CHAPTER V

The Quest for Identity:
The Diviners
Margaret Laurence's works center around Manawaka, the mythical Manitoba town and *The Diviners* marks the culmination of her Manawaka cycle. It is a novel of attentive social consciousness examining the interaction of the individual and the construction of Canadian society in the mid-twentieth century. The world of Morag Gunn, the protagonist is a set of structured consolations in which the complicity in relationships of social order and power is shown to be supportive and comforting.

*The Diviners* presents history initially as legend, something, that provides a pattern and inevitability because it has happened, is in the past and is possible to recount. But a substantial part of Morag's life is concerned with recognizing the shifts in the retelling of legend. And learning the techniques and strategies needed to construct and make history which does not purely console: in the context of retelling, each person has to find the points of difficulty, the parts that do not work smoothly in her life, at the same time as resisting the urge to fabricate a version of events where all things work smoothly, effortlessly fitting in, and creating yet another consolation. The techniques and strategies to be learned are intimately part of those skills of oral and written communication; and Laurence tells us that the need to practice that communication is 'strong and friendly. But merciless' (100).

Contemporary Canadian Fiction includes a number of works, which reject modern technology and turn to some form of
knowledge, which might be described as traditional or primitive. Bruce King states, “the search for roots in the past and some better life in contrast to modern urban civilization is widespread at present and the novel may be said to record an extreme representation of the new romanticism and a critique of it”\textsuperscript{1}.

Clara Thomas also opines the same about \textit{The Diviners}: “The passing of an authentic heritage of their people is a central preoccupation of writers of today, particularly of writers of the post-colonial nations”\textsuperscript{2}. In \textit{The Diviners}, there is a feeling that while the quest for identity requires an exploration of the past it must also be shaped by the present and by those, a sociologist would call the “significant others,” parents, children, lovers and friends. Terry Goldie observes, the search for self often takes the form of an interest in folklore, a diffuse assemblage of what could be defined as “the traditional beliefs, legends and customs, current among the common people.”\textsuperscript{3}

As the novel opens, Morag Gunn, a forty-seven-year-old writer, gazes out through the window of her house, watching the river that flows by. Morag has found a note stuck in her typewriter from her eighteen-year-old daughter, Pique, saying that she has left home to head out west. This turn of events excites mixed feelings in Morag: as a mother, she fears for her child; as a woman and a writer, she admires her. Pique has left home once before, and Morag is not made comfortable by memories of that bad time. But she reflects that she is
lucky to be a novelist whose work can take her mind off her personal life. (4)

Sipping coffee, gazing out the window and meditating, she observes her seventy-four-year-old neighbour, Royland, fishing. Royland is a diviner who discovers underground sources of water. Morag always feels on the verge of learning from him, “something of great significance, something which would explain everything” (4).

The structure of the novel embodies Morag’s development from a child to a self-aware person. The first section “River of Now And Then” shows Morag deeply disturbed about her daughter, Pique, who is undergoing an identity crisis. Pique’s physical movement West, triggers off Morag’s psychological journey back into her earliest childhood and she reconstructs garden memories from a jumbled mess of old snapshots which are the only things she has of the time before her parent’s death. Unable to understand her attachment to them, she says that she keeps the snapshots “not for what they show but for what is hidden in them” (6). Though fully aware that the interpretations she has composed “may be true and may be not” (7), they allow her emotionally re-live her paradisiacal past. Her spruce-tree family comprising Peony, Rosa Picardy, Cowboy Jake, Blue-Sky Mother, Barnstable Father and Old Forty-Nine, “reflects the pre-lapsarian paradise of the child.”4 The death of her parents results in her expulsion from the garden at the age of five, which is indicated by the
closing of the farm gates. Clara Thomas tells us that in the book's manuscript copy, "the words 'Paradise Lost' ended that memory sequence.\textsuperscript{5}

Morag's peculiar relationship with her photographs, kept as if in a treasure chest in "an ancient tattered manilla envelope" (5), which Christie had given her when she was five, plays a vital role in \textit{The Diviners}. Morag's personal record of history begins with a series of snapshots:

\begin{quote}
I've kept them of course, because something in me doesn't want to lose them, or perhaps doesn't dare. Perhaps they are my totems, or contain a portion of my spirit. Yeh, and perhaps they're exactly what they seem to be—a jumbled mess of old snapshots which I'll still be lugging along with me when I'm an old lady, clutching them as I enter or am shoved into Salvation Army Old People's Home or wherever it is that I'll find my death.\textsuperscript{(5)}
\end{quote}

One feels that Morag is inspired by a pre-rational, perhaps mystical knowledge. Morag's responses at the moment of seeing the photograph suit the recent studies made by anthropologists and folklorists:

Family photographs derive meaning from the content in which they are found. They are icons
of family members and symbolic of the family as a continuing unit with a past and with connections to the community. They are ethnographic created by the family for presentations to the others, but also for confirmations of the family's identity.6

Morag remembers that her parents died of infantile paralysis and says, "I remember their deaths, but not their lives. Yet, they're inside me, flowing unknown in my blood and moving unrecognized in my skull" (15). Mrs. Pearl from the next farm comes to look after Morag. After the death of her parents, Mrs. Pearl informs Morag that as she has no relatives near by and she will be brought up by Christie Logan, who was with her father in the Army. Christie and his wife Prince are kind but poor.

Another mid—June: Morag is awakened by a phone call thinking that it is from Pique, but it is from a would—be—writer seeking advice on how to get published. Morag watches the river and thinks:

Probably no one could catch the river's colour even with paints, much less words. A daft profession. Wordsworth, Liar, more likely. Weaving fabrications. Yet, with typical ambiguity, convinced that fiction was more true than fact. Or that fact was in fact fiction. (21)
Her thoughts are interrupted by Royland who comes and informs her that he is going divining on next Friday. He wonders if Morag would like to accompany him. Morag eagerly responds and admits that she finds it hard to believe in it yet she believes totally. Royland says simply, “it works” (22). He has the strength of conviction that she admires Christie’s tales of Piper and Morag Gunn. Just as he has faith, she must have faith if she is to write. But still she wonders: how can one make words do the magic?

In her memorybank movies of her Manawaka past, she remembers Christie, Morag’s first diviner. He is her first true teacher. Christie’s philosophy of garbage influences Morag in two other ways. What he recovers from what other people throw away reveals their history, just as what he absorbs from what he has read, heard, and lived through reveals the interlocking of the histories, myth and fictions of people. Nothing is really thrown away. The writer, Morag soon appreciates, is a scavenger—just like Christie. Similarly, Christie’s philosophy of the “socialism of the junk heap” is significant. Garbage is communal property, he tells Morag. One must share. One is an individual and a member of the human community. This lesson will not be lost on Morag.

It is Christie’s telling stories to young Morag, which first fires her desire to be a writer. Entranced by his tales, Morag starts creating her own tales, her own created realities.
Morag waits for a call from Pique, at which moment, the phone rings. It's Pique's father, whom Morag has not heard from in three years. Pique had turned up at his place in Toronto, and he demands to know why Morag allowed her to leave home. Morag blasts him in return, but they eventually agree that neither is to blame for Pique's departure. After a few awkward words, they hang up. Her reflections lead into her past.

