. Is that what is really going on, with me, now, with her? Pique, harbinger of my death, continuer of life (D 290).

However, like Stacey, she admires the openness and simplicity she sees in the sexual relations among Pique's generation and especially Pique's relation to Gord and Dan and the swiftness and clear-headedness with which she changes or abandons her lovers without any qualms. Like Stacey, she stands in a two-way relation to the world--parent and child. Even though as a woman of
independent spirit she walks out of her marriage with Brooke, she nevertheless commits herself totally to the task of bringing up Pique. Jules aids her by imparting knowledge of the past inherited by her through him. Like Jules, Pique takes up singing and recreating the old myths of the Metis as her career. In its own way, the family consisting of Morag, Jules and Pique is an idyllic, well-knit family bound by understanding and freedom.

In spite of all this help, Pique feels insecure and unsettled. For instance, in one of the meetings of their family with their neighbours,

> 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 (D 411).

Jules helps her out of this during his final visit. As Clara Thomas rightly observes, "[h]e also points Pique towards his brother Jacques and the place on Galloping Mountain as a kind of area of security and hope out of all the drifting and loss of his family" (164). This kind of passing over of heritage culminates in bringing together of the plaid pin and hunting knife. The final stroke of understanding in the mother-daughter relationship is the decision of Pique to go to her uncle's place in the Metis prairie. Morag accepts that "Pique's journey, although at this point it might feel to her unique, was not unique" (D 441). Thus, Pique's song about Jules is one way by which, she repays and affirms the importance of the Metis heritage. Another point has to be stressed in this relationship. Pique's response to Morag wishing her well is that she is not good at explanations.
This response proves that Pique has avoided getting into the trap of words. While Morag provides Pique, through her (Morag's) own experience, the insight into things, Pique in turn provides a new perspective on Morag's attitude to life and reality. Thus, the relationships which have been dominated by single individuals, here, culminates in the mutual understanding of both, which is essential for leading better lives.

The second group consists of mother figures like Eadie Twyborn and Stacey MacAindra who, with some success, try to cement their relationships with their children. In The Twyborn Affair, Eadie Twyborn’s character assumes significance only in relation to her multipersonality child. Eadie and her changeling Eudoxia-Eddie-Eadith have an emotional bond and it is the acceptance of this bond by both, that forms the crux of the novel. Just as Eadie's acceptance of her son/daughter is important, two different factors become necessary to the understanding of her character. One is her possessiveness over her child: "Father never wanted his child hanging round, or was in some way afraid. Eadie wanted one constantly. Eadie: Don't you love me, darling? .... Then why are you avoiding me?" (TA 123).

Again, Eadie's relationship with Eddie is one that is devouring.

'Shouldn't we embrace?' The gruff warning in her voice at once established her as his mother; and as they advanced upon each other, still the victims of their diffidence, he saw that it was she who was beginning to take the initiative, while he, the passive object of her intentions, .... (TA 148).

Another factor is Eadie's lesbian relationship with Joanie Golson.
She [Eadie] was dressed in a pair of check pants and a coat which could have belonged to my [Eddie's] father. Certainly the waistcoat of crumpled points was his, .... chugging along in the rear was Joanie Golson, her bosom expiring in palest blue charmeuse (TA 38).

This incident is repeated to emphasise the ambivalence and problems involved in sexual transformation. Two incidents help retrieve Eadie's position as mother in the novel. First, is her explanation in her reply to Marcia Lushington's letter in the second section.

What I would like to convey to you is that losing a child in death, is so much better than losing a grown ... reasoning child, to life.... . He is swallowed up. Whether in death or life, it is the same. We should not have aspired to possess a human being (TA 301-2).

