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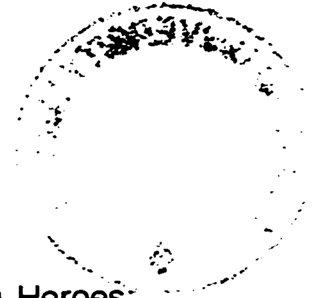

Margaret Laurence's Manawaka Heroes: Hagar, Rachel, Stacey, and Morag as Archetypal and Feminist Heroes.

By

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my family and friends whose unfailing support made it possible. A special thank you to Guy, Kristen, and Shelby for their gift of love and patience.

I am indebted and thankful for Dr. Alice den Otter's guidance in the completion of this work.

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Abstract

Hagar Shipley, Rachel Cameron, Stacey MacAindra, and Morag Gunn are the heroes of Margaret Laurence's Manawaka novels. This thesis examines these women as archetypal heroes, who successfully complete personal quests, AND feminist heroes, who teach others the lessons that they have learned through experience. Laurence states in her memoir that there were few women role models in fiction who she found exciting. I maintain that she went on to give us heroes who fight "dragons,"[1] escape captors, make love with green-world lovers, and most important, redefine themselves as they wish to be, not as society deems they ought to be.

The introduction presents an argument for the term "hero" over "heroine," while, at the same time, it disputes the term itself. Despite the androcentrism of "hero," the term and the archetypal framework to which it belongs can, I maintain, be profitably usurped and revisioned from a feminist perspective. When the feminist concept of "hero" as a role model is added to the "hero" who quests to gain enlightenment, this androcentric term demands redefinition. Terms and concepts are explained from The Female Hero in American and British Literature by Pearson and Pope and Archetypal Patterns in Women's Fiction by Pratt et al., the two main sources. Both of these sets of critics approach their analysis with the belief that women are heroic.

Chapter one examines Hagar, of The Stone Angel, as the aged hero whose individual "dragon" is an overdeveloped animus and a sublimated anima that causes her to reject all things female. Chapter two looks at Rachel, of A Jest of God, and Stacey, of The Fire-Dwellers, as sisters and heroes.

[1] Pearson and Pope identify "dragons" as the fragmentation and fear that plague the hero. She must "slay" her "dragon" before she can be a complete individual.

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Rachel's individual "dragon" is a fear of full maturity; she is ever the "puella," a daughter. Sister Stacey's individual "dragon" is her lost Eros. Maternity has depleted her sexual self leaving her dissatisfied and fragmented. Chapter three sees Morag, of The Diviners, as a hero with a vocation. Her individual "dragon" is the difficulty she has having a career while meeting societal expectations for women. The Manawaka women also share a "dragon." They all have difficulty with communication in one form or another. As well as this archetypal perspective, each woman is viewed within a feminist definition of "hero."

My conclusion is that Laurence provides her readers with these "heroes" because of her personal belief that real women are heroic and the literature should reflect their successful struggles. She was a mentor and teacher for those around her and her protagonists are meant to teach her readers how to struggle more successfully against things that oppress them. By naming them "heroes," but moving beyond the androcentrism of the term, I claim heroic status for the Manawaka women.

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that which you do not speak
you will never seek
that which you do not name
you will never claim
(from "Language and Consciousness" by Rozena Maart)

Introduction

The protagonists in Margaret Laurence's novels are not always admirable characters. Hagar Shipley in The Stone Angel (1964), Rachel Cameron in A Jest of God (1966), Stacey MacAindra in The Fire Dwellers (1969), and Morag Gunn in The Diviners (1974) are insecure, stubborn, prideful, and downright cranky. However, by the end of their stories these women have grown and come to terms with their lives and we, as readers, have gained respect for them and insight into our own lives. Much critical work has been done on these characters designating them "heroines." Yet I maintain, as do Carolyn Pearson and Katherine Pope in The Female Hero in American and British Literature, that the term "heroine" is a "diminutive" (vii) and that these particular characters must be seen as "heroes." And, more than just changing the term "heroine" to "hero," we must redefine our concept of heroism.

Each of the mature female protagonists in the Manawaka series achieves the status of "hero" in two ways, both being equal in importance. First, they go through archetypal trials necessary for rebirth and transformation. In this

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regard, Laurence uses the conventional quest-myth to give her protagonists heroic status. Then, she moves past the questing "hero" to incorporate a feminist perspective of "hero" that includes female role models.

While societal restrictions of women make it difficult for women to have what is generally thought of as a heroic impact outside their homes, Laurence's writing strongly indicates that she sees her protagonists as "heroes" because of the quest that each woman undertakes. In Fables of Identity, Northrop Frye states that the "central myth of literature . . . [is] the quest-myth" (18), and Laurence uses it in a resonant fashion in her formation of the "hero." The Manawaka women are not simply women who make some changes in their lives, they each complete a quest. All four women travel from places of confinement in the "garden" to a reward in "the new community" (Pearson and Pope). Because of their heroic struggle, they teach those of us looking for wisdom. In this way they improve their community and fulfil a feminist model of "hero" which then opens the term to new interpretation. In my interpretation, a "feminist" is a person who advocates for women's rights on the basis of equality of the sexes and who believes that women's and men's positions in society are the result of social, not natural or biological, factors.

As defined in the 1989 edition of the Oxford English Dictionary, a "hero" is a man who is "distinguished by extraordinary valour and martial achievements; one who does brave or noble deeds; [or is] an illustrious warrior." Secondarily, a "hero" is

> a man who exhibits extraordinary bravery, firmness, fortitude, or greatness in soul, in any course of action, or in connection with any pursuit, work, or enterprise; a man admired and venerated for

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his achievement and noble qualities.

Because of their secondary position in patriarchal societies throughout history, women have not had active roles in war or in work outside the home. Simply adding an "*ine*" to "hero" does not make this definition suit a woman's existence. Besides, the OED informs us that the "*ine*" suffix is "added to the names of persons, animals, or material things, and to some other words with the sense of "pertaining to,"or "of the nature of." What this suffix implies in the word "heroine" is that the male is the norm and female must be like him, belong to him, or have a relation to him. The implication is that a "heroine" takes on the nature of a "hero" while not being one herself.

The OED definition for "heroine" says she is "a woman distinguished by exalted courage, fortitude, or noble achievement." This seems honorable enough, but this definition still sets a comparison to the male as a norm. His courage, fortitude, and noble achievement are assumed to be more valuable because they appear in the public sphere. These same virtues pale when accomplished in the private sphere of the female. Societally enforced gender restrictions have forced women into the private sphere, then deemed this position less important than the public sphere. At the same time, women, like Joan of Arc, who carried their courage into public battle were "charged with demonic possession and burned" if they refused to conform to gender expectations (Stuard 168). All of Laurence's Manawaka women overturn the existing concept of "heroine" in some way, not like the Spenserian Britomarts, but, valorous just the same.[1]

Also in regard to the term "heroine," I have some concern that there continues to be a lingering romantic attachment that describes the beautiful and

[1] Interestingly, Morag is compared to Joan of Arc in The Diviners.

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beloved damsel waiting to be rescued by the hero. Searching for a better grasp of the literary "heroine," I turned to Rachel M. Brownstein's text "Becoming a Heroine: Reading About Women in Novels." She looks at eighteenth and nineteenth century British and American novels and examines the heroines under the categories of Being Perfect, Getting Married, and Thinking it Over. Her comment on marriage shows how much Laurence has moved past the romantic heroine:

> The marriage plot most novels depend on is about finding validation of one's uniqueness and importance by being singled out among all the other women by a man. The man's love is proof of the girl's value and payment for it. . . . [As] a bride, [she is] the very image of a heroine. (xv)

All of the Manawaka novels deal with women's feelings about marriage, but none look to it as a salvation.

Each of Laurence's protagonists eventually effects her own heroism, not waiting for a man to change her life. Because of lessons learned along their quests, Morag, Rachel, Stacey, and Morag each find affirmation and agency. Brownstein notes how women through history have identified with female characters in novels as "exemplars" (xxiv) and this applies to the feminist concept of the "hero" teaching those around her. Because readers learn from the Manawaka protagonists, we are obligated to find a more accurate concept for Laurence's main characters than the outmoded "heroine." Modern women do not wish to learn to seek validation through marriage.

"Hero" and "heroine" could also be considered as basic descriptive literary terms. Interestingly, the genres used in the OED in this type of

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explanation provide insight into the hierarchy we are meant to note beneath the seemingly innocent surface definitions. While the "heroine" is "the principle female character in a poem, story or play. . . ," the "hero" is "the man who forms the subject of an epic; the chief personage in a poem, play or story. . . ." As we know, the epic or heroic poem "was ranked by . . . Aristotle as second only to tragedy, and by many Renaissance critics as the highest of all genres" (Abrams 51). One sees that a "hero" is higher on the scale of importance than "heroine" because of this masculine genre distinction.

Another definition of "hero" and "heroine," from A Glossary of Literary Terms (1985), seems, on the surface, beyond reproach to a literary critic, even a feminist one. M. H. Abrams states: "The chief character in a work, on whom our interest centers, is called the protagonist (or alternatively, the hero or heroine) . . ." (139). But, the rest of the explanation adds insight into the seemingly equal terms. Abrams continues,

> In addition to the conflict between individuals, there may be the conflict of a protagonist against fate, or against the circumstances that stand between *him* and a goal *he* has set *himself* . . . (139). (Emphasis added)

By leaving out any reference to females, this term becomes androcentric and exclusionary.

While the evidence is not complete on the social effects of the inclusiveness to females of the generic "he," D.G. MacKay et al. believe that "Determining the full extent of the psychological effects of the prescriptive *he* presents a major challenge for the social psychology of language" (96). Mackay's team found that ". . . language is much more likely to influence

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evaluative thought [than descriptive thought] . . ." (94). Therefore, when we consider the meaning of Abram's statement that "there may be conflict of a protagonist [or *hero*] against fate, or against the circumstances that stand between him and a goal he has set himself . . . ," we assess that heroes are only male because of the pronoun "he."

Dale Spender in Man Made Language, discusses how the *he / man* symbol excludes women:

> It is not just that women do not see themselves encompassed in the symbol *he / man* : men do not see them either . . . . The introduction of *he / man* into the structure of the language has helped to ensure that neither sex has a proliferation of female images: by such means is the *invisibility* of the female constructed and sustained in our thought systems and our reality. (154)

Spender states that equality for women is simply disregarded in the thinking that "man embraces woman" (147-51) and feminists must work against and remove the "artificial and unjustifiable rule" (151) that allows the primacy of position to males in language.

Because conventional dictionaries are androcentric and, at the same time, equated with patriarchal authority, some feminist scholars find them questionable. Standard dictionaries simply do not cover the reality of women's epistemological or societal experiences. Feminist dictionaries are "word book[s] that call into question the androcentric nature of much 'standard language usage' and problematise many words and phrases in the light of feminist perspectives and commentary . . ." (A Feminist Dictionary 161). Such

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dictionaries reflect feminist attempts to rename and redefine, thus altering patriarchal perceptions of reality. Feminist dictionaries have developed out of a need to examine the relationship between women and language.

Berenice Fisher supplies this feminist definition of the "hero" in A Feminist Dictionary:

> Rather than one who is superhuman and above the rest of society in strength and power, [a hero] is a woman who shares our conflicts and struggles in a contradictory world. She shows us how to struggle more successfully . . . . The genuine hero helps her friends and comrades by *teaching* them directly or indirectly what she has learned from her experience, and how she has applied theoretical and practical knowledge to specific situations. (189) (emphasis added)

The fact that readers are able to learn how to quest successfully from her characters is the key to Laurence's success with these otherwise average women.

Laurence primes the reader to think of "heroes" in the archetypal sense by specifically using the quest-myth. She uses the archetypal struggles of her protagonists to teach valuable lessons to readers. Frye explains that modern literature uses "indirect mythologizing" or "displacement" as "the technique a writer uses to make *his* story credible, logically motivated or morally acceptable . . ." (Fables 36) (emphasis added). Guerin et al. comment that "prominent feminist myth critics including Annis Pratt and Adrienne Rich, define myth as the key critical genre for women. Criticizing male myth critics of the 1950s and 1960s, such as Frye, for ignoring gender in their scientific classifications of myth

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and archetypes, these writers direct our attention to gender . . ." (205). The archetypal heroism of Hagar, Rachel, Stacey, and Morag reinforces the feminist notion of heroism as both concepts seek a better human society.

Nevertheless, the argument that Laurence's protagonists should be called "heroes" or "female heroes" is almost as problematic as using "heroine" because terms such as these are tied too closely with the masculine (Spender 183). While using the "*ine*" ending of "hero" for "heroine" makes the second term a "subset of the real thing" (Miller, Swift, Maggio 52) and therefore not equal to the primary term, the words "hero" and "female hero" are also less than satisfactory as they try to fit women into a male mold that will never be a proper fit. As Spender notes, feminists who deal with the politics of naming, are "trying to articulate the meanings of names which do not exist" (182). Guerin et al. comment that "feminists have wondered how one actually does speak from a position outside patriarchy . . ." (203). Rather than facing silence, feminists continue to work against patriarchal language within the idiom we have. So, because there is no term for an ungendered "hero," this examination will expand the heroic concept using Laurence's protagonists while disapproving of the actual term.

Laurence's work demands a gynocentric critical approach to language because she does not include any substantive male characters in this series. Critics need not refer to a female "heroine" as opposed to as a male "hero" for clarity in discussion. Her main characters are all female and all "heroes." If we rewrite "hero" from a feminist perspective, recognizing its androcentrism, it reveals the heretofore gendering of the "hero" and his quest and it demonstrates an incongruity by counter gendering the term.