Eva Winkler is her best friend. Jules is a fifteen year old Metis school boy in Manawaka. He and Morag are classmates and she feels that he is a kindred spirit. One day the class is singing "The Maple Leaf Forever." Morag notices that Jules is not participating. His people, part French, part Indian, are not in the song. Morag stops singing, without knowing quite why. It is the beginning of her long identification with Jules—as a person, as a representative of the Metis and, like herself, as an outsider.

Jules is another one of the diviners in Morag's life. He, too, has a concern for the past of his people. Soon Morag is listening to stories that have been passed down to Jules from his father, stories of the prairies from a Metis point-of-view. These stories differ radically from the stories she has heard from Christie or learned from Canadian history books, because they are told from entirely different perspective. Morag notes this. What we choose to recall or emphasize about the past is what we see (or want to see) as significant. Christie tells young Morag "We
believe what we know.” And Morag later acknowledges that there is “no one version” of the truth.

The stories of Jules and of Christie foreshadow Morag’s concern as a writer. “The Maple Leaf Forever,” is a song celebrating the British conquest of Canada and referring to the settlers from England, Ireland, and Scotland. The poem “Daffodils”—which Morag studies in school—is likewise a colonial poem, imported from outside. Christie gives Morag a knife with a “T” symbol burned into its handle.

Morag is awakened by the birds in the roof of her log house. Royland and Morag go outside. Royland has a Y—shaped piece of willow, one hand on each branch of the fork. Morag had once tried divining with the willow wand. Nothing happened. Royland had said that she didn’t have the gift. She wasn’t surprised. She thinks that, “her area was elsewhere. He was divining for water. What in hell was she divining for? You couldn’t doubt the value of water” (83). That night Pique telephones from Winnipeg to say that she is fine. Royland finds water in the back yard of A-Okay.

Morag goes into her past. She is in her early teens and grows fashion—conscious. She works in Simlow’s Ladies’ wear on Saturdays and spends all her money on clothes. After work, Morag goes to Parthenon Cafe. When Morag is in Grade Nine, her teacher, Miss Melrose encourages Morag in her writing and also convinces Morag that Morag
needs glasses. Morag has a brief encounter with Skinner Tonner down in the valley of Wachakwa Creek.

Morag is in Grade Eleven, meets Jules, who is on leave from the army. He takes her to the collection of shacks he calls home. They make love. “She opens her eyes. They smile, then, at each other. Like strangers who have now met. Like conspirators” (112) and Jules introduces Morag to his father, Lazarus. Jules returns to camp and Morag thinks about him in the days that follow. She reads in the Winnipeg Free Press, the newspaper about the disastrous Dieppe Raid and anxiously scans the casualty lists in the newspaper. The name of Jules Tonnerre does not appear.

Morag works as a staff reporter for The Manawaka Banner for which MacLachlan is the editor. After the death of his son at Dieppe, Lachlan takes to drinking and is frequently hangover. On a winter night, Lachlan instructs Morag to report on a fire down in the valley at the Tonnerre shacks. The eldest girl Piquette and her children have been “caught in it” (127). Morag goes there reluctantly and finds Dr. Cates and Niall Cameron, the undertaker there. After going to the office Morag “cries in a way she does not remember ever having done before, as though pain were the only condition of human life” (130).

The war is over. Morag’s earnings as a reporter have been added to her trust fund monies, enabling her to go to college in Winnipeg in the fall of 1945. Her feelings about finally leaving Manawaka are a mixture of
joy and guilt. Prin has been suffering from premature senility and Christie has to look after her. Although he seldom gets drunk, he is scrawnier than ever, and dirty and smelly. He bewails his wasted life and raves on about his ancestors, whom he feels he has disgraced. Morag escapes Christie's interminable ramblings and silences by going out. One evening she runs into Jules, dressed in casual civilian clothes. When Morag tells him that she is going to college in Winnipeg and never coming back, Jules mocks her. He says, "Go to college and marry a rich professor, how about that? ...I'm not like you" (134). Morag realizes the truth of it. They live in different worlds now.

It is morning. Morag, once again caught between the difficulties of getting down to work and her current worries about Pique, looks out over the ruins of the vegetable garden and conjures up her imaginary mentor, the pioneer Catharine Parr Traill. The "discussion" Morag is engaged in with the invented ghost of Mrs. Traill is interrupted, when Royland enters the kitchen. Asked if she is talking to the same lady again, Morag replies that Royland is always catching her at it. But, she insists, it is not because she is alone too much. Surrounded by people, she would still talk to ghosts.

Pique sends her a post card from Vancouver. Royland assures her that "Pique'll be back soon" (141). After he leaves, Morag pulls out the previous day's newspaper and rereads an article, looking at the photo
accompanying it. Dr. Brooke Skelton has been appointed president of a university. Morag feels that Brooke is still handsome.

Once again the memorybank movie unreels. Morag is leaving Manawaka. Morag promises to write, but both she and Christie know she won’t. Morag reaches the world beyond Manawaka, the Winnipeg College. She boards with a family in North Winnipeg, far from the downtown university. Her room is like the room she had back in Manawaka—small, cold, and barren. Morag, feels guilty about wanting to move: Mrs. Crawley, her landlady has confided in her; the family needs the money. Ella Gerson, a Jewish girl becomes her “friend for life” (146). Ella invites her to her home. She has a widowed mother and two sisters. The Gerson house radiates a warmth Morag never known before, which makes her feel crying. Mrs. Gerson who semi—adopts her, tells that it is no disgrace to cry. She gives Morag, books by Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Chekhov and Turgenev. “Thus it is that Morag Gunn sets a tentative and cramped toe inside the Temple of Beauty at the same moment as she first truly realizes that English is not the only literature” (151)

Morag recalls her acquaintance with Dr. Brooke Skelton as a student. He appreciates her for her story which is published in “Veritas”. The professor explains to Morag that he likes her idiomatic expressions. When he questions about her background, she is ashamed of her past life and suggests that she doesn’t really have one. When he persists in probing her past, she says, it is more or less a blank. The comment
seems to fascinates her professor and he offers to drive Morag home.

Brooke Skelton's passionate goodnight kisses make Morag decide that she would do anything for him. He is fourteen years older than she is and insists that she would not be happy with him when she is fifty and he is sixty—four. Morag replies that she is not a child and that she would be happy. Brooke tells her he likes her, despite the fact that she is not beautiful, because of her “mysterious, non—existent past” (158). Morag feels as if she is starting life anew. She will conceal everything about herself he might not like.

Brooke suggests getting married in the spring and Morag eagerly agrees. But when she brings up the idea of her attending the university, Brooke discourages her, suggesting she might find it awkward when her husband is a professor there. However, if she wants to, she has a perfect right. She won’t need a degree to be a wife. She can sit in classes or read. After all, getting an education is basically learning and learning how to think. Morag takes in everything and offers no protest. Finally, Brooke suggests her fitted for a diaphragm because they don’t want to have “accidents” (164). Morag knows he means children. She agrees, but adds that she wants his children. Brooke assures her that there’ll be lots of time for that—later.

Morag writes to Christie asking his permission to marry Brooke. She makes various excuses in order not to invite him to the ceremony and concludes by asking after Prin. Christie replies that it is her life and
he hopes all goes well. He leaves open the invitation to “Come home when
convenient” and adds that Prin is not well. Later Morag goes back to visit
Christie and Prin before she marries and moves to Toronto. It is a
depressing visit. Christie is only fifty—six but looks seventy. Prin is a big
hulk in the bed to which she is now confined, her skin the colour of
uncooked pastry, her lips puffy, and her eyes far away. Morag feels older
now. She feels she should stay and look after Prin and Christie but she
can not. Morag leaves the next day. Later Morag goes to Toronto—a city
she comes to fear and hate.