This understanding further develops and at the end of the third section both Eadie and E. are mutually self-realised. She openly admits her longing for a daughter and foresees their future as sitting in the garden drying their hair and talking matters concerning women. Such an attitude characterises her near pathetic waiting for Eadith: "Eadie said I must not fail Eadith now that I have found her Eadith Eddie no matter which this fragment of my self which I lost is now returned where it belongs" (TA 431-2). Commenting on the 'ambiguous triumph' of this scene, Jean Pierre-Durix states that "[w]hen the mother herself accepts her son's transsexualism a strange kind of peace sets in, but this temporary balance can only lead to a refuge in dream-like visions which may well end up in death" ("Masks and Travesties: The Twyborn Affair by Patrick White" 46).

In Laurence's The Fire-Dwellers, the readers encounter Stacey as a mother of four children forever worrying about their
welfare, about what she supposes to be her husband's lack of affection for their son, Duncan. Through Katie, her daughter, she recalls her own past and the middle position she occupies as both mother and child.

That Stacey's identity is marked in her roles as housewife and mother is evident in her remark early in the novel.

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 81. emphasis added).

In her essay "Identity in The Fire-Dwellers," Nancy Bailey states that in the above passage, Stacey is worried about "the real self which underlies the diverse personae" (in Critical Approaches to the Fiction of Margaret Laurence 111). It is the changing masks that she resents in the long run, but she understands the need to work out her realisation within the confines of a family.

As a mother, she worries about many things. As Clara Thomas points out, Stacey resents her inability to prevent "Katie's vulnerability, at fourteen; Ian's stiff, withdrawn pride, Mac's misunderstandings of Duncan; and Jen's inability—or unwillingness—to talk" (120). Her fears can be broadly summed up under two heads for the sake of convenience: (i) generally concerning all her children and (ii) especially her relationship with her daughter, Katie, which parallels her relationship with her mother.

Stacey's concern for her kids as a group is evident in one of her interior monologues. Even though Mac points out and she
herself realises that her fears are irrational, she is not able to overcome them.

I fuss. Mother-hen type. All a load of nonsense. All unnecessary. Another nervous tic. How can I break habits I've acquired so gradually I'm not even aware of them until I see they drive Mac out of his mind? (FD 30).

Also, she is seen fervently praying to God. "-Please. Let them be okay, all their lives, all four of them. Let me die before they do. Only not before they grow up, or what would happen to them?" (FD 65). There are numerous instances, when she gets frantic about Jen's inability or unwillingness to talk. Similarly, she feels her own inadequacy to shape Duncan in the proper way. Mac feels she is spoiling Duncan with too much indulgence. During one of his tiffs with Ian and his father, Duncan says that he is unable to do anything right. Stacey's pondering over his words is very intense:

-What words? I haven't got any. It isn't mine he wants anyway. It's Mac's and Ian's, and those he won't get. I'm far from him, too. Far even from Duncan. How did it happen like this? (FD 101).

This reflection may be taken to represent the gulf that separates the masculine and feminine experiences as also the difference in the languages of the discourses of a male and a female.

But even in the exclusively female world of herself and her daughter, she feels her inability to help much. For instance, Katie rebels against Stacey for not allowing her to go to an adults-only movie just as Stacey herself rebelled against her mother to go for a public dance. There are also other ways in which the discrepancies between Katie and herself become explicit. One such instance is when Stacey, in a fit of youthful
energy dresses up in an **outmoded** fashion and dances by herself when the kids are asleep. This is followed by a stark contrast when Katie executes an elegant dance.

Katie is dancing... . Her auburn hair, long and straight, touches her shoulders and sways a little when she moves. She wears no makeup. Her bones and flesh are thin, plain-moving, unfrenetic, knowing their idiom (FP 117).

This passage is immediately followed by a description of Stacey:

Stacey **MacAindra**, thirty-nine, hips ass and face heavi-er than once, shamrock velvet pants, petunia- purple blouse, cheap guilt sandals high-heeled, prancing squirming jiggling (FD 117).