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Not until the late 1960s was there serious feminist scholarship regarding linguistic sexism (Miller,Swift, and Maggio xx), though it must be noted that feminists still do not hold any single opinion on sexism in language. Deborah Cameron, the editor of The Feminist Critique of Language: A Reader (1990), comments,

> One serious obstacle to intelligent understanding is that feminist views on language are very diverse, reflecting not only political differences within feminism itself but also the great proliferation of 'discourses' -- traditions, theoretical frameworks, academic disciplines -- in which language is discussed in the modern age. (1)

Despite differing opinions, language is considered a feminist issue as women continue to be dissatisfied with the terms used to describe them as well as the words in their daily lives that misrepresent or exclude them.

The last few decades have seen changes in attitudes that make language more equitable to women in the general sense. For example, it has been mandated that unbiased language be used in our common institutions. There is, however, more work to be done in this field. Spender says that "for women who do not wish to be compared to men there is [still] nowhere to go in the language"(21). This debate continues to be central enough to the feminist cause that Ms magazine takes time in its 25th. anniversary issue, in the fall of 1997, to include an article entitled "Liberating Language" by Casey Miller, Kate Swift, and Rosalie Maggio. This article discusses how, by working toward inclusionary language, feminism is changing the way women speak and think about themselves.

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> In the past, when women addressed linguistic concerns, they were accused of "ruining" the language. . . . But language belongs to those who use it, and women have taken their place alongside men who tinker with language. Ultimately, the issue is thinking about words we use in order to ensure that they are accurate, precise, and unambiguous. (54)

As well as attempting to find room within language for females, women are also seeking a place of their own in other traditionally male areas. One such area is archetypal criticism that has been mainly seen through the familiar eyes of Carl Jung, Joseph Campbell, and Northrop Frye. In Archetypal Patterns in Women's Fiction, Annis Pratt, Barbara White, Andrea Loewenstein, and Mary Wyer point out that female writers have their own way of using archetypal characters and patterns because "[a] battle goes on unremittingly within the heads of most women authors between assumptions about male and female behaviour norms and dreams of more gender-free possibilities" (11). They explain that their study of archetypal patterns seen in women's fiction is done with what French feminist theoreticians call "volant," that is, a process of "usurping elements of masculine theory useful to them while discarding the biases" (7).

Guerin et al. comment that "Pratt attempts to construct archetypes of power that are useful to practicing women critics as a means of avoiding the patriarchal tradition" (205). Because of the quest-myth that comes through so forcefully in Laurence's work, I feel I too must work with both archetypal symbols and feminist criticism, though I appreciate the feminist concerns of doing so. I understand that the symbols used in archetypal and myth criticism have come

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from the patriarchy and suggest some "universal" truths about the human condition. I have no desire to have the Manawaka protagonists act as male questers or exemplify any "eternal" wisdom, yet, the terminology of the quest is appropriate for the progress that Laurence's character's make and the obstacles they encounter. I appropriate the archetypal criticism and the terminology but I do not agree with its androcentricity.

As well as Pratt et al.'s Archetypal Patterns in Women's Fiction, the other secondary text that I find most helpful in examining Laurence's heroes is Pearson and Pope's The Female Hero in American and British Literature. Neither work mentions Laurence because they do not deal with Canadian novels. Still, by providing patterns commonly seen in quest myths, both studies allow me to situate the women of the Manawaka novels within an archetypal format. As Pratt et al.'s original copyright is 1949, they are less useful for modern consideration than are Pearson and Pope (1981). Pearson and Pope tell us that they felt a need to revisit the notion of heroism in novels because female heroism has heretofore gone unrecognized.

> The great works on the hero . . . all begin with the assumption that the hero is male. This prevailing bias has given the impression that in literature and life, heroism is a male phenomenon. This work begins with the assumption that women are and have been heroic, but that culture has often been unable to recognize female heroism. (vii)

Pratt et al. are interested in "[t]he ways that the heroes of the woman's novel came into contact and conflict with the roles proffered them . . ." (viii). Like Pearson and Pope, they examine this topic with the underlying assumption that

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women have the capacity for heroism.

By using Pearson and Pope's model, with assistance from Pratt et al., my study differs from other Laurencian archetypal critics who tend to be more mythological or psychological in approach. My study focuses on the quest of each hero including the "dragons" that they slay, the captors, guides, and green-world lovers that are a part of their journey, and the "new family" that is their reward. Each secondary character is looked at only in relation to the hero's quest. My examination then goes on to view Hagar, Rachel, Stacey, and Morag as heroes within the feminist definition because the reader learns how to lead her own life more successfully from their examples. With this dual proof of heroism on the part of Laurence's protagonists, the original definition of "hero" loses its power and surpasses the androcentric nature of the term.

Pearson and Pope explain their term "dragon" as the "fragmentation, self-loathing, fear, and paralysis" that plague the hero: "As in the classic version of the story, she descends into the underworld of her psyche to encounter the life-denying forces, or 'dragons' within" (63). The "dragon" is a problem that is serious enough to trouble the hero and cause her to struggle against it. Undisputedly, all of the Manawaka women have difficulty with language or communication at some level. As Theo Quayle Dombrowski notes,

> Laurence repeatedly concerns herself with characters frantic to explain, often frustrated because they cannot find adequate words, because some acts transcend words, or because words themselves are untrustworthy. . . . [S]he presents protagonists for whom speech is beyond conscious control, either because they lose the ability to articulate, or because their own inner voices

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take over, overwhelming their intentions. (50)

Besides this "dragon" of language and communication, I also study one other "dragon" or problem that each protagonist struggles to "slay." As shown by other critics, there are a variety of challenges that affect Laurence's protagonists . For example, the struggle with religion is a theme throughout the series. I prefer to deal with "dragons" that, in some way, have a gendered base. Hagar inherits pride from the patriarchy[2] and only finds freedom when she discovers her maternal self. Rachel learns that women are competent adults before she can leave childhood. Stacey balances her maternal role with her erotic self to become a whole person again and, as a career woman, Morag deals with society's opinions of a woman's place.

To foreground some of the experiences that Laurence's heroes encounter, I provide an explanation of the terms and concepts from The Female Hero . Pearson and Pope maintain that the hero typically refuses the initial call to adventure; she faces captors among those around her who wish her to continue the status quo; after finding guides who allow her to see her own capabilities, she finds a way to exit the "garden," that is, her home or community. The call may not be a dramatic event but something more common: some voice or incident "which forces the hero to move beyond the familiar and secure life, and to discover new possibilities in the world and herself" (85). She must extradite herself from attitudes which have kept her limited and captive.

The woman begins in the archetypal "garden" where her family and her society have indoctrinated her with their gendered values. These values

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[2] In general, the patriarchy is a hierarchacal system of social relations among men that creates and maintains the domination of women. It includes a political, economical, and cultural subordination of women. Although not all men benefit equally from patriarchal systems, as a system of social organization patriarchy patterns and shapes relations between and among men and women.

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become the problems or "dragons" that she must "slay." Demetrakopoulos notes that Laurence always deals with the idea of the Fortunate Fall, since "a redemptive growth and wholeness come from engaging in struggles and taking risks; . . . exposure to the fire of patriarchy hardens and articulates the self" (53). To exit the "garden," in archetypal terms, the hero must disobey what society dictates is correct for her life. Pearson and Pope state that during the journey the hero often feels "alone and confused" (82) and terrified of new circumstances and experiences. As well, if the hero "does not have the option of beginning a new life; her only option is to die nobly . . ." (80). In this respect, Pearson and Pope address something that is crucial to the Manawaka women achieving heroic status:

> The outcome of the quest differs according to the hero's circumstances and abilities. The exit itself does not by itself promise success, happiness, or love. What it does provide is independence, integrity, and self-respect. (83)

Since Laurence's heroes are in different age groups, life styles, and periods of historical time, they meet heroic requirements within their own parameters. Pearson and Pope's model suggests the treasure that the hero receives at the end of the quest is "herself" (223). She slays the 'dragons" that have plagued her and she discovers a transformed self.

Pratt et al. see the concept of the quest and "exiting the garden" in a more Jungian fashion than do Pearson and Pope: "The protagonist begins in alienation and seeks integration into a human community where . . . she can develop more fully" (135), she will go through a variety of steps before she completes the "ultimate quest for human adulthood" (138), she will split off from

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the family, find the green-world guide, encounter the green-world lover, confront parental figures, and be plunged into the unconscious. Both Pratt et al. and Pearson and Pope note that there is likely to be a period when the hero will appear to be mentally ill or question her own sanity. This model does not ensure that the hero will locate a treasure at the end of the quest, but there is hope that "men and women can walk in amity and equity" (12) after the protagonist meets her challenges.

When we consider Jung's idea of the human journey as being one of inner development aiming for psychological wholeness and maturity, the notion of besting or overpowering others does not seem especially heroic. Pearson and Pope suggest that "an exploration of the heroic journey of women . . . makes clear that the archetypal hero masters the world by understanding it, not by dominating, controlling, or owning the world or other people" (4-5). This way of thinking of the "hero" calls into question the heretofore androcentric "hero." If we expect that a "questing hero" is a male, we admit partiality. However, if we demonstrate that women are as capable of understanding the world as men are, we provide a perspective where the "hero" is counter gendered and we point out the incongruity of androcentric thinking.

Laurence's protagonists follow patterns typical of women heroes and also reap rewards for their quests. First of all, Pearson and Pope tell us that "the journey offers the female hero the opportunity to develop qualities such as skill, courage, and independence, which would atrophy in a protected environment" (8). The Female Hero states that "simply by being heroic, a woman defies the conditioning that insists she be a damsel in distress, and thus she implicitly challenges the status quo" (9-10). Change does not come easily to Laurence's

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protagonists but they each manage to evolve in their own way and in their own time and find a "new family" which is their reward of wholeness and a new sense of community (Pearson and Pope). When they "slay" their "dragons," they learn to understand themselves and their world better .

Some critics who have done work on the archetypal patterns of Laurence's characters are Stephanie Demetrakopoulos, Helen Buss, and Angelika Maeser. Demetrakopoulos's article, "A Revisioning of Feminine Archetypes," assesses Stacey and Rachel's archetypal development as "modern versions of Aphrodite and Artemis, Hagar as a redeemed yet Medusan Crone, and Morag as . . . a positive Arachne" (42). Buss's article,"Margaret Laurence's Dark Lovers: Sexual Metaphor, and the Movement Toward Individualization, Hierogamy and Mythic Narrative in Four Manawaka Books" (1986), discusses Laurence's protagonists in relation to "the imagery of the sexual encounters and the mythic prototypes therein" (97). Maeser 's article, "Finding the Mother: The Individuation of Laurence's Heroines," (1980) says that "Laurence's novels reveal that the struggle for wholeness and freedom is a spiritual one that engages the characters in an initially disturbing but ultimately rewarding journey toward self discovery and renewal," but the bulk of these journeys is a spiritual search for the archetypal Great Mother (151). While I have learned much from these archetypal discussions, I nevertheless am struck that none of these critics refers to the protagonists as "heroes."

Still, a few critics are beginning to see and refer to Laurence's protagonists as "heroes" or "female heroes" or, at least, allude to their heroic qualities. One such person is Diana Brydon in her 1988 article "Silence, Voice

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and the Mirror: Margaret Laurence and Women."[3] Brydon notes that Laurence highly emphasises the relationship of parents and children:

> The female hero, unlike the traditional male hero, does not separate herself from others to mature. Instead she defines herself in relation to others. [She] shifts the focus of the traditional female story from the heterosexual couple to the parent/child relation. (186)

While I agree that the Manawaka women suffer the split between familial role and concept of self, I nevertheless feel that sexual relationships are as pivotal to Laurence's characters as parental ones, and I also believe that the protagonists succeed in determining their own identities.

Other critics noting Laurencian "heroes" include Suzanne Ducharme whose 1988 article entitled "Defining Dignity for Women" discusses the particular qualities of the Manawaka protagonists that teach female dignity to those studying the novels. Sandra Heidrick examines the formation of a Canadian female identity in the Manawaka novels 's (1992). In her abstract, Heidrick states that Hagar "describes her psychological divining for her true self, her quest for her own identity, in language that transcends the boundaries of gender" (2). Barbara Helen Pell's, "Margaret Laurence's Treatment of the Heroine" (1972), is interesting because she says, "Laurence primarily views 'real' woman as a victim of society, man, and her own fears and frustrations. She must search beyond her role-definition to find a personal identity and freedom" (iii). Elements of the heroic are present in these studies but the heroic

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[3] Brydon's interests are how the "first-person point of view is so central to Laurence's work" (185), how the central female character's identity is "determined by her relationship with others" (186), and how Laurence's work shows the "dichotomy between role and real definitions of the self" (187).

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quest is not the central focus. None of the archetypal or the "heroic" studies use the feminist concept of the "hero" to evaluate the Manawaka women. With proof of the archetypal hero plus the feminist hero, my examination moves beyond these studies to a new level for Hagar, Rachel, Stacey and Morag.

As a child Laurence imagined herself a hero, "doing deeds of high bravery on the high seas and the low moors. [She saw herself as] the female version of Alan Breck" and says, "Yet what a pity that the girls of my generation had so few women role models in fiction who were bold and daring in life and work" (Dance on The Earth 64). In other words, women readers lacked "heroes." As an author, she sought to fill this gap by creating characters who fight "dragons," escape captors, make love with green-world lovers, and most important, redefine themselves as they wish to be, not as society deems they ought to be.

It is widely noted that much of Laurence's work is semi - autobiographical, so it should not be surprising that her way of depicting "heroes" comes from her personal understanding of women and their position within a patriarchal society. Her style of writing also comes from her particular time in writing history. Showalter documents the progression of an evolution of women writers and their writing styles:

> In the Female phase, ongoing since 1920, women [authors] reject both imitation and protest --two forms of dependency--and turn instead to female experience as the source of an autonomous art, extending the feminist analysis of culture to the forms and techniques of literature. (1232)

This is proven as we see the female experience centrally located in Laurence's

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work. Through their experiences,Hagar, Rachel, Stacey, and Morag show us how to be the "hero" as defined in A Feminist Dictionary . They share our conflicts, show us how to struggle more successfully, and teach us what they have learned through their search for meaning, all within the confines of patriarchy.