Morag sits in her big, comfy armchair by the kitchen window with
a glass of scotch, celebrating the receipt of a royalty cheque the day
before. She feels like talking to Christie who has been dead for seven
years. She phones Ella in Toronto. She has four books of poetry
published and is working on a fifth book. She tells Morag she is fine but
has the feeling of living “too many lives simultaneously” (173). This is a
feeling Morag can share. Morag announces that Pique is coming home,
but has split up with Gord. She wonders if her daughter will have the
same pattern of unstable relationships as her mother. Ella assures
Morag that an inability to form lasting relationships is not passed on
with the genes and invites her friend to visit Toronto. Morag feels cheered
up.

Morag’s next memory bank movie takes her back to Toronto. She is
afraid of the noise, the cars and the unfamiliarity of the city. Most of the
time she spends reading or listening. The possibility of their having a child, however, is a subject Brooke does not want to discuss. After four years in Toronto, she is the ideal housewife. But beneath it all, Morag is frustrated. She tries to write short stories, but tears them up. Brooke’s obvious determination not to have a child prompts Morag to confront him petulantly. The discussion ends petulantly.

When Morag suggests that she find a job, Brooke encourages her to work at writing. Morag admits that whatever she has written turns out badly. Brooke asks that he be the judge of that. At his request, Morag shows him some stories which he commends. "Spear of Innocence" is the title of Morag’s first novel. Brooke suggests they go to a movie. Morag would rather stay home and write, but dutifully goes with Brooke because that is what is expected of her. Later that night, when Morag thinks she would never go back to Manawaka, she realizes for the first time that the town nonetheless “inhabits her, as once she inhabited it” (185). Even though she has not yet come to terms with it, her past, which she sought so long to deny, lives on inside her.

After spending the day working on her novel, Morag takes a walk along the rutted country road near her house. When she returns, she is relieved to discover that Pique is back, hungry and looking much the same, wearing a belt with an old brass buckle that seems oddly familiar to Morag. The buckle and belt are, in fact, from Jules. Pique had a good trip. The best thing about the trip was that Jules had given Pique some
of his songs. This meant a lot to Pique, who needs to know if her mother loved her father. Pique asks, "Why did you have me? For your own satisfaction, yes. You never thought of him, or of me" (193). And to this accusation there was no answer. Pique is close to tears when she says that her father is losing his voice and finding it harder to get jobs singing. She confesses that sometimes she would like to see Jules, but wonders if he would feel the same. Pique explodes: "You're so goddamn proud and so scared of being rejected" (196). Just as they are about to prepare dinner, Gord comes in—at which point Pique leaves to avoid any confrontation with him.

The next morning Royland brings a fish for Pique's breakfast and wonders if Pique would like to go divining that afternoon. While waiting for Pique to wake up, the old man tells Morag a little about his past life—Of how he had been a preacher, and had driven his wife to suicide with his fanaticism. Later on, the Smiths come by to introduce their visitor, Don Scranton. He and Pique seem to establish an instant rapport and both started playing guitars and singing together. Then Morag muses on the people who had lost the languages of their ancestors, bring to her mind, Brooke who had spoken Hindi as a child but, forgot most of it later.

Brooke is the head of the English department. Morag writes during the day when Brooke is out. It has taken three years for her to finish her first novel and she feels empty. Brooke offers his critical suggestions, she
Morag's suppressed anger is released in a flood of words. Brooke blames the outburst on her return from Manawaka rousing bad memories she had forgotten. When he asks her to simply dismiss it from her mind, Morag boldly asserts that she had never forgotten any of her past. "It was always there" (210), she states. Brooke liked the idea that Morag had no past, that she was starting life brand new with him. But now he is disillusioned.

After the first publisher rejects Morag's novel, she sends it to another. The second publisher is interested, but wants revisions and the Novel is published. When the reviews for *Spear of Innocence* arrive they are mixed. Brooke is not pleased that she has chosen to use her own name—Morag Gunn—on the cover. He wonders aloud if she didn't think it worth taking the chance to put her married name on it. Morag wants to leave Brooke but does not see how she can. She walks blankly through the streets of the city, distant and despairing. One day, thus preoccupied, she sees Jules Tonnerre coming out of a rooming house. She runs up to him and hugs him. It is almost ten years since they last saw each other. Morag invites Jules for dinner. When Brooke comes home, he does not shake hands with Jules, but goes into the bathroom.
He calls Morag in and accuses Jules of freeloading, and Morag of having her past catch up with her. He reminds her that two of his friends are coming for dinner and that Jules can not stay. He adds that it is illegal to give liquor to Indians. Morag's chance reunion with Jules on the street leads to the final break with Brooke. She leaves with Jules and stays overnight. When she returns to the apartment to pick up her things, she sees Brooke a broken man, she knows she will never live under his domination again.

For three weeks, Morag lives with Jules. Jules accuses her of using him as a "shaman" (223), to break Brooke's spell. The word is appropriate, as Jules finds hidden sources in Morag with his lovemaking; Morag divines hidden truths with her pen. The act of sex with Jules releases Morag from her bondage to Brooke. Morag, with Jules' consent, chooses to have a child by him. And so Pique is conceived, a blending of three of Canada's solitudes—Scots, French, Indian. But there will be no marriage. Morag again leaves on a train, heading out west, passing Manawaka on the way to Canada's Pacific Coast, where she will try to make a new life. And she is bringing a new life with her within her womb.

Morag is pregnant and alone, living in a boarding house in Kitsilano area of Vancouver. One morning, Mrs. Maggie Tefler, Morag's landlady hears Morag vomiting in the sink. She brusquely guesses that Morag is pregnant and suggests that she go back to her husband. When Morag refuses to confirm that the child is not her husband's Mrs. Tefler
proposes that Morag take a room in the attic in exchange for doing the house work. Morag, who has little choice, accepts with thanks. Despite the low rafters, Morag likes her room. At least it is her own room. She buys odds and ends to fix it up comfortably. She recalls the famous dictum of Virginia Woolf that a woman, if she is to write, must have “a room of one’s own” (242).

She has written to Brooke to tell that he is using her own name now, but she has not told him of her pregnancy. One day Morag receives a letter from Brooke, which is patronizing. Morag has proved her point and he will try to forget her silly action if she wants to come home and act sensibly. He adds, he will send the train fare. Morag is torn: he has come as close as he can to admitting his need for her; she needs him too. But there is no going back. She wonders if she got pregnant to ensure that she could not return to Brooke. Did she choose Jules as a father so that no one could think the child was Brooke’s? “How many people had she betrayed? Has she even betrayed the child itself?” (243) Morag writes to Brooke. In reply, she gets a letter from his lawyer, seeking a doctor’s confirmation of her pregnancy, a legal document stating that Brooke is not the father, and the name of the father along with the dates when adultery took place. Morag complies with the first two requests and refuses the third, as she does not want to implicate Jules.

One evening Morag is visited by Hank Masterson, the local representative of her publishers, Walton and Pierce; brings the news that
Spear of Innocence has been accepted by the publishers in the United States and England. That will mean more money for Morag, who is almost broke. He encourages her to write and suggests she do some articles for the local paper. He will get her a literary agent. The new Agent, Milward Crispin, succeeds in selling one of her stories. The money from this and from her English and American royalties enable Morag to give up the house work and simply rent the room.