However, in spite of all these problems, Stacey ultimately strikes a harmonious relationship with her children. This comes through three incidents: Jen's sudden burst of words, Mac's caring for Duncan who gets drowned in the beach and Katie confiding in Stacey, when Tess Fogler forces Jen is forced to see the big fish eating its small one. Katie blames herself for merely snatching Jen and running away from the scene. She tells Stacey: "... you **would've** known what to say. You always do. I never do" (FD 179). Helen Buss rightly considers this instance as establishing a sense of equality, a position "where mother and daughter are equals, recognizing their **commonality**, being able to speak of themselves as 'we'." (Mother and Daughter Relationships in the Manawaka Works of Margaret Laurence 48).

In their attempts to **differentiate** between their children and outrival their daughters, some women fail in their roles as mothers. Both Elizabeth Hunter and Hagar Shipley favour one child over the other. They also resemble in their attempts to scuttle the plans of their children to admit them at the home for the
aged. Similarly, Elizabeth Hunter and Alex Gray outrival their daughters in their attempts to capture the attention of Edvard Pehl and Patrick White respectively.

At the end of The Eye of the Storm, Dorothy's thought process is given as a statement: "... the worst mothers in the flesh do not necessarily destroy the touching concept of motherhood" (ES 568). Two categories of motherhood emerge here: "motherhood as experience and motherhood as institution" (Delys Bird 41). In her quest for self-realisation, pride and rivalry with her daughter, Elizabeth loses her position as mother of the flesh but retains the institution of motherhood in her lifelong domination over her children. Instead of love, she nurtures hatred towards her children. Just as families can eat mothers, mothers can swallow children (Delys Bird 46). One explanation of Elizabeth's failure is that her sexuality is combined with motherhood. In the Brumby Island, Elizabeth tries to capture Pehl's attention to herself: "She was sitting sideways at the table ... exposing her slender, miraculously unspoilt feet from beneath the white, raw-silk hem" (ES 385).

Elizabeth cooks for Pehl and plays him music. The last straw is when she openly bitches about Dorothy saying that the latter is going through a difficult time and that hence she bears grudges. Dorothy's reaction is a life-long hatred and resentment for her mother. Further, she dismisses Elizabeth's realisation: "But could anything of a transcendental nature have illuminated a mind so sensual, mendacious, materialistic, superficial as Elizabeth Hunter?" (ES 570). Further, Elizabeth makes an undue differentiation between her son and daughter. She puts down
defiantly their plans of putting her in a home for the aged. However, the redeeming factor is her acceptance of guilt and rivalry and her timely, motherly nursing of Alf.

In The Stone Angel, the pride and inability to open up which mars Hagar's relationship with Bram, continues in her relationship with her sons. By an irrational belief, she holds that Marvin, her eldest son is a Shipley whereas John, her favourite son is a Currie. It turns out to be just the reverse. As John once puts it succintly, "You always bet on the wrong horse" ... "Marv was your boy, but you never saw that ... " (SA 237). Linda Hutcheon provides a psychological reading to the whole issue:

In preferring John to Marvin, Hagar had revealed her double allegiance to the passionate flesh and the repressive will .... her motherly devotion to her Shipley son was an acceptable social sublimation of her denied passion for Bram. Similarly, her secret despising of the hardworking, prosaic, but Currie-like Marvin is an unconscious rejection of her father's values-and his inhibitions ("Pride and Puritan Passion" 59).

In fact, John with his coarse ways and manners, resembles Bram more than Marvin. Hagar presumes that John will hold high the Currie heritage and gives him the plaid-pin. But he trades it for the Tonnerre knife and which, in turn, he trades for a pack of cigarettes. John, like Bram, has intimate relationships with the half-breed Metis and resents Hagar's possessiveness. However, he also cares for Bram during the latter's last days: "John had washed and fed him [Bram], helped him to die-to what extent, only John knew, and whether he'd done the right thing or not and in what spirit, only God knew" (SA 184).