In the following chapters I explore Laurence's principal Manawaka characters, noting their weaknesses and strengths as exemplars of both the archetypal and feminist definition of "hero." Hagar and Morag are treated as individual heroes in chapters one and three, while Rachel and Stacey are examined as sisters and heroes in chapter two. I maintain that family and society manufacture the "dragons" that must be slain, so it is best to view the Cameron sisters together. This study does not include A Bird in the House as I believe that Vanessa is too young to be regarded as a "hero" in these particular considerations. Maturity is required in a "hero" so that readers can learn from a more weathered experience. This perspective is provided by Hagar, Rachel, Stacey, and Morag.

Laurence's readers can see the heroic dimension of the everyday lives of the Manawaka women as they show us the way to change and possibly find heroism in our own existences. As Pearson and Pope comment,

> Unless the heroism that women demonstrate in the world is reflected in the literature and myth of the culture, women and men are left with the impression that women are not heroic; that their heroism, when it occurs, is a reaction to the moment . . . . (7)

And, as the quotation from Rozena Maart states, if women do not name what

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they accomplish, they will never claim its reward. Laurence has given us "heroes," but critics continue to diminish the triumphs of Hagar, Rachel, Staey, and Morag by referring to them as "heroines." By naming them "heroes" but moving beyond the androcentrism of the term, this study claims full heroic status for the Manawaka women.

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Chapter 1

Hagar -- The Aged Hero

In The Stone Angel, Margaret Laurence documents Hagar Shipley's life by using the familiar quest myth. In doing so, she expects the reader to see the protagonist as a questing archetypal hero. As a reader of the 1990s, I also see Hagar as a woman who is successful as a hero from a feminist perspective. Hagar's quest requires her to "slay" her personal "dragons"[4] before she can reap rewards of community and wholeness. The "dragons" that Hagar must overcome are excessive pride, caused by an over-developed animus, and a problem with communication that is multi-faceted. The challenge she has in adequately expressing herself is the "dragon" she shares with the other Manawaka heroes, while her excessive pride that is a product of a denial of her mother, is her individual "dragon." When Hagar kills these "dragons," the reader examines this protagonist's success and sees an example of how to "struggle more successfully"[5] in one's own life. Thus, Hagar finds heroic status in two categories.

Pearson and Pope state that "[t]he heroic journey is a psychological journey in which the hero escapes from the captivity of her conditioning and searches for her true self" (63). Hagar's conditioning is both familial and societal. We are actually privy only to the events of the last few weeks of ninety-year old Hagar's life but, because of her "rampant" (5) memory, we are privileged to view most of her lifetime and determine her status as "hero." It is in

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[4] This term from Pearson and Pope refers to the personal problems that the hero must overcome because of fragmentation of the self.

[5] The feminist definition of "hero" includes teaching and showing others how to struggle more successfully.

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Hagar's childhood that the reader detects the "dragons" with which Hagar must struggle throughout her life. Her mother "relinquished her feeble ghost as [she] gained [her] stubborn one" (3) and, lacking a mother, Hagar is socialized by her severely proud father. From him, she learns to reject any characteristics that are perceived as weaknesses, both in herself and others. Abhorring weakness means that Hagar over-accentuates characteristics which appear to embody strength. This necessity for strength extends to a pride of place in the community, pride in possessions, and pride of outward appearances. Because of Jason Currie's patriarchal beliefs and similar views echoed by the Manawaka community, Hagar equates weakness with women and, thus, recoils from all things female. She also inherits difficulty in communicating her feelings and thoughts from her father and her society. These are the conditioned "dragons" that Hagar must "slay."[6]

This "dragon" (the rejection of the weak female, the over-developed animus, and the "repression of her feminine self" (Buss Mother and Daughter 11)) is, in effect, a way for Hagar to renounce any affiliation with her mother or the community of females. Some critics who examine how Laurence's protagonists must come to terms with their mothers are Angelika Maeser, Cynthia Taylor, Helen M. Buss, and Constance Rooke. Maeser and Buss take a Jungian perspective with the Manawaka characters and say they seek "the Great Mother" and "discover the Ground of Being" in their process of individuation (Maeser 151-2), while Taylor treats The Stone Angel as a novel of awakening. Rooke, in "A Feminist Reading of The Stone Angel" looks at Hagar's pride in a Christian context (26) and says that Laurence "cites patriarchal society as a kind of instigating culprit" for Hagar's "compensatory

[6] Slay means solving a problem in Pearson and Pope's model of The Female Hero.

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pride" (27). As well as having a different focus for their studies, these critics do not find that making peace with the community of women is as "heroic" on Hagar's part as I insist it is. Nevertheless, looking at The Stone Angel as an archetypal quest, with "dragons" to "slay," allows the reader to see the adventure that Laurence wishes female readers to experience.[7] It also transforms Hagar from simply an irascible old woman to a successful hero.

Using Pearson and Pope's model, I examine the family and the society in Manawaka as the captors in the original garden from which the hero must escape. Hagar's "dragons" begin in "the garden"[8] "of her youth where her role model is her father. From the imported stone angel that adorns his wife's grave to the inheritance he leaves to have the family plot attended in perpetuity, pride of position rules Jason's life. Like the stone angel that is bigger and costlier than all the rest, Jason sees himself as superior to the others in Manawaka who he feels are "a lesser breed entirely" (4). Hagar shares this pride from an early age. She and Jason compare themselves to others in the community with regard to how successful the head of the family is. Charlotte Tappen is worthy to be Hagar's best friend as she is the doctor's daughter. Lottie Drieser is at the bottom of the social ladder as she does not have the protection of a father at all. Patriarchal pride trickles down and influences the children.

Jason sees his family as extensions of himself, and therefore their appearance, demeanor, and actions must also be worthy of pride within the community. From the start, he dresses Hagar in a manner that will show others how prosperous and proper he is. By age six she was "strutting the board

[7] The concept of "dragons" refers to Pearson and Pope's idea of the life denying feelings that the hero must struggle against.

[8] The garden is Pearson and Pope's terminology for the society where the hero is socialized and acquires her problems.

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sidewalk like a pint-sized peacock, resplendent, haughty, hoity-toity, Jason Currie's black haired daughter" (6). Buss calls our attention to the fact that it is male peacocks who show off their plumage (Mother and Daughter 13). Laurence suggests that this pride is as unnatural as civilizing the prairie bluffs with "portly peonies" (5). Constance Rooke notes that Jason encourages "social arrogance as an extension of his own - although he naturally expects obedience within doors" (31). Jason believes in masculine superiority and strength of character and Hagar embraces her father's values as her own.

Laurence indicates that Hagar is fated with the burden of pride as she inherits it as well as learns it from her father. She is even like him physically and in temperament: "Only I, who didn't want to resemble him in the least, was sturdy like him and bore his hawkish nose and stare that could meet anyone's without blinking an eyelash" (7-8). Pride is a typical tragic flaw in classical heroes. Such heroes tend to be arrogant and independent, causing us to admire their feisty spirit, while at the same time making us fear the fall that normally attends *hubris*. Laurence paints this picture of Hagar so we immediately identify her with the "archetypal hero" who is sure to fall because of this flaw. From her father, Hagar learns and inherits a type of pride that accentuates her animus[9]. She must deny the female part of herself just to meet her own standards.

Another "dragon" that Hagar learns from her father is poor communication skills. They both have a way of alternating tactlessness and close-mouthedness. This is seen as an inability to express inner feelings and

[9] Guerin et al. state that the "human psyche is bisexual" with the anima having a feminine designation and the animus having a male designation (170). The anima is a man's inner woman and the animus is a woman's inner man. Buss quotes Dennis Cooley as saying that Hagar is "afflicted with a fierce animus and persona" (Mothers and Daughters 14).

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thoughts when they need to be expressed, but also, it is saying hurtful things to others. This "dragon," like her pride, originates in the "garden," and affects Hagar's whole life.

Rather than exposing his true feelings, Jason communicates in platitudes, cruelty, or silence. When six-year old Hagar learns the weights and measures that are central to the mercenary way he sees life, he chimes, " 'Hayroot, strawfoot, / Now you've got it.' [She remembers, t]hat's all he'd ever say, when I got it right. He never believed in wasting a word or a minute" (7). He uses language to hurt and control others. When Hagar wants to take a teaching position, Jason attacks her with words of patriarchal ownership when he says, "no daughter of mine is going out there alone" (44). When she tells him of her intention to marry Bram Shipley, he replies with insults and then silence to punish her disobedience. These modes of communicating block true rapport. Similarly, Hagar learns and uses these poor communication skills because she feels they demonstrate strength.

It is not usually a father that teaches a female child as we have seen Jason do; mothers usually play a large part in socializing their daughters. Hagar's female models are her mother and her Aunt Doll, but both of these women are prevented from moderating Jason's overpowering influence on Hagar. Hagar imagines her dead mother as "feeble" (3) and "docile"(59). She says, "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 . . ." (25). Rooke notes that "so thoroughly has [Hagar's mother] been obliterated that even her name is missing from the text" (27). Hagar's mother cannot teach her that being female or maternal does not mean being

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weak, nor can she teach her to communicate effectively. Hagar internalizes the misconception that being a woman means weakness and death.

Not only is Hagar's mother an ineffectual model for the young girl, her other exemplar, Auntie Doll, is subservient and largely silent. As "hired help" (6) with no real say in the family, motherly Dolly Stonehouse is no match for a feisty little girl such as Hagar and simply sends her off to Jason (7). This "poor soul" who "put one hand in front of her mouth when speaking," to cover her bad teeth, also impedes her voice. She is not a female model that Hagar would want to emulate (17). Because of her mother and Auntie Doll, Hagar sees strength and maternal tenderness as mutually exclusive and she rejects the feminine "too extremely" (Rooke 29).

The family "garden" imbues Hagar with two "dragons." The first "dragon" is a rejection of all things female; the second "dragon," is a problem with communication skills. These "dragons" that Hagar learns at home are also strongly reinforced in her society: the people in Manawaka have set up a hierarchy based on male power. Hagar sees that Lottie is looked down on as "No-Name" because of her uncertain paternity, and Henry Pearl is ridiculed because his father is poor (11-12). The fathers of these children have left them open to scorn in the community. Wealthier males are respected and rule the community and privilege their families with their power. This trust in the patriarchy encourages Hagar to reject the feminine and foster an overly-developed animus.

Critics who examine Hagar's relationship with her mother and the women in her society, agree that she must learn to identify with valuable characteristics that society sees as female before she reaches wholeness. In

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their own way, these same critics agree with Pearson and Pope who state that the hero is obliged to learn "to trust her full humanity in a world that sees men and women as incomplete complements to each other" (68). Taylor says that Hagar's "awakening [is] contingent upon her ability to come to terms with her image of the mother and her image of herself as mother" (161). She must also reject those values of her father's that are detrimental to her life. To become a hero, Hagar must "slay" this "dragon."

Hagar's second "dragon" is her inability to communicate her thoughts and feelings effectively. The community augments this problem initially learned at home. She is given a finishing school education that prepares her only for life within doors because she is not welcome to communicate in the larger community. When she wishes to teach away from home, she is told how unacceptable this is for a young woman. Her father tells her "Men have terrible thoughts" and the farm boys will "paw" you (44). She feels cowed by the thought that men make society a dangerous place for an unprotected woman. She silently stares at the picture of the herd of cattle in her home and is compliant. When Hagar ignores the edict that, "There's not a decent girl in this town would wed without her family's consent" (49), she is effectively silenced by ostracism from her family and most of the community. Women's voices are controlled by powerful males and any insurrection is punished by the community as a whole. Hagar learns that the societal "garden" reinforces the problem she has in communicating effectively.

As a hero, it is Hagar's mandate to "slay" the "dragons" that she has acquired in the "gardens" of her youth. Her father and society teach her a compensatory pride because she is not allowed to value her mother's

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contribution to society, and they also saddle her with a communication problem that is a clash between harsh words and silence. Each of Hagar's "dragons" is examined to see to what extent it plagues her adult life.[10] I refer to this examination as viewing the "fruit of the garden." [11] The heroism of the quest to "slay" her "dragons," during the last few weeks of her life, is heightened when we note how restrictive they have been to her.

Hagar's pride isolates her and inhibits her relationships with her brothers, her sons, her husband, and others that might have been a comfort to her. Taylor comments that "Hagar loses the fullness of her potential self when she cuts herself off from others" (162) and we see this first with her brothers. It is her negation of all things female that is at the root of this problem. She refers to Matt and Dan as "graceful and unspirited boys" who "took after [their] mother" (7) and, because of this perceived weakness, her relationship with them is never close. When Dan is dying of pneumonia, Matt asks Hagar to put on their mother's shawl to comfort Dan, but she cannot move past her abhorrence of a perceived weakness to pretend that she is the mother she does not respect. Her relationship with her brothers is the first that fails because of her overdeveloped animus.

This notion of weakness based in the female also seems to encompass intelligence. Hagar relates sickly Dan with females and she remembers him as a "ninny" (276). Jason appreciates and rewards Hagar's quickness to learn. He feels that, because of her intelligence, she should have been a boy (14). Hagar sees herself as a clever honorary male. She also uses her own perception of intelligence as a bench mark for those she respects or denigrates.

[10] This time encompasses Hagar's adult years before the Silverthreads incident.

[11] "Fruit of the Garden" refers to proof in adulthood that the hero is truly encumbered with the "dragons" (problems) acquired in their youth.