Morag's another visitor Julie Kazlik, is from Manawaka., whom she has not seen for ten years. Morag gives birth to a baby and names her Piquette Tonnerre Gunn, and shortens it to Pique. When the baby is two months old, Morag gets Julie to take a roll of colour film. She sends one picture of the baby, with a note, to Jules, who replies that he is pleased with Morag's choice of name for her. He still is moving about, singing, but hopes to see his daughter some day.

Morag shifts to Julie's old apartment. Morag's new landlady is Fan Brady, is a “danseuse”. Fan reminds Morag of the character “Lilac Stonehouse” in Spear of Innocence, and she wonders about fiction foreshadowing real life. But Fan is tougher and more cynical than Lilac. Morag goes to a party thrown by Hank Masterson where she meets Harold, a slightly drunken newscaster who just separated from his wife. He and Morag go to her apartment together. Afterwards, Harold says he'll call her. Morag is unsure, but he does, a few days later. This time they go
to Harold's apartment. He takes her hand and weeps, telling her that he loves his wife. After that, he does not call again.

A few weeks later Morag writes to Ella and tells her that her new book, *Prospero's Child* is almost through its first draft. She talks about what she is trying to achieve and admits that she is being ambitious. According to his letters Christie is starting to show his age. She writes more often now to Christie and sends him money when she can, but she can not go back to Manawaka. She wants to find her own home, but does not know where it could be. Perhaps England — she'd like to go there, even though she might be disappointed. She would also like to go to Scotland, to Sutherland, "where my people come from" (271). She does not know what she would learn there, but feels that some day she must go. But not yet — she hasn't enough money and she feels she can't leave Fan right now. Morag concludes her letter by sending her love to Mrs. Gerson and to Ella. Unsure what else she can do with her novel, Morag submits it. It is accepted by three publishers—Canadian, British, and American. The novel is published, and Hank Masterson throws a party for her. Morag would rather have the party money, but she says nothing.

The next memorybank movie begins with a snapshot of Pique who is four years old. Fan's dancing days are over. She gets a job as a coat—Check girl. Morag, who has received advance royalties on *Prospero's Child*, insists on helping by paying more rent. One day Brooke arrives with his second wife, Anne. Morag wonders why they came. Was he
showing off his wife? But she was showing off her child. It strikes her that they have had to hurt each other one last time (275). When Pique is five years old Jules visits Morag for the first time almost in six years. Jules stays with them for some months. He has come to see his sister Val, who is sick. His brother Jaques has settled near Galloping Mountain. The younger brother, Paul, was drowned up north, where he was acting as a guide for American tourists. Jules is out most days. Sometimes he comes home drunk, but only after Pique is asleep. Most often he is silent when his depression hit.

One evening Jules gets out his guitar and sings songs of Old Jules, his grand father, for Morag and Pique. Pique likes the strong, simple lyrics and the tune. She asks her father to sing the song again, but he says, “someday.” Pique wants a song for herself. Jules again says, “someday.” Perhaps someday Pique will write a song for him, he suggests. Pique says she does not know. One night Jules leaves them, but he does not say good bye to Pique.

Morag is sitting in the kitchen. Pique remembers the one time her father had been with them; she remembers his songs and the things he told her when she was in Toronto. Pique is not pleased by Dan and A—Okay’s plans to raise horses. She has plans to travel out West again.

Sceptr’d Isle is the title of the next memorybank Movie. Pique and Morag are living in England. One foggy day, a greengrocer asks Morag what she thinks of “this royal throne of kings, this sceptr’d isle”, and
Morag is surprised to find a working man who can quote Shakespeare. One of the reasons Morag comes to England is a fantasy about mingling with fellow—writers as friends. She has friends, but few are writers, and she finds that London can be just as provincial as Canada. She and Pique have established a kind of refuge in London. Morag works part—time at a bookstore owned by Mr. Sampson. He often lets poor students read through entire books in his store without pressing for a sale. Also he is sympathetic to Morag's need to look after Pique—and to write. Christie writes a letter to Morag, asking her when she plans to travel to Sutherland, the home country of her ancestors. Morag writes to Christie, assuring him that she will go on her pilgrimage soon.

One afternoon in the book—shop Morag comes across Dan McRaith, a painter from the Highland village of Crombrauch, in Scotland. As they chat, Morag observes that her people lost their Gaelic tongue, and McRaith replies that the same is true of most present—day Scots. This man reminds Morag of Christi: she feels an echo of the lost Gaelic in their voices. Although Dan McRaith is married and has children, Morag decides that this does not matter. She arranges to meet him in a pub that same evening. They talk about their lives and Morag finds it incredible that she can talk to him so easily. It does not seem strange that later, after the pub, they spend the night together.

Almost two months pass, and Morag is still seeing Dan. When he has to get away from his home village, he takes a room at a friend's
house in Camden Town. He reads two of Morag's books and finds it strange that her characters "could be you and yet not you, at the same time" (308). Morag is pleased by his understanding. He then offers to show her some of his paintings, which he has brought down from Scotland to sell in London. Once he has finished a painting, he feels no pain in selling it. Morag admits that she never reads one of her books when it is published. Each of them is detached from the work once it is delivered into the world.

Morag has known Dan McRaith for three years now sees him for a few weeks or months, twice a year, when he comes to London. Like Ella and like Jules he will be her friend for life—another reassurance that "no man is an Island, entire of himself. Sometimes, in order to gain a new perspective on a particular situation, it is necessary to travel—to distance oneself. So it is with Morag's visit to Sutherland. There she realizes that she and Dan cannot be long—term lovers. He is bound to his wife and family and place, even though he must periodically leave them. There, too, overlooking the firth to Sutherland, she is struck by the sudden realization that Scotland is Dan's place, but her place is in Canada. When after returning to London, she learns that Christie is dying, she tells Pique that they are going home. Home has no real meaning for Pique yet, but for Morag it means Canada, Christie's country.
Canada is the land of her father's. When she greets Christie on his death bed, she can finally tell him, from the heart, her realization that he was a father to her. This understanding frees her and marks an essential rite of passage in Morag's long pilgrimage to find who she is and where she is coming from. She can claim her heritage as an inheritor and prepare to create her own place in her homeland. Christie is blessed by Morag's simple yet profound acknowledgement of her debt to him, and he dies in peace. Morag gives Christie the funeral he wanted, with a piper playing a lament for the dead over his grave. Morag, listening to the mournful wail of the pipes, sees "with the strength of conviction" that this rite of passage is Christie's "true burial" (329). She is released into her mourning, free at last, another rite of passage is completed.

"Beulah Land", places Morag on Toronto after leaving Manawaka and Christie's funeral. She is staying with Ella and her second husband Mort. One day she comes across the advertisement in the paper that an 80-acre farm is for sale near Peterborough, Ontario. She has the land. And she feels, now she has ancestors. She will be a new pioneer, setting down her roots in Ontario. Her new place is called "McConnell's Landing". She meets an old man with a grey beard approaches and introduces himself as Royland, a neighbour who lives farther down the river. He reveals that his business is finding wells—he is a diviner—and asks Pique if she wants to accompany him on his divining expedition the next day.
Three years have passed. Morag’s novel is finished and has been accepted for publication. Pique is fifteen and asserting her growing independence. Jules visits McConnell’s Landing to see his daughter again. When Pique meets her father for the first time in ten years, his songs, and stories to know more about her “other side” fire her. The injustices of the past done to her Metis forebears can partially be vindicated by art—but only partially. When Jules tells her about how his brother Paul died under mysterious circumstances and how his sisters Val and Piquette died, he has another reason. “Too many have died,” he tells her. “I don’t aim to be one of them. And I don’t aim for you to be neither”. At this point, Jules gives Pique the only keepsake he has that belonged to his father, a silver brooch. Morag gives him the knife with a sideways capital T.