In one sense, Hagar resents the mutual understanding that exists between John and Arlene and the perfect marriage between
Marvin and Doris. For instance, she once tries to advise Arlene against *marrying* John by saying that Arlene cannot *change* him a bit. Arlene's reply shows her maturity and her difference from Hagar:

"It's not me," she [Arlene] said. "I'm by him, that's all. If I could do more, I would, but I can't, nor he for me." I [Hagar] didn't see what she was driving at, but her calm and almost withdrawn air infuriated me (SA 202).

Similarly, John has a better understanding of the importance of the individual rather than the abstract familial pride which Hagar holds. When Hagar rejects Arlene by saying that she is No-Name Lottie Drieser's daughter, his reply is a cryptic questioning of all her values: "This may come as a shock to you," John said. "But it's not her grandfather I'm going around with, nor she with mine" (SA 204).

The perfect understanding that exists between John and Arlene is evident in their clear thinking and frank discussions about their marriage and their future. When direct confrontations with John and Arlene prove futile, Hagar tries to break the relationship by joining hands with Lottie. This results in their plan to send away Arlene to the East. This, in turn, results in the ghastly deaths of John and Arlene. Margaret Gail Osachoff, in "Moral Vision in *The Stone Angel,*" points out the interesting feature that Hagar remembers the childhood episode of killing the chicks in the dump, while Lottie forgets the whole incident. One reason is that Hagar is "imaginative and sensitive" while Lottie is "cold and callous" (151). Further, Lottie has accomplished the task, while Hagar is not able to do it. The third possibility
is that Lottie is more villainous and therefore, lies to Hagar. However, Hagar who turns into stone, unable to weep is released from the bondage when she cries for John's death before Murray Lees, the surrogate son, who brings to light the fact that tragedy is universal.

The facts about John are conveyed to the reader mainly through Hagar's recollections. But her relationship with Marvin happens in the present. We find Marvin and Doris, themselves in their sixties, struggling with an impossibly stubborn woman, Hagar. Even though Hagar accepts Doris as a good cook and takes care of her, she is sarcastic about their natural fears and verbally torments them about their idea of putting her in an old-age home. Meeting Murray Lees and her night at the cannery brings about her realisation, for, in the hospital, she is able to say, "You've not been cranky, Marvin. You've been good to me, always. A better son than John" (SA 304). With this, "she accepts the evidence of love she has always wanted" (Clara Thomas 72).

Conclusion

While examining the female protagonists within the purview of their roles in the family, certain similarities and differences emerge. Though this was considered in the course of the chapter, an overview of them at this stage may be of help in studying the similarities and differences in the perceptions of Patrick White and Margaret Laurence. This may also help in assessing the use of concepts like family and the distinction made between sex and gender by the two writers.
Despite the individual differences, certain common features are found with respect to the familial roles played by women in the works of the two writers. As daughters, protagonists are in perpetual conflict with their parents (usually, dominant mothers) and are often unfavourably compared with their socially successful sisters. As wives, some of the protagonists are portrayed as committing adultery. Elizabeth Hunter, Ellen Roxburgh, Stacey MacAindra and Morag Gunn may be cited as examples. On the one hand, the adulterous affairs emphasise the loveless and incompatible marriages made by the women. On the other hand, it can be argued that the portrayal of adultery is a form of questioning and rebelling against the social norms which insist on chastity for women. On a psychological level, the adulterous affairs are ways by which the 'real selves' of the protagonists are revealed. This aspect will be considered in detail in Chapter Four. As mothers, we find protagonists grouping under three categories: successful, partially successful and total failures. Favoring of one child over the other is a trait shared by some of the protagonists with the other mother figures who are not protagonists. For instance, Elizabeth Hunter's favouring of Basil over Dorothy may be compared to Amy Parker's differentiation between Ray and Thelma in The Tree of Man or Mrs. Goodman's differentiation between Theodora and Fanny in The Aunt's Story. Similarly, Hagar's favouring of John over Marvin may be compared to May Cameron's differentiation between Stacey and Rachel. Further, for women like Elizabeth Hunter and Hagar Shipley, motherhood is a biological fact. It is interesting to find women like Theodora,
Laura and Rachel who do not experience biological motherhood but have an intense experience of motherhood as something emotional. Let us now consider the differences.