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Her idea of intelligence includes refined language skills, which, in fact, have little to do with true intelligence, but Hagar uses the qualities she equates with her father and herself to set herself apart from others.

Hagar's perceptions of her sons also depends heavily on her perception of their strength (intelligent) or weakness (vacuous). She ignores Marvin's good qualities because she dislikes his resemblance to Bram's family. She feels that the Shipleys are all "common as bottled beer" (32). Their manners and grammar do not meet her finishing school standards: Hagar "almost felt as though Marvin weren't [her] son" (62). Even though young Marvin tries in every way to please her, he cannot gain her approval (112-3) because he is rather methodical and "never a quick thinker" (130). As a child, "he'd hang around the kitchen," until she tells him to "get moving" (112). Along with his slow ways, his desire to be mothered appears as a weakness and repels Hagar.

A startling example of Hagar devaluing the positive in Marvin is seen when she tells us, "He fought at Vimy Ridge, and lived through it. . . . He wrote home once a month, and his letters were always very poorly spelled" (130). Most mothers would take joy in a son's communication. She accentuates what she sees as an unforgivable flaw and virtually ignores his accomplishments and continued devotion to her. In her later years, Marvin mothers Hagar and by doing so increases her dislike for his "femaleness." Though he has always sensed as much, Hagar tells Marvin that he is not the favoured son when she throws this hurtful barb, "If it were John, he'd not consign his mother to the poorhouse" (75). Her exaltation of intelligence and strength blinds her to Marvin's worthiness and puts a serious block in their relationship.

John is Hagar's favourite son because she feels that he takes after her

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father, Jason. He is quick to learn and is better spoken than Bram and Marvin. She passes on the family pin to him and tries to instil in him the pride that her father gave her. As an adult, John is both different from and similar to his mother and his grandfather Currie. He shows signs of the same pride that they both carry, yet he is much more able to show kindness. As a youth, he is embarrassed that his father is known as "Bramble Shitley" (131) but, as he ages, he becomes more like his father and does not care what Hagar or others think of him. John is compassionate only when it comes to his father and his girlfriend, Arlene Simmons. When Hagar and the Simmonses interfere in John and Arlene's relationship, he sacrifices their young lives rather than part with Arlene. Despite the truth regarding the characters of her sons, Hagar continues to value John over Marvin because she believes her younger son has the strength and intelligence of the Currie family. She ignores the fact that he is a quick-tempered drunk. Hagar's pride in her own values vitiates the truth in the relationship she has with her sons.

Another relationship that falls short of its potential because of Hagar's pride in her own values is her union with Bram. Hagar rebels against her father's authority, yet, when she marries Bram, she has plans to change him to meet her father's standards. These values demand a successful appearance in the community. Hagar cannot abide what she sees as Bram's lack of ambition and success, his crude manners and speech, or his drunken public clowning. Unlike Jason, "[h]e couldn't string two words together without some crudity" (79). When she finds his conversion to her ways impossible, Hagar is too ashamed to be seen in town or in church with her husband. She says she "preferred possible damnation in some comfortably distant future, to any ordeal then of

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peeking or pitying eyes" (90). Her pride of place in the community is crushed.

It is only Hagar's distorted values that make Jason appear a better man than Bram. Bram, at least shows honestly his poverty, laziness, and love of alcohol while being harmless to others. He sees refined manners and polite social graces as false and he has no need to seek the approval of the community. When Hagar says she is leaving him he does not rage at her but instead shows concern for her food on the journey. Jason, on the other hand, disowns her for going against his wishes. Hagar's prideful values are like a suit of armour that holds in her own feelings and prohibits her from feeling the warmth from others.

This pride and a rejection of all things female also prevents Hagar from accepting Bram's attempts at kindness or intimacy. When they are first married he gives her a "cut-glass decanter with a silver top" and she "laid it aside and thought no more about it" (51). Valuing a gift of beauty but minimal utility, no doubt, strikes Hagar as something a woman would do. Therefore, she does not allow Bram any pleasure by showing him emotion that indicates "softness" on her part; nor does she outwardly acknowledge the pleasure she gets from having sex with him (81). This pleasure is another gift from Bram that she is too proud to admit to. Taylor says, "[t]o show response would be to accept being a woman. Denying her womanliness also means denying her sexuality" (163). To exhibit joy in sex or tenderness toward her husband for giving her pleasure is the same "intolerance of weakness" that she demonstrates in the rest of her dealings with people (Taylor 163).

Hagar's first "dragon" isolates her from her most important relationships. Other people who might touch her life receive the same strong disapproval.

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Hagar's assessment of Mr. Troy, the minister, is that "God's little man" is afraid of her (40). She finds him feminine and ineffectual. She does not respect anyone like him or Doris who finds "comfort" in religion (30). Obviously, Hagar thinks that requiring comfort is to admit you have weaknesses and this would let down the facade of strength which she fights to maintain. Interestingly, Laurence gives several of her male characters, such as the minister, tender or maternal qualities. Bram and Marvin also display kindness toward Hagar, as did Jason Currie at times. When her father reached out to hug or touch her, instead of seeing kindness as a positive quality, this physical comfort increased Hagar's resolve never to show what she perceived as weakness. This "dragon" she acquired in childhood plagues her throughout her adult life.

I identify Hagar's second "dragon" as a problem with communication and also examine it as "fruit of the garden" meaning, proof that this "dragon" has been nurtured in the family /community and continues to plague the hero in her adult years. This "dragon" sometimes manifests itself in a self-enforced silence or an inability to express feelings and thoughts when they need to be expressed. Other times it is the inability to stop harsh, hurtful words and thoughts. Being silent at the right time can be an act of kindness. It is paradoxical that a woman who so values correct speech and judges others on this criteria should herself be a prisoner of problematic communication.

Sometimes Hagar uses silence as a weapon against those to whom she feels superior. She lets the minister "flounder" as she makes "no reply" to his conversation (41). She enjoys Doris' cooking but does not compliment her because she does not respect her (67). When the doctor is condescending, she "fix[es] him with a glance glassy and hard as cat's-eye marbles, and say[s]

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nothing" (91). When she is embarrassed, she swears to "speak no more," (138) though she knows she will not follow through with that vow as she still needs her ammunition.

Silence is also a prison for Hagar. When Marvin is leaving to go to war she "didn't know what to say to him" (129) and she never finds the words to reconcile with her father. Perhaps the most important time when words fail Hagar is when John is dying. First of all she "hushes" him, then has no recollection of whether she was able to speak or whether John could hear her. When the women of the community come to comfort her after John's death, she can not "say a single word" (241-3). She loses the person that she loves most in the world without being able to express her feelings. This silence links Hagar inextricably with the stone angel and also with her voiceless mother.

Laurence tells us how important thwarted communication is to the protagonist when she uses images of Hagar being silenced. Hagar recalls that the sign in the Presbyterian church of her childhood says, "The Lord Is In His Holy Temple - Let All Within Keep Silent Before Him" (89). Now, at ninety, she is again hushed for speaking out in church. When pain and the fear of mortality strike, Hagar cannot speak. She thinks of masks with "their mouths in the "O" of a soundless wail" (54). She fears a "smotherer" and "want[s] to shout" (72) but cannot. Hagar is now being silenced just as she has silenced others in the past.

When she is not using silence, Hagar also uses language as a weapon against others. Oftentimes her name calling is only in her own mind, but even these internal monologues poison her relationships. The almost constant references to Doris as something lower than human is especially distressing.

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She thinks of her daughter-in-law as a "sow in labor," (55) and a "calving cow,"(31) or even creatures with even less intelligence than animals such as a "partridge" (144) and a "flea"(108). The elderly women at Silverthreads nursing home are "old ewes" (98). A comment by Buss draws together this aspect of Hagar's use of language with her abhorrence of things female.

> Paradoxically, the Great Mother is often depicted as the Lady of the Beasts and the feminine in its earthy and elementary dimensions is closely associated with the instinctive life of animals. But Hagar's denial of the feminine leads her to put the most negative interpretations on these images. (Mother and Daughter 14-5)

With words and silence she holds herself aloof from forming relationships that would benefit herself and those around her.

It is clear that Hagar's "dragons" that were formed in her childhood "garden" have plagued her throughout her adult years and must be dealt with if she is to become a hero. Often there is an event or a series of events that precipitate the "exit from the garden"[12] and Hagar's motive to leave her protected existence with Doris and Marvin is, superficially, her refusal to be put into a nursing home. On a deeper level, Hagar has a sense of her impending death and needs to "slay" her "dragons" before she can find the freedom to die.

We know that Hagar's mind is on death as she feels Marvin and Doris are treating her like "a calf, to be fatted" (35)" and as though [she] weren't [t]here" (32) anymore. She also feels as dry "as an old bone" and in this same passage she uses the phrase "dust . . . to dust . . ." (54). She pictures herself as

[12] The Exit from the Garden is a stage in the hero's journey where she must leave the garden of dependency to slay her dragons and seek her reward of the new community. Pearson and Pope (68).

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a snow angel where "[t]he icy whiteness covers [her] . . . " (81). The pain she now lives with is a dramatic reminder that her end is imminent.

Before pursuing her quest there is a false start for Hagar. Pearson and Pope inform us that the hero's journey is "complicated further by the human tendency not to understand completely all the ramifications of a single experience" (77). Her aborted attempt to leave "the garden" comes when Hagar is taken to Silverthreads. She sees it as a "shadowy" (99) place for the dead; "a mausoleum" (96) where she takes a drink of "hemlock" tea (99) and pretends to be "blind" and "deaf." (97) In this underworld, she meets an archetypal "Good Mother" to show her the way. She likes and respects Mrs. Steiner because she sees a resemblance in their looks. This woman speaks to her of matters that link women such as menstruation and giving birth. They also discuss the community of women when Mrs. Steiner speaks positively of her daughter. Hagar wonders "how peculiar that she knows so much" about women and about life. Hagar admits, "I never got used to a blessed thing" (104).

Hagar is not ready to hear a message about accepting the female in herself, yet, she feels she must "find some place to go, some hidden place" (105). She escapes to the Silverthreads summer-house. The archetypal journey is often one from civilization to nature and Hagar goes from an institution into the garden. She is exhilarated and is "gifted with sight like like a prowling cat" (105) as she feels led to some unknown destination. In this "shadowed and luminous" place, Hagar experiences clarity of the spirit when she remembers a children's verse, "The Prisoner's Song,"

> If I had the wings of an angel,
> Or even the wings of a crow,

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> I would fly to the top of T. Eaton's
>
> And spit on the people below. (106)

With the angel being Hagar's dead mother, this song indicates strength, not weakness, in women. It also encompasses images of the male with reference to the "prisoner," as more men are incarcerated than women. Hagar must learn to blend the male and female to be whole. She vows, as in the song, to escape and to fight against those who stand in her way. The voice that calls her to the quest is her own.

Hagar is not quite ready for her voyage and therefore allows herself to be taken home. She has not been ready to face her "dragons" in this initial attempt to leave "the garden." Pearson and Pope explain that such failed attempts on the part of the hero sets up a "spiral or circular" path rather than a "linear" one, "while simultaneously building complexity and depth" (78). Hagar now plans for a successful exit. She finally heeds the call to change and makes ready to go. She emerges from a state of stasis into a world of chaos.

Armoured in an old dress, a cardigan sweater, and sensible shoes, Hagar finds her wings and flies from her prison/home. Before she reaches Shadow Point, her "Green-World" (Pratt et al.), she faces some trials. Getting past her anxiety in the bank, she finds her way to the bus, while her ninety-year old body threatens to let her down. She is gripped with pain, exhausted, and her memory temporarily fails. Determined, she makes her way "down and down" (148) to this place of nature, of solitude, near the water. Archetypically, all of these things are significant. She retreats into a womb-like place where she can be spiritually reborn. Guerin et al. state that "water is . . . the commonest symbol for the unconscious" as is the blackness that surrounds

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Hagar at night (150-1). She must meet the "dragons" in her unconscious self before she can deal with them.

In the old fish-cannery Hagar's wonders if she has "come here not to hide but to seek" (192). She slips into a Lear-like madness and takes off her hat with its "cultivated flowers" as an unwanted sign of civilization. She feels quite "transformed" as she thinks, ". . . no one's here to inform me I'm a fool" (216). Away from the societal influences that helped to nurture her "dragons," Hagar is free to confront them. This place, with its "muffling darkness, smothering and thick as wool" (162) is terrifying for Hagar, so she looks for a rescuer. She remembers Bram's strengths instead of his weaknesses and wishes that he were there. She also envies the dead, "fancy[ing] herself . . . among them" in a place of beauty and freedom (162). But, the true rescuer has not arrived yet and the old woman pulls herself back from the brink. She must not die without making the changes necessary for her rebirth.

Frightful omens of death come closer all the time and Hagar deals with them. When a sea gull gets into the cannery she wounds it because a bird in the house is a sign of death and she defends her life. Dual images come from this scene. There is a reenactment of a girlhood trial at the "sulphurus" Manawaka dump when Hagar is not able to end the suffering of some chicks (26). Again, she is not able to put the gull out of its misery. The scene is also reminiscent of the ancient mariner, disrespectful of nature, killing the albatross. Hagar is still not able to get beyond her own selfish emotions but the fact that she states she is remorseful for having hurt the bird is an improvement and shows she is gaining courage.

Surrounded by nature and water, Hagar allows her altered

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consciousness to take her mind back and forth through her lifetime looking for answers that will allow her to "slay" her "dragons" and be rejuvenated. In the cannery, two figures come to be Hagar's green-world guides.[13] The first is Meg Merrilies, a character from a poem by Keats. Hagar remembers.

> Old Meg was brave as Queen Margaret,
> And tall as Amazon;
> An old red blanket cloak she wore,
> A ship hat she had on;
> God rest her aged bones somewhere . . .
> She died full long agone" (163).