During that autumn, Pique tells her mother about her visit to Manawaka. She went down to the valley, where Jules and Lazarus had lived, and where her namesake, Piquette had died in the fire. She also visited the cemetery where Prin and Christie Logan were buried. Some flowers had been planted, and a weary, middle-aged woman was weeding the grave. Morag realizes that the woman would be Eva Winkler. Pique announces that she is going to travel out west again—this time to Galloping Mountain, where Jacques Tonnerre, his wife Mary, and numerous children live. She feels a need to be a part of this extended family and has written to Jacques. Then, for the first time, Pique sings
one of her songs which is about the valley and the mountain that hold her name, her search for her roots and her need to belong somewhere.

That evening, Morag receives a telephone call from Billy Joe, Jules’ partner, who tells her that Jules is very ill with throat cancer. Immediately Morag leaves for Toronto, gives him her copy of Pique’s song, and Jules regrets that he can’t hear his daughter sing it. Morag leaves in the morning before he awakens, knowing she will never see him alive again. Back in her house on the river, four days later, Morag is unable to write. That evening Billy Joe arrives with the news that Jules has killed himself. He brings with him Jules’ knife, to give to Pique. Morag telephones her daughter at the Smiths. When Pique comes home and sees the Tonnerre knife on the table, she realizes that something has happened to her father. Morag tells her that he died of throat cancer. A few days later, Pique heads out west again—this time by train.

In the days that follow, Morag is able to get back to work. One day Royland interrupts her and informs her that his divining powers have left him forever. He says,

It’s something I don’t understand, the divining,”

Royland said slowly, “and it’s not something that everybody can do, but the thing I don’t usually let on about is that quite a few people can learn to do it. You don’t have to have the mark of God between your eyebrows. Or if you
do, quite a few people have it. You didn't know that, did you?" (369)

A-Okay tried it, Royland says, but his skepticism got in the way. Nevertheless, A-Okay could learn, Royland believes, if he could just get over wanting to explain it. Morag reflects,

   The inheritors. Was this, finally and at last, what Morag had always sensed she had to learn from the old man? She had known it all along, but not really known. The gift, or portion of grace, or whatever it was, was finally withdrawn, to be given to someone else. (369)

When Royland had left, Morag sits beside her window, contemplating. Royland was a true diviner. She mentally compares his gift of divining, with her gift of creating things with words. She gets up goes out and walks towards the river. It is neat sunset at the fall of the day, and the river surface reflects the golden light. The river's current is visible, even though the wind blows the surface water in the opposite direction. Thus the river seems flowing both ways. "Look ahead into the past and back into the future, until the silence" (370). This thought flows through Morag's head. She wonders,

   How far one can see into the river? Not far. Near shore, in the shallows, the water was clear, and there were clean and broken clamshells of
creatures now dead, and the wavering of the underwater weed forests, and the flicker of small fishes, and the undulating lines of gold as the sand ripples received the sun. Only slightly further out, the water deepened and kept its life from sight. (370)

Thus *The Diviners* by Margaret Laurence is a novel which has a preoccupation in the protagonist's search for herself. Morag's search for inheritance is closely knit with her search for her identity through writing her way into the Canadian literary tradition. The novel explores the relationships of individual to her community and its history, which leads beyond individuality, back into the past and forward into the future. Morag backtracks through the wilderness of memory and legend in order to find her own identity and her own "space" in the time present, gaining in the process a recognition of literary and cultural traditions which have shaped her as to what she is. The process of breaking away from the fractured self and coming to terms with the "self" and possessing it for Morag involves rejection as well as acceptance, the exercise of the imaginative reason, till she views herself as inheritor and finally is at home.

The river image that opens and closes the novel subtly and vividly captures Morag's growth as an individual. At the beginning of the novel, "the apparently impossible contradiction" of the river flowing both ways
fascinates Morag. Towards the end of the novel, the same phenomenon urges her to “look ahead into the past, and back into the future, until the silence”. Her recollections range from the snapshots, memories reminiscences and songs from her personal past as well as her ancestral past. As John Moss rightly puts it, *The Diviners* “is a brawling vision in the middle of a life of the various identities that have been achieved, evaded and stumbled inevitably upon, by one person, Morag Gunn”.

The specific instances which bring out Morag’s realization are her acceptance of Christie Logan as her father and thus, accepting the heritage he has offered her through his ‘tales’ as her only true heritage. As a writer, her acceptance of the limitations of the powers of the word. This knowledge is given to her by Royland, and the momentary insight offered by the flight of the Blue Heron.

The novel proceeds through wilderness to homesteads and homecoming at the end. It is the story about a woman writing and artistic creativity, investigating the social, political and material conditions within which women’s fiction is produced in Canada. Their fragmented narratives express fractured, striated, sensibilities. Their attempts to exhibit an impulse toward completion which is aesthetically necessary to the artist, helps them overcome such attempts at marginalization. The narrative pattern of the novel establishes possibility as well as pave way for a co-existence of dual inheritance perceived by
Morag within herself, thus constituting her differences in the sense of shifting identities that perpetually elusive and variegated.

As the novel unfolds, Morag is an established writer with four novels to her credit. She is in the process of writing the fifth. Though she constantly worries about convincingly creating a world out of words, she remains more like any other woman and mother concerned about her daughter, Pique. As Nancy Bailey quotes: “Unlike writers...who write for a living, Morag never changes publishers, feels her agent is neglecting her, worried about the size of other writers’ advances, or has any truck with universities”6 Though the criticism is absolutely valid, the importance of the contexts of Morag’s novels lie in their symbolic value. In this regard, Nancy Bailey’s defence is convincing.

The context revealed by the titles of Morag’s novels is...a symbolic progression of the inner self from the light of “Spear of Innocence” and “Prospero’s Child” through the darkness of “Jonah” back to the light of “Shadow of Eden” and “The Diviners”7

The five novels of Morag are important in many ways. They not only establish Morag as a writer but also facilitate her development in life in which she plays more than one role—as an orphan at the age of five, adopted daughter of Christie, wife of Brooke, lover of Jules, mistress of Dan and mother of Pique. The titles of the novels assume a lot of
significance. In them, Morag begins in a state of innocence, and moves on progressively to being tutored by Brooke, to break away and become an outcast, to having a glimpse of the Eden of the past which comes alive through the Piper Gunn stories to a final state of viewing writing as divining. At this point, the creator and the created merge. Like the symbolic river that flows both ways and which is evoked at the beginning and the end of the novel, Morag divines into the past and the future in order to understand herself. "Look ahead into the past, and back into the future, until the silence" (370). It is this silent moment in which she achieves a state of grace that she returns once again "to write the remaining private and fictional words" (370).

Though Morag's early literary talents are signalled through her write ups in Manawaka Banner and the short story, publisher in the college magazine, literarily, her present is more important in terms of creativity. The past is important for its literary value only when it is invoked in the works.