In portraying the daughter figures, White seems to insist on the physical ugliness of the protagonists. For instance, Theodora is manly with a prominent 'black moustache.' Laura is a 'plain' headmistress. Mary is a 'red girl' and 'ugly as foetus' in Norbert's terms. They are constantly compared with socially successful women like Fanny Parrott and Belle Bonner. Peter Beatson is of the opinion that White tries to establish the fact that "like success, beauty is an end in itself; ugliness, like failures, points to a higher end" (The Eve in the Mandala 48) and also "the dichotomy of aspiring soul and earth bound body" (109). It can also be established as White's way of subverting the social norms of feminine beauty and womanly attributes.

Laurence also insists on such subversions in that none of her daughter figures are extraordinarily beautiful by social standards. However, Laurence establishes the passing away of beauty with age and the acceptance of it with grace as marking the growth in maturity. For instance, Stacey is well aware of her beauty as a young girl in Manawaka. But she realises her physical bulkiness in the present which provides a striking contrast to her daughter Katie's natural beauty. Thus, her final words in the novel are a plea to "mutate into a matriarch." Similarly, Morag who begins by being conscious of her long beautiful legs and who takes beauty treatments, grows into maturity in accepting Pique's natural grace and agility. In spite of her pride in her good tastes, Hagar is conscious of her grotesque bulk in the present.
In the case of Rachel, her self-criticism about her ‘scarecrow’ appearance and ungainly movements grows into an acceptance of the very same factors at the end of the novel.

The concept of time as the healer results in the cementing of bonds in Laurence's fiction. Thus, Vanessa reaches an understanding with her mother and grandfather and Morag with Christie. The same may be said of Stacey and Mac in the man-woman relationship. As mothers, Morag and Stacey strike an understanding with Pique and Katie. What Nancy Bailey posits for Stacey may be applied with equal validity to the others i.e., their capacity to break "the cycle of women's lives 'lived too long in both depression and fantasy while our active energies have been trained and absorbed into caring for others'" (in Critical Approaches to the Fiction of Margaret Laurence 117).

In the Whitean canon, the only examples of such understanding are those formed between Elizabeth Hunter and Alf and Eadie and E. Twyborn. Otherwise, the deviation from what is considered normal is quite glaring. Most of them are social outcasts either due to their ugliness (Theodora or Mary) or the oddity of their minds (Laura). Beatson points out that "though some kind of dislocation from socially defined normality helps activate the core of being, it is not necessary" (126). It can be argued that a shift in White's stance can be noticed from The Eye of the Storm onwards. Thus, Elizabeth Hunter, Ellen Roxburgh, Eadie Twyborn and Alex Gray maintain a veneer of socially accepted appearances.

Another area of difference between White and Laurence lies in their treatments of sex in their fiction. For instance, in
White's fiction, direct reference to the sexual act is very rare. Physical union is seen as an act of necessity for procreation and as a disease. This is seen in the juxtaposing of images of rotten vegetation while describing physical union as in *Voss*. Thus, Laura finds Rose's physicality repulsive, to cite an example. The descriptions provided by Elizabeth Hunter and Alex Gray about *love-making* are full of grotesque images. In an interview with Jim Sharman, White considers his books to be "very sexual."

They don't flaunt it. Oh, they do more in the later ones, because people now do flaunt sex. But in the earlier ones you didn't, because people didn't. And they also believed more in love than in sex. Now people believe less in love ("A Very Literary Luncheon" 30).

In the above passage, White distinguishes between love and lust. But his insistence on *agape* over *eros* is quite evident in the relationships between Voss and Laura, Theodora and Sokolnikov, Mary and Eustace. Ingmar Björksten's observation is perceptive in this regard. Bjorksten argues that in White's fiction love is considered as

a feeling and as a concept, as an experience and as a presentiment; as that mystery which the intellect can never grasp but which can be comprehended by the intuition of a sensitive being or by the inspiration of an "elected" being (Patrick White: A General Introduction 27).