Hagar changes her own appearance to resemble Meg, whose "house was out of doors," as she adorns herself with June bugs and crowns herself "queen of moth-millers, empress of earwigs" (17). Buss notes that in Meg and Queen Margaret, Hagar comes in touch with "a womanly strength based on a female tradition rather than a denial of femininity" (Mother and Daughter 17).

Murray F. Lees is Hagar's second green-world guide. Murray's middle initial stands for Ferney (fern), symbolizing a union with nature. It is also his mother's maiden name and, therefore, a tie to the female. Pratt et al. state that it is common for women to find "solace, companionship, and independence in nature" but males are seen as "antagonists who disturb their peace" (21). Laurence blends the male, the female, and nature, when she chooses Lees as a guide to help Hagar communicate more effectively and open her heart to things female. Lees is an example of the author suggesting that humans are neither totally "male" or "female" and that these terms are simply societal

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13 Pearson and Pope and Pratt et al. discuss the importance of natural (green-world) settings and guides to the success of the hero. Oftentimes the hero only retreats mentally to a green-world.

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constructions. With his "high and fluting" (220) voice, and because Hagar "relates to him as if her were . . . a non-male figure," Buss sees Lees as a surrogate mother for the motherless protagonist (Buss Mother and Daughter 18).

Quite naturally it seems, language is not a problem here. Hagar is able to talk to her guide with frank openness because she treats him as an equal. Her refusal of the female falls away and she realizes that the patriarchal pride she has used as her "wisdom" is nothing more than "wind" (234). She admits her part in John's death which she has not been able to do before. In an altered state of consciousness, she has the opportunity to go back and say to John the things that may have prevented his death and she feels forgiven (247). It is the nurturing that Lees shows Hagar that allows her to reciprocate and speak kindly to him and "feel lightened and eased" (253).

Pearson and Pope say it is common in female quests that, though "the situation is often very grim -[it is] the capacity of heroic women to learn from their experience and to change their world" (92). Even at such an advanced age and in ill health, Hagar learns from both Meg and Lees. She demonstrates her personal growth as she kindly gives Lees forgiveness after his confession of guilt in his son's death. In an uncharacteristic show of physicality, she shares body warmth as they huddle together. Hagar finally shows compassion; something which, heretofore, she has been unable to do. She puts his needs above her own when she does not take his coat even though she is cold. Her conviction that strength means only unemotional and unbending pride is being tempered by tenderness.

The opportunity is not there for Hagar to conclude her adventure from the

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cannery, but it can be seen that she has completed one segment of the voyage. After hearing of her illness, she knows she does not have much time left. The second leg of her journey takes place in the hospital. It must be noted that at first she is again too prideful to accept the company of women, and communication is as problematic as it ever has been. She is cantankerous, her thoughts and words are hurtful weapons, and she has no tolerance for those around her on the ward. She feels superior to women, such as Mrs. Dobereiner who speaks German, as they are "foreigners"(260). For Hagar, simply being a woman is foreign. She does not believe that she is calling out in pain and delirium in the same way that they are (261). Her pride does not accept this picture of herself. She seems to have forgotten the lessons of her first guides.

Luckily for Hagar, two archetypal guides, a Good Mother and a Soul-Mate, are there to help her continue her journey. Elva Jardine, with an implied meaning of Eve and The Garden of Eden, and Sandra Wong, a "celestial" (286) clothed in silk chrysanthemums (302), guide her to the final stage in her journey. All of her life, Hagar's "dragons" have isolated her and Pratt et al. note that before the quest is done, the archetypal hero "seeks integration into a human community where she can develop more fully" (135). For Hagar, this community must be a female one where she can learn to value her own female qualities. Even though Elva does not have children, she can be considered a Good Mother since she brings to mind Mrs. Steiner who glories in having daughters and soothes and ministers to those around her. Rooke notes that Hagar learns from Mrs. Jardine because "Elva is tough in spirit, as well as compassionate toward other women and tender in the love she exhibits toward her husband" (40). Sandra is a Soul-Mate because she "speaks just like Tina,"

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(286) Hagar's beloved granddaughter. Hagar wants to be a model of masculine strength for Sandra as she tells her to deny her feelings and not to worry, an operation is "not serious" (287). But, when Hagar is allowed to care for her roommate, she finds a maternal strength that is new to her. Sandra becomes Hagar's surrogate daughter and they share a moment where they laugh together as conspirators and women.

Pearson and Pope say that "a rescue figure aids the hero in freeing herself from the myth of female inferiority and in identifying a viable female tradition" (68). Hagar has believed in female weakness and rejected the nurturing part of herself. She has embraced what she sees as male strength until it has became the core of her pride. With the guidance of the women in the hospital, Hagar discovers that she can integrate the male and female parts of the psyche and achieve wholeness and complete her voyage. She must accept that women's qualities are as valuable as men's and, as Elva demonstrates, "as a woman and with courage, . . . the two are not at odds" (Rooke 40).

Pratt et al. say that, in the unconscious, the archetypal hero must confront her parental figures in "the repository of [her] personal memories" before she can complete her journey (140). For Hagar, this confrontation goes on throughout her life, but, it culminates in her last days which are spent moving in and out of a drugged consciousness. In a dream about a youthful ride on a Ferris wheel, Hagar tries a bit of a cologne called *Ravishing*. Never in her waking life would she have agreed to touch anything as "feminine" as "ravishing." The fact that the cologne is a gift from a girlfriend's mother symbolically links Hagar to a reunion with her own mother. It also hearkens back to her use of *Lily of the Valley* perfume from Tina. In her subconscious

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she forms the positive female bonds that she requires to reconcile with her mother. She thinks in her dream, "'Well, that's a change'" (303).

Hagar's reconciliation in the female community allows for a denunciation of her father's values. Through her relationships with Mrs. Jardine and Sandra she faces and denies the hold her father's pride has had on her. Initially, she does not respect Elva because she represents women as "flimsy as moth wings" -- exactly what Hagar has loathed throughout her life (269). When Hagar sees that Elva shows strength and kindness for others in the face of death, her opinion changes. Sandra is strong and weak at the same time; not denying either side of her personality. She admits to being afraid of an operation, yet, she has the courage to stay with Hagar though she is initially afraid to be with someone who is dying. Through the example of these women, Hagar is able to reconcile being "hard" and "soft" at the same time. In accepting these representatives of her mother, she can deny the hold that her father's values have had on her.

Hagar has somewhat of an epiphany when she hears Mr. Troy sing (291). Until now she has seen the minister as not strong enough to be worthy of her respect. When she hears him sing she realises that having joy is more important than having power. Joy allows one to cherish life and loved ones. This "know[ledge] comes upon [her] so forcefully, so shatteringly and with such a bitterness as [she has] never felt before" (292). She acknowledges that her pride in appearing strong has been one of her burdens and then she does the same with language. She questions, "When did I ever speak the heart's truth?" (292). Pearson and Pope see this type of connection for the hero as a liberating moment when she identifies those things in society that have "restricted" her or

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"taught her that she must repress . . . herself" (103). These admissions by Hagar show that she has successfully completed her quest. Her treasure is her transformed self and she is supposed to live in happiness with her new family (Pearson and Pope 223). Hagar's time is short but she tries to open herself to those around her.

Hagar struggles with her communication dragon after she gains insight. She admits "I'm choked with it now, the incommunicable years, everything that happened and was spoken or not spoken" (296). She makes amends in small ways such as when she takes back the harsh words she flings at Doris (293). When one form of communication fails, she acts; the light does not bring the nurse so Hagar gets the bedpan for Sandra (299). The most important "truly free"(307) communication of Hagar's life is when she lies to Marvin. First she admits to him that she is afraid. This brings her down to a level where she can give him what he needs. Then she tells him that he has been "[a] better son than John" (304). Even though this communication is a false one, it is done in love and kindness. Her new appreciation of kindness allows her to be maternal and say the words her son desires to hear.

In passing on her ring to Tina, Hagar links her silent, mild mother with the articulate, confident, next generation of women. Hagar does not have time to enjoy the new community and the wholeness that should have been her rewards for a successful quest. Her time is done, but, as Adele Wiseman comments in the afterward of The Stone Angel, Hagar "comes fully alive at last before she dies" (310). She comes to understand that by relinquishing the pride learned from her father she is allowed to feel and share joy as well as communicate effectively to those around her. In risking her own safety to bring

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Sandra a bedpan and in telling Marvin that he is a favoured son, she performs "truly free" maternal acts. She proves that she has killed her "dragons" and she dies nobly as an archetypal hero after a successful quest.

As well as being an archetypal hero, Hagar also fulfils the feminist definition of a hero. This definition states that the hero "shows us how to struggle more successfully . . . and teach[es others]. . . what she has learned from her experience. . ." (Fisher A Feminist Dictionary 189). Hagar has newly come to value the community of women and she wishes this communion to continue because she leaves her mother's ring to Tina. In making a connection between generations of women, Hagar symbolically passes the new female strength that she has come to admire on to those who follow her. As well as Tina, we, as readers, are her followers.

It strikes me that neither Hagar's age nor the number of years that remove the modern reader from the setting of The Stone Angel has diminished the impact of this novel on its readers. Women in the 1990s continue to struggle with the "no daughter of mine . . ." attitude of Jason Currie. We also embrace values of the patriarchy when we follow fashion dictates or accept the glass ceiling in business. We continue to strain to have effective communication and have our feelings understood as we use man-made language that does not suit us. Hagar takes stock of the personal problems that plagued her life and, through her pain and fear, she finds the strength to change and to make amends to those she has wronged. This is an important lesson.

Because she appears to go out as stubborn and cantankerous as she came in, the reader might wonder what, in fact, Hagar has to teach. After all she has learned, she still speaks curtly to the nurse and refuses help. I feel

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certain that Laurence knows, as readers, we would not believe a complete change in Hagar's character. We may not even respect her for going gently into that good night. Because Hagar uses her new found experience when it counts and does not pass around pleasantries willy-nilly, we believe her sincerity. She uses her inexperienced skill of positive communication to show kindness to those closest to her. Through Sandra, she makes amends for rejecting the women in her life. Through Murray Lees, she apologizes to John. Most importantly, she speaks directly to Marvin and gives him a lasting gift -- one of love. Even though she remains a "holy terror" (304), Hagar does soften her strong, isolated personality. She allows people to touch her and she touches them in return. She teaches us all that change has no age restriction and that change, in itself, is heroic.

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Chapter 2

Rachel and Stacey - Heroes and Sisters

Rachel Cameron asserts, "I am the mother now" in A Jest of God (1966), and her sister, Stacey MacAindra, insists,"it's myself I'm thinking about, as well as them" in The Fire-Dwellers (1969). Both statements, made toward the end of their respective novels, affirm the changes in the lives of the Cameron sisters that qualify them as heroes. Like Hagar before them, Rachel and Stacey acquire "dragons" that inhibit their growth and personal relationships. After heeding calls to action and making successful exits from the "garden," each of the sisters "slays" her personal "dragons" and completes a mythic quest.

Coral Ann Howells is one of the first critics to see valuable links between the "only pair of novels in [the] Manawaka cycle" (93). In "Sisters Under Their Skins," Nora Foster Stovel tells us that very little work has been done to compare the special bond between these novels by Margaret Laurence. Not only are the two novels about the Cameron sisters, they were also composed and published simultaneously (Howells 120). Laurence states that the stories of these women were on her mind at the same time and, in fact, she "interrupted work on The Fire-Dwellers to write A Jest of God" (qtd. in Foster Stovel 120).

Numerous critics see Rachel's and Stacey's successes or personal growth as less than heroic -- at best mediocre. Readers and critics alike respect Hagar for her struggle to be free of the stony pride that stultifies her life. We also applaud Morag's achievements as a published novelist. Nancy Bailey, in "Margaret Laurence, Carl Jung and the Manawaka Women," feels that "achievements . . . evade all the Laurence women except Morag Gunn" (307)

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and Laurie Lindberg feels that "Morag somehow reaches a higher level of self-awareness and a greater measure of wisdom than any of the others" (187). With such unenthusiastic support for the strength shown by the women in A Jest of God and The Fire-Dwellers, I feel that my greatest responsibility is to prove that Rachel and Stacey are heroes and worthy of respect. These sisters are successful in their quests for change and, because of their struggles, we learn from them. Therefore, the Cameron sisters qualify in both an archetypal and a feminist definition of hero.

To prove that Laurence's women are heroes, I will study them as successful questers before I demonstrate how they are heroes in the feminist sense of the term. The protagonists begin life in the home and community referred to as "the garden" (Pearson and Pope). I feel that the "dragons"[14] they must slay in life are inherited or learned in "the garden." For this reason I will examine Rachel and Stacey together as sisters with the same parents and societal surroundings; sisters who begin a quest for renewal in the spring of the same year. By examining the archetypal imagery, the characters that surround them and the dangers of their quests, we fully appreciate their reward which is "the new family."[15] Interestingly, Laurence takes these sisters down completely different paths even though they originate from the same "garden."

Both Foster Stovel and Howells maintain that the diverse life styles that the Cameron sisters live is due to their differences in personalities. Laurence demonstrates that Rachel has always been shy while Stacey was an outgoing teenager. We see this in the scenes where each sister remembers going to

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[14] "Dragons" refer to the problems that the hero must solve to complete the quest, that is, the fragmentation that the women must rise above to better their lives.

[15] A term from Pearson and Pope referring to a new sense of community and wholeness.

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dances. Rachel recollects:

> Sometimes I'd go with three of four other girls, scarcely wanting to, for the peril undertaken, the risk of no one asking a person to dance. But I dreaded not going even more -- having to make up an excuse which anyone could see through. (Jest 66)

Stacey remembers the dances this way.