Morag's first novel "Spear of Innocence" is about the heroine Lilac. The parallel to this character can be found in Morag's childhood friend Eva Winkler, both of whom undergo painful abortions. In her article, Lynette Hunter points out how Fan Brady, Morag's landlady, is a "mirror image of Lilac" (254). In the novel, Morag asks 'Does fiction prophecy life?' (254). Here is an instance when it does.
It is important to note that the writing of the novel serves at this point of Morag’s life as a substitute of the child she cannot have by Brooke Skelton. The initial tension in their marriage begins with the publication of the novel. In Prospero’s Child, the heroine Mira, is an obvious reference to Miranda. The story evolves around the growth of Mira from a childlike state to that of a mental maturity when she rejects all barriers. The parallels to Morag’s life are very clear. Brooke, like Prospero, is the father figure and colonizer. Morag, like Miranda, initially submits to the tutoring but after attaining maturity resents the cage and escapes from it.

The third novel Jonah brings in Biblical associations of being swallowed by a whale and passing through a dark labyrinth and coming out alive through the grace of God. This novel fictionalizes Morag’s relationship with Christie Logan, the garbage collector. Like Morag, Carol, the heroine resents the fact that her old man is an outcast in society. In a symbolic reading, the novel is a study of the heroine’s acquaintance with the dark forces of the self before an ascent into realization. Shadows of Eden recreates the tales of Piper Gunn which Christie imparts to Morag. It is a recreation not only of Morag’s ancestral past but that of the mythical past of the country itself. This novel shows the novelist’s understanding of the universal truths of life. The fifth novel The Diviners brings Morag’s present. Her life after divorce from Brooke and after having a child by Jules is brought into focus.
Thus Morag fictionalizes her past experiences and reassess them. Another aspect of writing which both fascinates and baffles Morag is language, especially, words. Morag is language-conscious, who desperately tries to merge the world and the words in spite of knowing the limitations of language. For instance, Morag gives importance to names because they define identity. Thus, her daughter’s name, Pique, is not only as acting of recognition of Jules’ dead sister Piquette but also placing the name within a heritage. Also, naming gives Morag, what Theo Quayle Dombrowski calls the “Adam-like power” of naming God’s creation for the first time. Morag fantasizes the power involved in naming: “Imagine naming flowers which have never been named before. Like the Garden of Eden. Power! Ecstacy!” (138). She seeks to go beyond the intended meaning of a word. The inability to grasp the existing meanings of words is seen in a series of questions asked by Morag as a child beginning with “What means...? The explanations sought for, include words like cord (36), scavenger (26), and recess (28). Similarly, Prin’s word “mooner” (42) means “Something else” for Morag.

Morag realizes her power as the diviner of words which can do magic or sorcery only occasionally. “He was divining for water what in hell was she divining for?” (83) In these lines, Morag questions the value of fiction and equates it to magical activities like divining. Morag also realizes the limitations of language to conjure the exact image or situation. As she, herself puts it:
The swallows dipped and spun over the water, a streaking of blue black wings and bright breast feathers. How could that color be caught in words? A sort of rosy peach color, but that sounded corny and was also inaccurate.

I used to think words could do anything.

Magic, Sorcery. Even miracle. But no, only occasionally (4).

At the beginning of the novel, Morag wonders that "things remained mysterious, Royland's work, her own, the generations, the river" (4). Her works and her life are quests to know the meanings of those things which remain hidden. The Snapshots and Memorybank Movies are ways by which Morag tries to chronologically re-create her past and find out what is hidden in them. Through writing, Morag tries to demarcate clearly the difference between reality and fiction. She questions herself whether the word "liquid bronze" (21) would be enough to depict the colour of the river. It is the acceptance of the blurred line of demarcation between fact and fiction that leads to realization. Clara Thomas refers to Morag as a watcher in terms of her life and profession. What is more important is that Morag "is far from calm, but she is becalmed. She is not powerless to act, but at this point in her life the opportunities for dynamic action do not exist in her relationships with
others. They only exist when her work is going well, in the act of writing her fiction.9

Though the progress as an artist itself serves as a means for coming to terms with the self, there are also certain heightened moments of grace enhancing the insights of the protagonist. One such instance is Morag's spotting of the flight of a "Great Blue Heron."

Once populous in this part of the country. Now rarely seen.

Then it spotted the boat, and took to flight. A slow unhurried takeoff, the vast wings spreading, the slender elongated legs gracefully folding up under the creature's body. Like a pterodactyl, like an angel, like something out of the world's dawn. The soaring and measured certainty of its flight. Ancient—seeming, unaware of the planet's rocketing changes. The sweeping serene wings of the thing, unknowing that it was speeding not only towards individual death but probably towards the death of its kind. (292)

This vision makes Morag realize that "her quest for islands" (293) had ended and that Pique has begun, simultaneously with Morag's own attempt "to write the remaining private and fictional words" (370). Like
the heron, Pique’s Tonnerre heritage also faces extinction. However, there is a “measured certainty” in the flight of the bird. J. A. Wainwright considers the passage as Laurence’s conviction that “the artist must investigate the relationship between her art and her life”\(^{10}\)

Thus Laurence has displayed her worksheet to the readers through “The Diviners”. Michel Fabre draws attention to the title *The Diviners* which is emblematic “in a metafictional sense, since it sums up the reading of the novel as a process”\(^{11}\) This reading includes not only the fictional works of Morag, but also, other works such as *Clans and tartans of Scotland*, *60th Canadian Field Artillery battery Book*, *Osian’s Poems*, and *The Canadian Settlers’ Guide*. There are some instances of meta—metafictional elements. One such instance is Laurence’s account of Morag’s novel *Prospero’s Child*. Ildiko de Papp Carrington sums it up as “a novelist separated from her husband writing about a novelist separated from her husband who has written about a woman separating from her husband”\(^{12}\) With *The Diviners* Margaret Laurence seems to have reached an affirmative acceptance of art and its limitations. The novel also marks the culminating point for both Morag and Laurence. Morag sets down the title and begins the novel that the readers and Laurence have just finished.

Morag is searching for an identity, what Jung refers to as ‘Individuation, becoming one’s own self’\(^{13}\) When compared to the three earlier heroines of the Manawaka cycle who are born and brought up in
Manawaka, Morag is the outsider. Her parents die of infantile paralysis and is adopted by Christie Logan, the town “Muck” collector. It is quite significant here to note the fact that Morag is Laurence’s only heroine to intimately relate to the outcast Metis, unlike the high born established family girls such as Rachel and Stacey. Morag is dispossessed. But the true fighter that she is’ Morag determines to overcome the shame of being poor and despised. She is in fact, an archetypal heroine, through whom Laurence probes a new area of Canadian consciousness—the immigrants from Europe who are dislocated from their ancient home, traditions and mores and the Native Indians and Metis who are dispossessed by the European immigrants. Laurence encompasses not only the Canadian historic consciousness but also scoops up characters from her own earlier works, now seen from the viewpoint of Morag. However, the quest for the persona involves not only an exploration and comprehending of the past but is also shaped by the present as well as by those “significant others”14, namely parents, children, lovers, friends etc.