Such an argument accounts for the motherly care with which Elizabeth Hunter nurses her husband during his last days. This can also be seen in the acceptance and affection of the "spirit children" in White. Theodora's love for her niece Lou, and Laura's love for Mercy can be classified under this category.

Another reason for the difference found in White's portrayal of sex is provided by his essentially 'androgy nous' vision. Manly
Johnson states that White presents sexual encounters "as struggles for unity--two lacks driven to seek completion" ("Patrick White: The Eye of the Language" 344). In this regard, White's statement in Flaws in the Glass is insightful: "In fact sexuality refreshes and strengthens through its ambivalence ... the masculine principle in ... women, the feminine in ... men" (154-5. emphasis added). While echoing Virginia Woolf's statement regarding androgyny, the passage also accounts for the recurring hermaphrodites in White's fiction. Theodora described as a bloke in skirts and Mary Hare's animal compassion for her father and cousin are good examples. Carolyn Bliss is of the view that White uses androgyny "as a means of recalling a prelapsarian unity and of entering a realm in which all dualities are encompassed" (Patrick White's Fiction: The Paradox of Fortunate Failure 47). While androgyny may be a way of achieving mandalic wholeness, White's statement (quoted above) seems to emphasise the acceptance of the sexual ambiguity rather than its resolution. E.'s sexual transformations in The Twyborn Affair stress this aspect.

Unlike White, who seems to believe more in the marriage of the minds, Laurence tackles the sexual encounters with ease. There are constant references to the sexual act as a confirmation and a reassurance of communication and understanding between individuals. As Ronald Labonte points out, though Laurence differentiates between love and lust, "[s]exual touching is the sine qua non in human contact because it alone pierces the appearances, the abstract images of ourselves which we project for the world to marvel at" (in The Work of Margaret Laurence
173). Though Hagar believes that love should be "tender at, lavender sachets," it is the acceptance of her sexual arousal to Bram that finally leads to her self-knowledge. Similarly, Morag encounters a patriarchal 'giver' in Brooke, lust in Harold and Chas, comfort in Dan MacRaith and perfect understanding in her love-making with Jules. Commenting on Laurence's ability to integrate sex and sexuality, John Moss observes that "[u]niversal problems of human experience are seen and rendered in terms of the sexual roles of her characters" ("The Presbyterian Legacy: Laurence and The Diviners" 70). On the one hand, such descriptions mark the insider's view Laurence has in writing about the intimate experiences of her characters. On the other hand, the sexual behaviour of Laurence's woman "is inseparable from their total experience of themselves" (John Moss. "The Presbyterian Legacy" 71). What they rebel against is the role-playing and gendering by society. Thus, Morag who walks out of her sterile marriage with Brooke and is permissive in her love-affairs, takes it on herself to be a good mother to Pique.

This chapter is an attempt to study what David Jeffrey calls, "the search for a relational or interpersonal understanding of the self" whose persistent aspect is the "obsession with the family" ("Biblical Hermeneutic and Family History in Contemporary Canadian Fiction: Weibe and Laurence" 87). While Jeffrey connects Laurence's family units to the archetypal family structures derived from the Bible, Peter Beatson divides White's family units into the 'external,' 'internal' and 'mythical.' These two readings may be taken to
affirm the varied nuances and connotations of the individual within the family provided by the two writers. The existing range from the particular to the universal also portrays "the structures of the existing forms of so-called reality" which "prove too narrow and repressive for . . . women who attempt to discover where the cause of their bondage lies" (Angelika Maeser in John Sorfleet ed. The Work of Margaret Laurence 151). Though some attempts at norm breaking were evident in the roles of women within the family, more such attempts will be examined in women's professional roles as artists and teachers in the following Chapter.