> Stacey Cameron in her yellow dress with pleats all around, the full skirt. Knowing by instinct how to move, loving the boy's closeness, whoever he was. (F.D. 124)

I concur that their unique personalities play a large part in their lives, but I feel that family and society also contribute to the specific problems that the women acquire, struggle with, and overcome.

Rachel's primary "dragon" is that she has not allowed herself to mature. Helen Buss suggests that Rachel needs a "long overdue growth from maiden to woman" (1985 44). Like the "girlish" (22) bedroom she sleeps in, nothing has changed in her life for a very long time. She is not able to assert herself in any aspect of her life, nor is she convinced that she deserves to assert herself. She feels that her mother, May, "speaks [to her] as though [she] were about twelve" (63-4), and even worse, Rachel sees herself as a child. She puts her mother and Stacey on the same level when she says, "Mothers of the world, unite"(28), then proceeds to position herself with her nieces and nephews, "You have nothing to lose but your children" (28-9).

Stacey has moved past Rachel's stunted emotional maturation but has her own problems. I agree with Bailey's ("Identity"108) and Buss's (Mother and Daughter 45) opinions that Stacey's principal "dragon" is her lost Eros. Of

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course, these critics do not refer to the protagonist's problem as a "dragon." As the wife of Mac MacAindra and the mother of Katie, Ian, Duncan, and Jen, Stacey has misplaced her sexual self, while becoming a helpmate and a care giver. Katie's budding sexuality is a constant reminder to Stacey of the part of herself that she can no longer express. She questions, "What's left of me? Where have I gone?" (70).

Like Hagar before them, Rachel and Stacey share a problem with communication. Critics such as Mitzi Hamovitch, Jill Franks, and Howells study the difficulties with communication seen in Laurence's work. Hamovitch feels that the "double voices" in A Jest of God and The Fire-Dwellers are covert feminist messages (173) which is all the more reason to use a gynocentric approach to view these novels. This term "double voice" aptly describes the communication that we hear from these sisters. Their communication is largely internal and, when we do hear a voice that reaches externally, it is most often laboured and unsure. The communication "dragon" continues to plague the Manawaka women.

Using Pearson and Pope's model to study the quests of the Cameron sisters, I will begin with an examination of "the garden" that consists of their parents, May and Niall Cameron, and the society of Manawaka from the 1930s to the 1950s. We hear more about the senior Camerons in A Jest of God than we do in The Fire-Dwellers although both works describe them through present and past experiences of the sisters. In general, girls learn much about what is expected of them as females from their mothers and May has played a large part in the development of her daughters.

May believes that people must put on a good appearance and repress

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emotions or face censure. When a member of her church sings an off-key solo, May calls it a "disgrace" that should not be allowed (49). She would be "shocked to the core" if the minister were to show any religious zeal (4). May is critical of everything and everyone: "never tired of saying how others ought to be and never were" (F.D. 21). She is still "cute" (Jest 21) and slim and has the energy for weekly hairdos and bridge parties, but she plays her unhealthy heart as a trump to manipulate others. Margaret Atwood calls May a "mother who plays guilt like a violin . . ." (214). As Rachel says, May's "weapons are invisible and she would never admit even to carrying them, much less putting them to use" (Jest 46). Just the same, May's manipulations pass a fear of being judged on to her daughters.

May frowns upon any real truth in communication. Rachel has to pull the details of the Stewart girl's pregnancy out of her mother because "circumlocution is necessary for Mother" and May is too delicate to talk about things that she considers improper (F.D. 64). May only allows what she considers polite speech and teaches her daughters,"don't talk about it -[if] it isn't nice" (F.D. 155). Because May cannot tolerate directness, Stacey writes to her of the mundane. Stacey wonders "what would happen if just for once I put down what was really happening " ((F.D.138). Because of May, her daughters struggle to overcome this learned "dragon" in themselves.

The opinions of the community are paramount to May and she attempts to pass conformity on to her daughters. Both sisters know that their mother is prudish. May considers sex a bother and feels that the naked body "doesn't look very nice"(Jest 146). In her opinion, sex is a duty required of marriage and only acceptable within marriage. May shows horror and voices unkind

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sentiments about Cassie Stewart's out-of-wedlock pregnancy. Buss suggests, however, that we should not "blame the mother" for the problems that Rachel and Stacey acquire, because May is a victim of her own circumstances and is simply gaining whatever power she can in a "male-defined" society: "Because May has no real power over her world, she gains it through underground, manipulative devices" (Mothers and Daughter 33, 36). Still, as a role model, May ensures that Rachel and Stacey know that "nice girls don't."[16] This "don't" means "don't live life to its fullest because of fear of reprisal for outward shows of emotion," "don't speak truthfully about their thoughts," and "don't want and enjoy sex in or out of marriage."

As well as learning lessons from May, Rachel and Stacey also retain things that they learned from their father. Because he died fourteen years ago, we meet Niall Cameron through the memories of his daughters. A funeral director and an alcoholic, he avoided his family and life as much as possible. Rachel wonders "whether he possibly felt at ease with them, the unspeaking ones, and out of place in our house, things being what they were" (Jest 20), while Stacey remembers him as "capable only of dressing the dead in between bouts with his own special embalming fluid" (F.D. 11). Niall is tormented by horrors from the war (F. D.10) and is incapable of coping with life. He sought the "oblivion" of the dead (Jest 48). From him, the Cameron sisters learned to avoid directness in communication and in life. Because he lived a life that was as much dead as alive, they too accept positions in life that are less than complete. Foster Stovel accuses Niall of burdening his daughters with "a living death in the mausoleum of the Cameron Funeral Home . . ." (121). Rachel tolerates a life that is less than fully adult and Stacey accepts being a

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16 This is a common phrase from the 1950s.

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fragmented woman.

As well as learning "dragons" from their family, these sisters also have their problems reinforced by the society that was their youthful "garden." The Cameron sisters may be women of the 1960s but their role models for womanhood are of their mother's generation, forcing the younger women to grapple with an extremely restricted societal role for women. Howells suggests that the cultural and social inheritance seen in these sister novels makes a noted impact on Rachel and Stacey:

> Here female voices speak out of domestic spheres and nurturing roles, never openly dissenting from them any more than their mother had done, and indeed in their own lives confirming traditional cultural patterns. (94-5)

The parochialism of Manawaka society that is noted in The Stone Angel continues to confine its inhabitants even many years later. Atwood states that Rachel is the "epitome of what nice girls were once educated to be" (214), which is self-sacrificing in the extreme. Both girls are caught up in their society's concern for appearances which leads more to anxiety and hypocrisy than to truth. The societal "garden" is as damaging as the Cameron family "garden."

As adults, the Cameron sisters are ill at ease in their society because roles and expectations for women are on the cusp of change. As children and teenagers, they were restricted by their Scots Presbyterian upbringing but, as women, they see a sexual revolution at hand. The next generation of women are advocating free love. In 1990, Elizabeth Waterston calls the society in which the adult Cameron sisters live the "double-edged" and "troubling 1960s"

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(91, 85). She comments that North American society was "building freedom with the lingering hierarchic tradition. Betty Friedan's The Feminine Mystique caught the surge of 1960's feminism; [and] Laurence offered [us] a moving vision of the limits of liberation" (85). We see this in Rachel's discomfort with the made-up girls in the Regal Cafe who have their arms around boys (Jest 61) and Foster Stacey's awe at the "[l]anguid long-legged girls who speak a new tongue and make love when they feel like it, with whoever, and no regrets or recriminations" (F.D.70). Stovel says that the sisters each demonstrate "fractured psyche[s]" in this "fragmented" and "crazily complex culture"(121-5).

Before viewing their exits from these "gardens," it is important to see how debilitating the influences of the "dragons" are for the sisters. As adults they are seriously hampered by their acquired "dragons" and I examine the "fruit of the garden"[17] so the reader appreciates the difficulty of Rachel's and Stacey's quests. Both of the sisters show the effects of their upbringing before they "fall from innocence"[18] and heed the call to adventure. The communication difficulties of each woman are noted as well as proof of Rachel's immaturity and Stacey's loss of Eros.

Pratt et al. identify an older single woman such as Rachel, as the archetypal "odd-woman," not half of the more commonly seen couple (113). To the sensibilities of the 1990s, this idea from 1981, is out-dated and patriarchal. Pearson and Pope point out that in various pieces of literature, "[t]he aging, selfless virgin is rather condescendingly portrayed as a virtuous dupe. . ." (26). Laurence uses this image as she introduces us to the protagonist of A Jest of

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17 A term referring to proof in adulthood that the hero has a specific problem or "dragon."
18 term from Pearson and Pope referring to an event or events that bring about change in the hero's life.

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God. Interestingly, by the conclusion of the novel, the author revises the representation that she initially used. Like a child, living with her mother, Rachel's "dragons" are her immaturity as well as a problem with communication. As a teacher, Rachel is a professional that deserves respect but, because she does not insist on being treated as an adult, others manage her as if she is a child. At times, she even thinks of herself as a child, wondering if she has a "soft spot in [her] head" akin to the fontanelle of a baby (24). Like the skipping children at the beginning of the novel, Rachel jumps obediently to everyone else's tune. Only in her mind is she the "Spanish dancer [who longs to] get out of town" (Jest 7).

Most heroes become orphans of one fashion or another before they begin a quest. Because she does not yet assert herself as an adult, Rachel cannot come to terms with the thought of losing her remaining parent and living on her own. She worries that if she upsets her mother, May's heart will stop. So as not to risk change, she keeps her life as stagnant as her mother's; her routine is ever the same and she curtails her social life to wait on her mother. While complaining inwardly and flagellating herself for wanting to break out of this stifling routine, Rachel says, "I can't begrudge her. Anyone decent would be only too glad [to do things for their mother]" (21). Yet, she does resent this subservient position.

Rachel is not oblivious to her lack of maturity as she questions her life and her sanity. She wonders, "Am I unbalanced? Or only laughable? That's worse, much worse" (25). Seeing her former students mature into sexually confident beings, she feels mocked and rejected. Concerns about her health obsess her in the same hypochondriacal way that her mother uses to avoid life.

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She lies awake imagining a brain tumour and calms herself in the very tones that her mother uses (24). Her nights are "hell on wheels" as death beckons, but a full life seems unattainable (24) .

Rachel's poor communication is proven in her lies and her internal conversations. She finds herself in several difficult situations because she lies rather than find the courage to express her true feelings. She lies to Calla regarding her desire to go to a service at the Tabernacle (32) and then is forced to attend though she would rather "turn and run" (36). Her falsehoods with Calla become pitifully transparent and inhibit communication between them (52). Howells observes that Rachel's internal conversations contribute to her lack of communication with others:

> Isolated within her own mind and body, [Rachel] is most of the time estranged from other people and, more disturbingly, she is sometimes estranged from herself. . . . In her mind words separate themselves from meaning or at best exist in unstable relationships, so that language becomes the agent not of communication and self-expression but of alienation. (96-7)

Much like her father who retreated to the funeral home, and her mother who withdraws to a sickbed, Rachel takes refuge in her mind. Here she manufactures the kind of life that she desires, away from the censure of others, where she does not have to communicate truthfully or courageously.

Rachel's "dragons" also show in her profession. She is paranoid about her performance as a teacher (29) and she allows Willard to talk to her in a patronizing manner (31). During attempts to defend her disciplining of James, she stammers, "I just wondered - and I thought maybe I should - so I just, I

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mean, . . . [and she realizes she has] made it worse" (29). She disappoints herself because she never acts or speaks forcefully enough. When Calla, a colleague and an equal, calls her "child," she does not object to this adjective (32).

Stacey also shows proof of her "dragons" in adult life. Archetypally, married women are frequently seen in "enclosures" (Pratt et al. 45) and Laurence shackles Stacey with a wedding band. She thinks, "I don't get out enough. My boundaries are four walls" (69). As a wife and mother, Stacey MacAindra misplaces the Eros that had given such pleasure and definition to Stacey Cameron as a single woman. In separate examinations, Bailey and Buss point out that what Stacey seeks is an integration of her maternity and her sexuality.

> Laurence emphasises that [Stacey's] struggle . . . is to maintain the real and erotic part of her self that Manawaka society had tried so hard to destroy, but that is essential, according to psychologists, if a woman is to be able to value individual relationships and the fulfilment of personality, rather than simply subordinate personal identity to family and social norms. (Bailey 1990 113)

Stacey struggles to be what society expects a mother to be -- selfless. But, in the process, she worries that she has instead become a "monster"(20). Stacey says that her children "nourish [her] and yet they devour [her], too" (20). Much like Errour in Book One of The Faerie Queen, Stacey feels like Spenser's serpent that feeds its children with "poisonous dugs" (Spenser 132). In constantly giving to her family, she feels as if she is forfeiting a self that includes sexuality .

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In "The Hand that Rocks the Cradle," Coppelia Kahn endorses Adrienne Rich's assertion that maternal altruism is widely endorsed ;

> What Rich describes as maternal altruism, [Jean Baker] Miller elucidates as the principle on which the female ego, patterned by mothering, is built: selfhood achieved through serving others' needs and interests, as if women had none of their own. (Kahn 78)

Kahn, Rich, and Miller concur that this altruistic mothering is detrimental to women because it denies selfhood that is an inherent right for women. Knowing that the concept of the selfless mother is totally accepted by society makes it that much more difficult for Stacey to fight for anything personal.

Stacey internally fights against the "injustice" (15) that categorizes her not as a sexual individual but as the mother of four children and as Mac's wife. Her thirty-nine- year old looks bother her since she is sure others see her only as "this slightly too short and too amply rumped woman" (15) who never manages to keep up with the latest styles or fashion colours. Mentally she rails that "[u]nder this chapeau lurks a mermaid, a whore, a tigress" (15) yet, when Buckle's sexuality excites and frightens her, she handles him with her "good-wife-and-mother voice" (49). She feels that her maternal persona is exclusive and must obliterate her personal self.