Morag comprehends the fact that the subjective self is mercurial, reality paradoxical and literary inheritance non-comprehending. The novel comes to a close with the “texting of the self”. A homecoming for her protagonist inheritor. The core and locus of the novel is its narrative structure which involves series of decentrings with present and past, separation and departure, displacement, deracination, etc., resulting in a
writing which is variegated in style and speech. In such writing, one can witness what Bhaktin opines: “The investigator is confronted with heterogeneous stylistic unities often located on different linguistic levels and subject to different stylistic controls.”¹⁵ In the narration, there exists a tentative split between the construction of gender and in the retelling of Morag’s past, interwoven with the articulation of the familial adult/child relationship between Morag and Pique. Morag experiences a more radical alienation from her self, subject to schism and scepticism which are inherent to growing up, in the process offering a perspective rendering of the society. It also draws our attention to the conflicting claims of being a (M)other and an artist a female Kunstlerroman. In Laurence’s words The Diviners is an “orchestration of fragments”. Interestingly Bhaktin makes use of the term “orchestration” to describe the heteroglossia of the novel which resists the centripetal forces of poetics, working towards a verbal and ideological unification and centralization.

The novel orchestrates all its themes like the totality of the world of objects and ideas depicted and expressed in it, by means of a social diversity of speech types and by demarcating individual voices that emanate under such conditions. For instance, in the section “The River of now and then” which reveals Morag’s loneliness, poverty and her imaginative desire. Marginalization of Morag enhances her interest in Jules Tonnerre. The relationship is quite important since Morag and Jules divine the history of their people and record it- Jules in his songs.
and Morag through her lucubrations, as a novelist. Jules' is a relationship grounded in the activities of language, the creation of the novels and songs while Morag develops her resistance, power and plot. Juxtapositions of structure becomes the *leitmotiv* for difference in narrating the story. The description of "now" is largely anticipatory, heavily filled with imagery, technique, narrative strategies, pieces of stories to be developed. The passages in italics which draw the reader's attention is in the form of running commentary "LIVE", of the present. The snapshots appear rhetorical since the narrational tone develops the extraordinary complexity of attempts at registering and recording the memory in the process of paving way for "totally invented memories". The tone shifts to a casual or more leisurely plane in "I remember those imaginary characters better than I do my parents. What kind of a character am I?" (11) In fact, it is this question which the whole book grapples with.

According to John Fowles "The voice is the most difficult problem for a writer."16 In the first section of the novel, the third person coalesces with the first person and one is made to experience what Clara Thomas opines, "We are captured by the illusion of Morag describing herself."17 Since Morag, the marginalized, needs struggle for recognition, such a merger of the first person and third person voices, apparently suits Morag's narrative style and appears essential—an attempt made by the othered, subjected being, to be mediated through
the egocentric self. Sherrill Grace’s comments are also quite interesting in this context:

Although Morag does not technically speak in her own voice, the third person narrative voice in the past time for the fictional present and in the present tense for remembered sequences is always extremely close to her, presenting events through her eyes. The third person allows a minimal distance from Morag creating, in addition, the sense that there are two Morags one who experiences and remembers while the other writes, a doubling phenomenon quite common in artist hero novels.\textsuperscript{18}

The tales of Christie and Jules enable Morag’s individuation, to find its roots and she discovers that legend and history coalesce in a fantastic, inextricable manner. To Morag, the tales tantamount to a post modern sense of referentiality—truth of fiction and fiction of truth, in the process of paving way for comprehending the “self”, which again is a patch work of self fabricated fictions. Christie’s tales stand as testimony. He appears to be cynical when he comments: “Oh what a piece of work is man, oh what a bloody awful piece of work is man, enough to scare the pants of (sic) you when you come to think of it the opposite is also true hm...hm.” Being paradoxical, this statement is offered as proof of “truth”
and which in fact is "not the truth of it". Christie thus, is an embodiment of "its all true and not true." One can see here that Margaret Laurence is preoccupied with the illusion of Art.

As a writer, Morag develops the skills of a diviner—insight or intuition of some other kind of sight in order to fathom what goes on in peoples mind and her mind. Through Morag, Laurence re—visions a woman and her heroines are signifiers who subvert the structure of characterization in world literature. Harriet Blodgett makes an interesting comment and praises Laurence for writing from feminine point of view without being polemical and opines that "It was fortunate chance that she was born too early to become a self conscious participant in the recent women's movement because, this saved her from the tendentiousness and shrillness of much radicalist feminine writing". Unlike Laurence's earlier heroines, Morag is able to recollect her past and emerge as a strong and independent woman, able to love and create as David Staines remarks: "She creates a richly populated universe which is the achievement of a great novelist."20

Photographs play a vital role in the novel. It is apparent that Morag's priority is not the photograph at the physical level but the identity latent in the photograph. Paul Byres comments are quite pertinent here. "The most important characteristic of still photography is its susceptibility to individual control. Each person involved with the still photograph has his own hand in his own semantic turning knob"21

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Incidentally, the novel attempts at exploring the need to impose a meaning while at the same time it also explores the dangers in such a process and the danger of photograph in general. For instance, Jules is quite uncomfortable about his pictures being taken. He observes, “May be I am superstitious. Or may be it’s the same as I can’t make up songs about myself. May be I don’t want to see what I look like. I’m going on okay this way. Let’s not get fancy about it” (281).

Jules’ remark reminds one of a “primitive” who refuses to be photographed. Jules process of individuation seems quite incompatible than that of Morag since Jules recognizes his heritage but is unable to recognize himself, as in his refusal to write his own song. But for Jules, a copy of a five year old photo of his daughter Pique helps him to establish an essential connection: “Her large dark eyes look openly and with trust at the person behind the camera namely her mother” (259). Morag on the other hand attempts to get rid of he photographs but is unable to do so:

“I’ve kept them because something in me doesn’t want to lose them.”(5).

“I remember their deaths, but not their lives. Yet they’re inside me, flowing unknown in my blood and moving unrecognized in my skull” (15).

Interestingly, Morag’s association with the photographs run parallel to the associations existing between a mother and her child in
the womb. While the placental existence of the embryo which exists inside the mother as the other and which Luce Irigaray talks about in "And the One Doesn't Stir Without the Other", that mother and daughter live as each one the other's image. The existence of the photographs prompts Morag to undergo the same kind of experience: Angela Carter's comments are apt in this connection: "Consider the womb...domain of futurity in which the embryo forms itself from the flesh and blood of the mother, the unguessable reaches of the sea are a symbol of it."22

While the womb is a fleshy link between the past and future, the physical location of an everlasting present tense that can usefully serve as a symbol of eternity, a concept which has always presented some difficulties in visualization. The photographs enable Morag to comprehend her persona in a patriarchal setup. Her alienation guarantees her role as marginalized and prompts her to comprehend her own self in continuum as Levi—Strauss observes:

In ethnographic experience the observer apprehends her/himself as his own instrument of observation. Clearly s/he must learn to know her/himself to obtain, from a self who reveals himself as another to the I who uses her/him, an evaluation which will become an integral part of the observation of other selves.23
While the foetus is a product of one’s own flesh and blood, kindred, which is still viewed as the other, the photographs which are no way connected to the body of an individual’s flesh and blood still manages to establish a kinship with individual. It is so because the image mirrored in the photograph helps the observer to comprehend the “self” from the physical self. The foetus remains a mystery till it is conceived and probably disrupts an individual’s preconceived notions about it after its conception while the photograph, at the outset is devoid of such preconceived notions and prompts an individual to develop or shape notions in accordance to her or his own tastes after the film is developed.