Stacey's problem with communication is apparent in her dealings with her husband and her children. The rapport between her and Mac is every bit as strained as were the exchanges between May and Niall Cameron. Where Niall had used the mortuary to avoid communicating, Mac retreats to his study. On the surface, Stacey talks perfunctorily to her husband in monosyllables about the mundane world of house and children. In her mind she pleads, "Can't we

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ever say anything to one another to make up for the lies, the trivialities, the tiredness we never knew about until it had taken up permanent residence inside our arteries?" (25). Mac insists that their lack of communication "doesn't matter" (25) and "there isn't any use in talking" (58), but this void torments Stacey.

Stacey also feels inadequate when trying to communicate with her children. The most obvious metaphor in the novel for the communication problem shared by the MacAindras is Jen's "determin[ation] not to communicate" (9). This youngest child makes only unintelligible noises, much like the way Stacey feels she herself communicates. Katie tells her mother that she talks in "outdated slang" (48), so when adequate words do not come to her, Stacey pours another gin and tonic, retreats into her own mind, and crowns herself "Explainer of the Year" (47). Her sons hide their feelings from her and she does not have the power to break through to their young male thoughts, their "locked rooms" (198).

Even if she wants to communicate, it is not acceptable for Stacey to do so in public. When Mac tries to silence her with a warning not to argue with his employer, her concern about having her slip show in public (95) is representative of worrying that her true feelings will escape. Women's undergarments and thoughts must be kept private.

Having observed the "garden" and the "fruits of the garden" in the lives of Rachel and Stacey Cameron, we can see that these sisters are held captive by their problems. Seeing how debilitated the sisters are with their communication problems, Rachel's lack of maturity, and Stacey's loss of Eros, we now have a greater respect for the quests that the sisters are about to undertake to find

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wholeness. Having noted their confinements, we see that an attempt at freedom seems necessary just to save their lives. The anxieties that the sisters face cause each of them to think she may die of a brain tumour (Jest 24, F.D. 122). During their quests Rachel and Stacey both meet seducers and guides, hear calls to action, take a fall from innocence, and do battle with their "dragons" before they make the changes necessary for their own salvation.

Laurence begins A Jest of God with Rachel thinking longingly of childhood as she looks at life from a window -- a non participant in adulthood. Rachel comments throughout the novel about her great height (49), perhaps so that the author can contrast Rachel's immaturity with the image of an Amazon woman. The courageous and warlike Amazon with her sexual appetite is everything that Rachel is not. We simply cannot picture this "too quiet" (10) girl-woman as "handsome, . . . pretty / [or]. . . the queen of the golden city" (7). Even though the "garden" of her home and community are cloistering, Rachel hesitates to confront life and leave. Demetrakopoulos likens Rachel to Persephone who is forever the " 'puella' or woman fixated into the daughter role, an immature woman" (56).

Laurence provides her heroes with guides, who encourage forward movement in life, and captors, who hold them back. The author often complicates characters by giving them more than one role so that the hero must be very careful in deciphering mixed signals. Nick Kazlik appears as the person that effects the major change or "fall into life" (Pearson and Pope 142) for Rachel. The reader sees him as the catalyst that drags her into the world. As a green-world lover, he challenges her to break away from her mother's domination and accept his sexual advances. He is an example of an adult in

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charge of his own life. Still, through no fault of his own, the positive act of challenging Rachel becomes a negative one and Nick becomes not a saviour but a "seducer."

Pearson and Pope describe the role of "a seducer" in the hero's quest:

> A seducer . . . restricts the hero so that she cannot act independently to slay the dragon by her own hand, in her own way. In such cases the agent of the fall is a seducer -- that is, a mentor who serves initially to rescue the hero, but eventually threatens her with another form of entrapment. (143)

I maintain that Nick is not directly to blame for being a seducer. Rather, it is what he represents to Rachel -- a husband to solve her problems -- that is the seduction. She sees him as a rescuer from her sexual immaturity and her cloistered life but, because she wants to abdicate personal responsibility for change, this is seduction and not merely guidance. He never promises permanency therefore, Rachel manufactures her own seducer.

Thoughts of Nick take over Rachel's mind, bringing along with them visions of rebirth. Submerged in cleansing bath water, she dreams of her green-world lover among the spruce trees of Galloping Mountain (144). Without him, her body shows no sign of life.

> The water is clouded with soap, and through the murkiness my flesh does have a drowned look, too pale, lethargic, drifting, as though I could nevermore rise and act. . . . Naked, I am so bone-thin and long, my legs placed maidenly together and my arms out-dangling. Underwater, this cross of bones looks weird, devalued into freakishness. My pelvic bones are too narrow, too narrow for

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anything. (145)

While submersed in the baptismal water, a telephone call from Nick brings Rachel's barely alive body back to life. She longs for life, but at this point, life means Nick. He attempts to warn her against relying on him: "I'm not God. I can't solve anything"(154). Yet, she obsessively talks to him in her mind and fabricates him as her saviour. As Pearson and Pope point out, "longing for security and ease becomes itself a powerful dragon" for the hero (143).

Because Rachel's first sexual encounter with Nick comes in the centre of the novel, the reader sees it as a significant turning point in her life. Pratt et al. feel that "Eros is one of the primal forces leading the personality through growth toward maturity" (74). The river in a green-world setting is appropriate for an archetypal transition. Nick even calls the river "neutral territory" (92). All of her sexual adventures with Nick are away from town in a natural setting. After they have sex, an act that affirms life, she encounters her mother and thinks to herself, "There are three worlds and I'm in the middle one, and this seems now to be a weak area between millstones" (100). Rachel equates Nick with life and her mother with "the Angel of Death" (100). Due to the influence of her parents she has always sensed that both life and death pose threats but she now understands that her life in limbo is just as perilous. Rachel knows that her life must change but wishes for assistance along her journey.

Rachel does learn useful lessons from Nick, despite this manufactured status as seducer. He has changed since they were children: he no longer lives with his parents, he speaks his mind, he makes decisions that are in his best interest, and he is a sexually active adult. He strives to avoid those of his father's traits that he sees are destructive; he refuses his father's suggestion that

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a man should be saving money for his own funeral (76). A survivor of childhood polio, Nick obviously wishes to feel joy rather than anticipate death. He shares his history and his feelings with Rachel and he encourages her to communicate. He also introduces her to her body in a way she "never knew" (110). Because of Nick, Rachel initiates steps towards independence -- she dates him despite her mother's fussing. She will find his lessons valuable on her own quest.

Another character that is initially seen as a guide but then as a seducer is Rachel's friend and fellow teacher, Calla. She is a good example of a single woman living life maturely and contentedly. Unlike Rachel, her life is not static. She changes her apartment and seeks involvement with friends and groups. Keeping birds is her way of being responsible for other living things. She seeks depth in her life at the Tabernacle and, as we hear through her own words, she is a survivor (205). She is an important character in that she is the only person that Rachel confides in. Unlike her namesake, the lily -- a flower linked with death -- Calla shows Rachel how to live life more fully.

These positive things aside, Calla wishes to dominate Rachel. In calling her "child"(15,182) and "honey" (181), Calla does not encourage Rachel to mature any more than May does. Calla tries to take charge with solutions for Rachel's possible pregnancy because she desires Rachel's dependency. Calla acknowledges that she has "a collection of motives like a kaleidoscope" (182). She loves Rachel and feels that this "child" needs looking after.

At the same time as Rachel fights against Calla's seduction, she has her first call to make a change in her life. Laurence illustrates the importance of Rachel's visit to the Tabernacle of the Risen and Reborn by means of considerable symbolism. With the understanding of archetypal meanings of

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light and dark, as well as the regenerative power of water and religion, the reader sees the great potential for Rachel's rebirth. Through the danger of darkness, clad in the pure white of a sacrificial virgin, Rachel crosses rain swept River Street to this holy place (35). Images of peace associated with "paradise" and the saving blood of Christ surround her (35), yet initially, she remains as "locked and empty" as the stores she passes to come here (35). This "death" is a necessary preparation for rebirth.

Rachel's mental processes are barraged with images and promises of a new life that she is not prepared for: "Seek and ye shall find . . . For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom -- to another the word of knowledge. . ." (38-9). At the same time, images of apocalyptic death fill her mind (38). Her subconscious takes over and allows freedom to her suppressed emotions and voice. Rachel experiences glossalalia that she describes as "the fear, the breaking, the release, the grieving" (43). Others in this church also "speak in tongues" and Calla believes this phenomenon is a gift of the spirit of God (33). Rachel's wish for change has broken through in this undiscernable language, but it is not a spiritual renewal that she desires. She refuses religious awakening in the same way that she runs from an offer of love from Calla. However, she does learn from these experiences and they prepare her to begin her journey at a later time.

Another call to leave the "garden" comes when Rachel believes that she is pregnant. She feels abandoned by Nick and desperate. (Pearson and Pope note that pregnancy is frequently seen as a "punishment" for female sexuality (31)). Rachel, again clad in her white raincoat, goes to the Parthenon Cafe to contemplate her situation -- away from her mother's hovering presence. Named

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after an Athenian temple, this would have been a refuge where people of another time and place went for solace. Now the cafe is filled with "assured" (169) young people that contrast her own uncertainties about sexuality and accentuate her feelings of inadequacy in an adult world. She believes that if she were to have a child out of marriage, her mother would "mourn . . . [a]s though it were a death" (167) and she struggles with opinions that are in opposition to her own desires. Close by, in the Queen Victoria Hotel, which bears the name of a matriarch who stood for moral respectability, three ancient men sit like magistrates in the lobby. Though she is not convinced of this, the fact that their eyes are closed (169-71) is, no doubt, an indication that society is not as watchful or as judgmental as Rachel believes it is. She feels judged and condemned.

Pearson and Pope address the effects on a woman who falls from innocence as Rachel has done:

> In most cases, the protagonist's inability to attain the goal of total purity and selfless innocence, coupled with her ongoing hatred for the persistent imperfect self, leads her to settle for self-denial, suffering, or even self-destruction as an alternative. (28-9)

Leaving this public place, Rachel goes home still uncertain of what she will do. As is common with a trapped hero, she fears that she is mad -- "[c]razy as a loon" (174) -- and attempts suicide with both of the "poisons" that her parents have used to avoid life -- May's barbiturates and Niall's alcohol. She slips into an unconscious state, the realm where true feelings are not censored by societal constraints. Instinctively, she has not swallowed all of the death pills.

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She discards the rest of the barbiturates on a place belonging to the dead -- the mortuary lawn. With a sense of "lightness," she remembers the "one clear and simple thought" that saved her -- death is permanent (176-7). This fall from innocence gives Rachel the courage to enter adulthood.

Rachel makes the decision to live and to have the child. After a visit with Calla, Rachel feels that she is ready to make her own decisions and knows she is going to be "all right" (182). We have proof that she makes up her mind to put her own desires first because she thinks, "My mother's tricky heart will just have to take its own chances" (183). These are her first selfish acts, her first mature acts. She insists, "it's my child, mine. And so I will have it. I will have it because I want it" (177).

In the true heroic tradition, Rachel must become an orphan before she leaves the "garden." As May is both a parent and a captor, there must be a change in their relationship. May guilts Rachel into passive obedience and does not allow her to mature; she encourages Rachel to feel weak and incapable of action. May, like most captors, fights to maintain the status quo when Rachel tells her they are moving. For this battle the older woman brings out all the ammunition that has previously worked for her: she speaks to Rachel as if she were a child, she uses demeaning words to crush her determination, and she reminds her daughter who is the parent. May also uses her frail health as a weapon because she knows that Rachel fears her death. To survive, Rachel effectively becomes an orphan when she rejects May as the mother.

Pratt et al. tell us that it is also common for the hero to confront absent parental figures "in the memory" (140). Rachel descends to the underworld of the Japonica Funeral Chapel to confront memories of her father. Hector Jonas,

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the present mortician, becomes a guide that helps Rachel understand her dead father and prepare to leave his house. As a child she was not allowed in the mortuary and therefore fears the death with which Niall and Hector work as a matter of course. Hector is dwarf-like with owlish eyes (126) -- the figure of the wise-fool. He puts death into terms that she no longer fears. He states pragmatically, "'It happens'" (127). She surprises herself as she relaxes: "I'm laughing more than seems decent here in this place and yet I know it's absurd to hold back, as though there were anything hushed or mysterious here" (129). If she is to come to adulthood, Rachel must face death. With Hector as a guide and a surrogate father, she laughs in its face.

Rachel searches for truths and Hector gives her some needed lessons about life. With Hector, she has success when she uses her voice. She demands, "Let me come in" (125) and she is allowed in. She stops apologizing for herself and simply thanks Hector for listening to her (134). He tells her that Niall had chosen the kind of existence he wanted: "If [he] had wanted otherwise, it would have been *otherwise*" (131). Because of these lessons, she questions whether she has ever tried to change her life and realizes that living a full adult life is a choice. Her voice has served her well and when she ascends from this underworld visit she pictures herself parenting her mother. She is now prepared to become an adult.

Like Rachel in A Jest of God, Stacey experiences guides, seducers, and calls to action during her quest in The Fire-Dwellers. While she shares a communication "dragon" with the other Manawaka women, her other "dragon" is uniquely her own. She grieves the loss of an erotic self that used to give her a joy for life. Stacey feels that her maternal self has taken over her erotic self and

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left her divided and confined in domesticity. As mentioned, married women in literature are frequently seen in archetypal enclosures. Stacey must escape from the confines of societal expectations of mothers before she can quest to find an effective form of communication and her depleted Eros.