Thus in the novel, the old photographs help the characters in the process of socialization and self-discovery. The photographs remind Morag of the affinities that are established between herself, Pique and Jules. This perhaps seem to be the central purpose of family albums. The photographs are all thematically connected but non-representative. *The Diviners* is more concerned with narrative than image, the fact being that the protagonist Morag is a novelist.

During her visit to the MacRaith’s home in Crombruach, Morag cancels her earlier plans of visiting Sutherland, a place from where the Gunns were believed to have originated. In answer to Dan MacRaith’s question, she says:

I don’t know that I can explain. It has to do with Christie. The myths are my reality...And also, I
don't need to go there because I know now what it was I had to learn here...It's a deep land here, all right...But it's not mine, except a long long way back. I always thought it was the land of my ancestors, but it is not.. Christie's real country.

Where I was born. (319)

Morag realizes that Christie, apart from bringing her up, has given her a heritage which is truer and more real than what history has to offer. Before Christie dies, Morag manages to go back to Manawaka as also to voice out her realization to him: "Christie I used to fight a lot with you, Christie, but you've been my father to me" (323). This scene is a touching one in the novel because both Morag and Christie communicate a massive compound of love, pity, and mourning, shot through with the relieving incongruity of laughter, according to Clara Thomas.

Christie's funeral scene is one of the most powerful scenes in the entire gamut of Laurence's novel. Sensing that Christie will be at ease only if he is buried alongside Prin and in the Nuisance Grounds which has formed such an important part in his life, Morag insists on burying him instead of cremating him as Hector suggests. She also insists on a piper playing the final farewell to Christie.

And Piper Gunn, he was a great tall man, with the voice of drums and the heart of a child, and the gall of a thousand, and the strength of
The piper plays “The Flowers of the Forest,” the long—ago pibroch, the lament for the dead, over Christie Logan’s grave. And only now is Morag released into her mourning. (329)

Through music, Christie is connected to the ancestral figure Gun and thus, a heritage is created high Morag accepts as her own.

Royland’s divining for water parallels Morag’s own search for words. She had known all along that words cannot do magic or sorcery but what she has to learn from Royland is the fact that “the gift, or portion of grace, or whatever it was, was finally withdrawn, to be given to someone else”. Royland humbly accepts her how, true to her depiction of is loss of divining powers. She sees him as “The Old Man of the River,” “an ex-shaman” whose powers are gone. But he points out to her how, true to her depiction of him “as an elder of the tribe,” he can pass it on to somebody else. “It’s something I don’t understand, the divining,” Royland said slowly, “and it’s not something that everybody can do, but the thing I don’t usually let on about is that quite a few people can learn to do it...”(369). Her realization here is that of all forms of divining whether for water, words or heritage may be passed on and thus, does not become extinct. “The inheritors. Was this, finally and at last, what Morag had always sensed she had to learn from the old man? She had known it all along, but not really known” (369). Morag realizes that her own heritage
and Jules’ will be carried forward by Pique just as she herself, though unwittingly, carried on Christie’s heritage.

The quest for selfhood undertaken by Morag Gunn, is not as obviously archetypal as that of other protagonists of Margaret Laurence. We witness Morag’s ability to make her spiritual vision a social reality. Raised on the wrong side of the tracks, Morag is by far the most articulate and complex of Laurence’s Manawaka women. Compelled by certain events in her present life, she tunnels back into her past in order to make sense of her present state. Morag’s divining for personal truth and inner freedom parallels that of her creator and makes the novel “spiritually autobiographical” for Laurence. In a public discussion at Mohawk College, Hamilton, on May 10, 1975, Laurence said that in *The Diviners* she came closer to portraying herself than in any other work. However, the novel is not totally autobiographical for the things that happen to Morag, in the novel, did not happen too Laurence. Morag is and is not Laurence. Rich and varied in characters, themes and narrative techniques, this “poetic and muscular” bildungsroman insists upon the need to see dichotomies as not mutually exclusive. By balancing polarities, life can be apprehended in its richest form. Thus, *The Diviners* is at once “the most international of Laurence’s books and the most national,” her most political and most spiritual work. Commenting on the religious humanism in this novel, Gabrielle Roy says: “It is a search for water,
That this positive and profoundly moral novel should be attacked as pornographic\textsuperscript{29} and racist\textsuperscript{30} shows the extent to which a superb literary work can be misread. More unforgivable still is the reaction of certain male critics to the character of Morag. Threatened by her independence and her sexuality, their reactions are blatantly sexist. In conversation, Peter Such included Morag in the long line of 'bitches with hearts of gold' tradition in Canadian fiction\textsuperscript{31} and John Moss is one among many male critics who feel that Morag is "a rather modest wanton"\textsuperscript{32} since she has had only five men in her forty-seven years. Morag, however, is neither a wanton nor a bitch with or without a heart of gold. She is fully realized human being, self-reliant and self-critical, painfully groping her way through the wilderness of spiritual and mental miasma to a paradise of her own making.

As Morag grows up in the house of the town garbage-collector, Christie Logan, is an "arrant outsider". In the novel we experience the town through the eyes of those who are already at the bottom and have no further to fall.\textsuperscript{33} Marian Engel feels that Laurence has consciously stripped Morag of "the stolid family ties that gave Canadians, like good ships, the steadying characteristic known as 'bottom'. Morag has to find her own steadiness and she does this by never quite participating fully in the conventional situations her life offers her.\textsuperscript{34} Being a writer,
Morag soars above the level plain of tradition and prejudice with tales, songs and dreams. Throughout her life the 'word' helps her transcend her alienation and survive her dignity. "Language is more than a love or an obsession for Morag, its reality: the only way she can know reality."35 "Morag, like Laurence, uses her pen to divine truths hidden from view."36 Marge Piercy fails to grasp this idea completely and says that she does not see why Morag is a writer and proceeds to ask: "Would Morag's life have been wildly different if she made clothes rather than novels?"37 This is like asking Hamlet to be Othello. "The Diviners" is a well-written kunstleroman and Morag's consciousness is explicitly that of an artist. However, unlike most artists, Morag does not withdraw from the world in order to write. She sees art not as imitation but as an expression of life and feels the need to participate in it as fully as possible. Morag's concerns are therefore not as narrow as those of Hagar, Rachel or Stacey. The name Morag is Gaelic for Sarah in the Bible; the matriarch of the Jewish race whose child promises hope for a new dynasty.38 Thus, the collective, social and historical past of Canada is important to Morag. Consequently, she is specifically what Sherill Grace calls, "a Canadian artist-hero."39

One can understand that Morag's quest has the paradise-wilderness construct of symbols operative within biblical tradition. By paradise meant a state of freedom, bliss, felicity, or delight. In the Old Testament the garden is used a symbol for paradise. The Garden of
Eden and the Garden of Canaan, the Promised Land with milk and honey blessed, symbolize a state of ideal existence. The garden symbol is transmuted into the city symbol in the New Testament and the city of God, the New Jerusalem, is seen as paradise. A wilderness on the other hand, is displaced garden and represents man's unredeemed state when he is separated from God as is the case with the Biblical Hagar. Morag's search for paradise leads her from one kind of wilderness to another till she acknowledges the value of her past, and realizes that the source of happiness and peace lies within her own self.
REFERENCES


33. Margaret Atwood, "Face To Face" 9.

34. Marian Engel, "Steps to the Mythic: The Diviners and A Bird in the House," A Place to Stand on 239.


39. Sherrill Grace, "A Portrait of the Artist as Laurence Hero": 64.