Stacey originally had a call to action and left her first "garden" when she left Manawaka for Winnipeg before the present novel begins. Through her memories we note that she had an effective voice and positive sexual self-image before marriage. As a child, she had a strong sense of a personal identity as proven when she defended her name to a new minister who teased her about it (90). She fought to maintain control over her sexuality, even while May disapproved of her going to dances. She assertively told May, "It's a dance, Mother, for heaven's sake, not an orgy" (46), but, in fact, for a fourteen year old girl it was an orgy of emotion. She had control over her voice and her sexuality. The airman from Montreal was a green-world lover who affirmed her sexuality on a "leaf-blanketed hillside" at Diamond Lake (71). Stacey, fallen from innocence, left the "garden" to seek adventure.

In Winnipeg she escaped the somewhat frightening and eccentric Janus Uranus, an employer with the name of the two-faced god, only to have her freedom curtailed. Mac, her husband-to-be, rescued her and they became green-world lovers at Timber Lake, surrounded by "[j]ungles of blackberry bushes and salmonberry" (37). Like a heroine in a romance novel, Stacey was captivated by his handsome looks and "hopeful confident" (8) personality. Rather than dealing with her fear of Mr. Uranus, she let Mac "slay this dragon." At age twenty-three, her first quest for freedom ended in the enclosure of marriage with Stacey losing the strong voice and the Eros that she cultivated as

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a girl.

Having been married for sixteen years in the present narrative, Stacey's "dragons" have now reached a critical point. There are a number of events and thoughts that precipitate Stacey's second call to leave the "garden," this time, her matrimonial "garden." Because her "dragons" are communication problems and the loss of her erotic self to her maternal self, I will limit this section to examples that refer specifically to these problems. Ironically, Stacey says, "I've got everything I always wanted" (70), yet she feels the need to escape from her roles as mother and wife.

Concern about her lack of communication with Mac is one issue that initiates Stacey's call to action. She fears that her mind is "full of trivialities" (32) and that she bores Mac. She puts this down as one reason that they do not talk anymore. She allows Mac to silence her by saying there is "no use in talking" (105). He dismisses her intelligence and mothering practices by saying that she is ruining the boys. Stacey takes the burden of their failing communication largely on herself.

Grieving her lost Eros is another matter that causes Stacey to heed the call for change. Thoughts about her former erotic self do battle with her presently diminished sexual image. As an adult she looks back longingly to "making spend-thrift love in the days when flesh and love were indestructible" (70-1). She feels dowdy and unable to compete with younger women that she sees as more attractive than her. She mocks herself in words that give her a fancifully exalted status then dash her back to what she truly believes:

> Pour on the Chanel Number Five. . . . Mac and Buckle will spring to their feet. *Gad!* they will exclaim. *Who is this apparition of delight?*

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> *Who is this refugee queen from The Perfumed Garden?* In a pig's eye, they will. (56)

She desires sex with a man other than Mac but when she fantasizes about Buckle she questions her sanity. The prudery she learned from her mother is taking over Stacey's sexuality.

Her inability to communicate and her loss of Eros manifest themselves in Stacey's sense of entrapment within her marriage. She muses, "I'd like to be on the road. Not for anything but just to be going somewhere" (22). Stacey had pictured open communication and fulfilled sexuality when she married, but instead finds herself in a relationship that lacks candour and erotic stimulation. At one point Stacey worries that Duncan will be "trapped . . . alone" in a nightmare (28). The reader might also be concerned that Stacey is caught and solitary in a dream gone bad.

In a chapter entitled "Novels of Marriage," Pratt et al. comment that, because of the enclosing nature of marriage it is extremely difficult for married female heroes to achieve true authenticity. Their freedom is limited, their health fails, and their personalities are dwarfed (46-7).

> Each attribute of authenticity meets with its opposite: freedom to come and go is abrogated; early ideal lovers are banished, to be replaced by a husband who resembles the Gothic villain; erotic freedom is severely limited; intelligence becomes a curse, and, correspondingly, too much consciousness of one's situation leads to punishment or madness. (45)

These confinements all fit Stacey's domestic situation. Child care and Mac's needs dominate her time. Mac is no longer a considerate lover and, although

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their home is not a dungeoned castle. Mac is guilty of cruelty in his words and actions towards his wife. Stacey is dissatisfied with her sexual relation with her husband but feels guilty fantasizing about other men. She is frustrated by the courses she takes because they do not consider the real lives of women; she mentally calls the professor of Ancient Greek Drama a "[y]oung twerp" when he does not understand that killing a child is upsetting to her (33). As her internal monologues demonstrate, she is aware of her feelings of confinement and concerned about her sanity. It is truly difficult for anyone to be self-determined while dealing with this barrage of psychological cramping.

Having seen the events and thoughts that accentuate Stacey's "dragons" and precipitate her call to action and leave the matrimonial "garden," we must recognize the people in her life who also play a part in her actions. The men that influence her are Mac, Buckle Fennick, and Luke Ventura, while Mrs. Fennick, Tess Fogler, and Bertha Garvey are her female models. Looking at the lives of others gives Stacey insight into her own problems.

Stacey thought that Mac would continue as a "green-world lover" after they were married. Pearson and Pope comment,

> From a very young age, the female protagonist hears fairy tales like Sleeping Beauty and Snow White, which promise that she will be awakened by the kiss of a handsome prince. He offers her the green world of vitality, love, and prosperity. (33)

At the beginning of their relationship Stacey liked "everything about [Mac]"(38) and saw him as "Agamemmnon king of men" (8). As a husband, though, Mac occasionally becomes her rapist. Sometimes, during sex, he controls and physically hurts her.

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Pratt et al. discuss archetypal rape as an "event . . . that involves the violation of the self in its psychological and physical integrity" (24). Its purpose is to discourage Eros in the woman (Pratt et al. 24). Laurence indicates that Mac uses unacceptable force with his wife and makes these scenes as uncomfortable for the reader as they must be for Stacey. He is violent and threatening when he is angry. He silences her and insists that he is right and she is wrong. After a disagreement about Duncan, Mac nearly strangles her in bed.

> When he is inside her, he puts his hands on her neck, as he sometimes does unpredictably. He presses down deeply on her collarbone.
>
> Mac please .
>
> That can't hurt you not that much that's not much Say it doesn't hurt.
>
> It doesn't hurt.
>
> He comes, then, and goes to sleep. (30)

Again, when Mac believes that Stacey has had sex with Buckle, he strangles her during intercourse. He asserts his ownership over her and says, "I won't have anybody else touching you see" (149) and then "makes hate with her" (150). Mac also threatens Stacey in public. When she tells a lusty joke at an office gathering, Mac presses her elbow "hard enough to bruise" (103). She believes he might actually "throttle" (106) her someday.

Stacey is expected to understand that she must live within the patriarchal rules for female sexuality. She is Mac's property and she must not speak of sex with other men or have sex with anyone but her husband, or the

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consequences will be harmful to her. Buckle's sexual denigration of Stacey (147) and the men at Thor's party who taunt her with sexual innuendo and unwanted touching (101) add to this impression that sexuality is dangerous for females. Male power has the intent and the ability to silence women and control them within the enclosure of marriage. Pratt et al. comment that "when women heroes do seek erotic freedom, which we define simply as the right to make love when and with whom they wish, they meet all the opposition of the patriarchy" (24).

Stacey gets another lesson that female promiscuity is reason for punishment . Formerly a prostitute, Buckle's mother is now blind and grotesquely obese, reminiscent of Spenser's "loathsome Gluttony/ [a]Deformed creature. . ." drinking herself into mental oblivion every day. Her tea pot is Gluttony's "bouzing can" and both Mrs. Fennick and Gluttony are "unfit . . . for any worldly thing/ And eke unhable once to stirre or go" (The Faerie Queene I.4.181-207) Buckle says "She's away to hell and gone" (147). This life style is suicidal if not technically insane. Stacey must guard against sexual thoughts and actions if she is to avoid such mental derangement.

Archetypally, images of rape trauma and enclosure induce mental escapes to nature as well as "madness and suicide" (Pratt et al. 29). There are indications of all of these reactions in Stacey. Within the confinement and chaos of her home, she dreams of freedom and serenity.

> Sometimes I look through the living-room window at the snow mountains, far aff, and I wish I could go there, just for a while, with no one else around and hardly any sounds at all, the wind muttering, maybe, and the snow in weird sculptures and caverns,

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quiet. (14)

Jake Fogler tells her these thoughts are unhealthy: "So now [she says] I don't think I've got the right to think about the mountains" (14). Stacey questions her sanity calling herself a "lunatic" (15) and knowing that if she tries to explain herself to others she would "be put in a mental ward" (15). She refers to her life as "madness" (70) and thinks, "You're losing your mind, Stacey girl" (77).

As well as risking derangement from rape trauma, Stacey also learns the mental peril of matrimonial enclosure from her neighbours. With her "high-pitched girl-voice" (169), Tess Fogler is completely dominated by her husband's dictates. She says that she is happiest when she is "on the go," but she has nothing meaningful to do (202). Tess spends her time shopping and staying "beautiful" for Jake. He reciprocates by teasing her about a lack of intelligence and by avoiding her. Rather than demanding a mature existence for herself, she attempts suicide and exchanges her existing enclosure for a mental institution. Similarly, Bertha Garvey's enclosure is confining as she endures her husband's verbal abuse just as her mother had accepted her husband's domination. Because of her father's control, Bertha did not receive an adequate education and suffers because of it. Tears (79) and food (249) are hopefully enough for Bertha who tells Julian that she is "too stubborn to die yet for awhile" (250).

Stacey is haunted with concerns of madness, and these worries are reified by thoughts that her life is passing very quickly. Death seems much too close as she worries that she has a brain tumour. She wonders if her father had ever truly lived before he died and ruminates that "[s]omething should happen before it's too late. . . . [She says] Well, c'mon, Stacey, it's getting late"(120).

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Having noted the acts, people, and thoughts that precipitate Stacey's need to leave her married "garden," we realize how terrifying the flight from this enclosure is for her, and yet, how completely necessary. Having been reassured that she is not ill, Stacey takes some personal time away from her family and celebrates her life. Dressed in a sensual outfit, she descends to the basement with a bottle of gin, and the assertion that she is "Stacey Cameron and [she] still love[s] to dance" (124). This grotto suggests nature with its "magic trees, trees of life flowering unexpectedly into azure birds, green unlikely leaves" (124). Here she loses track of time and enters a state of altered consciousness. The music takes Stacey back to her youth as it "crests, subsides, crests again, blue-green sound, saltwater with the incoming tide . . ." (125). This water imagery indicates the rebirth of Stacey's sexual self.

This renewal allows Stacey to leave the enclosure of her marriage and motherhood to explore the erotic part of herself. Her first attempt at freedom with Buckle is aborted. Already in the description of the setting, Laurence intimates that the hero will not find enlightenment with this encounter. The apartment requires Stacey to go up stairs, mocking the archetypal heavenly ascent because both the circumstances and the environment are dirty and unnatural. Garish colours and garbage jar the sensibilities. This scene is presided over by a symbol of female promiscuity in the grotesque shape of Buckle's unseeing mother. Stacey is prepared to have sex with Buckle but his unwillingness to share himself intrudes. Lyall H. Powers says that this truck driver "asserts his masculine dominance"(30) on the road and also in bed. He does not let women touch him as he believes that by "having" his penis, they will restrict his freedom. Stacey descends from the apartment feeling only fear

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and revulsion.

Stacey's second attempt at freedom is more successful. This time Laurence has the hero flee the "eternal flames" (154) of the city and seek nature and the sea for her adventure. Dressed in the green of the forest, Stacey finds the beach through a dark symbolic birth canal, a "muddy trail, overhung with grass" (157). Barking dogs, like Cerberus guarding the gates of the underworld, frighten her. She is fortified with Scotch from her father's flask; cigarettes and alcohol are her communion. Here, by the archetypal sea -- the symbol of the unconscious, the symbol of death and rebirth, and, the symbol of the mother of all life (Guerin et al. 150) -- Luke Ventura, a fisherman and a redeemer figure, symbolically rescues her.

As a green-world guide, Luke, whose surname indicates adventure, is unshaven and clothed in symbols of nature. He wears a sweater of "thick wool with Haida . . . motifs of outspread eagle wings and bear masks" (162). Pearson and Pope discuss how a character such as Luke is the impetus that the hero needs to change.

> Because the quest appears to be so terrifying and uncertain, at least one key factor may distinguish the successful hero from the confused victim: a single voice . . . telling her that she is worthwhile, that she has a right to happiness and fulfilment, and that she has the ability to find it. This voice parallels the call to adventure and the intervention of supernatural aid that informs the classical hero's departure on the quest. (83)

Luke does all the right things to let Stacey know she has the power to tackle her "dragons" herself. Powers notes that "[h]e leads her to confront herself and the

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nature of her fears and thus to her self-acceptance" (31). He begins by talking openly to her and encouraging her to communicate freely with him. He tells her she does not need to be "sorry" (165) for showing her emotions and assures her that she "is not alone" (165). Although he calls her "baby" (165), which normally is an insult for a woman, it is what she needs at this moment -- not to be "the mother." Bailey sees Luke as Stacey's animus and points out that, "Laurence often dramatises her women's inner truths through projection in specific male characters" ("Identity" 116).

With her second visit to Luke, Stacey becomes actively involved in fighting her own "dragons" when she finds a way to escape her confinement to see him. Again, she talks freely about things that she does not share with anyone else: her worries for her children, her poor communication with Mac, and her own insecurities. He affirms that she is a sexually desirable woman and lets her know that her body is acceptable to him (187). Luke provides Stacey with both forms of intercourse that she requires; he offers her a way out of her enclosure with an offer to stay with him and travel. His tale of crossing the Skeena River with Charon navigating the ferry boat is a lesson not to become one of the "nominally living" (208) like her father and mother. She has to make changes if she is to find a recommitment to life.

Stacey experiences two orgasms with Luke. As it is common for heroes to make momentous decisions during times of altered consciousness, it is conceivable that these *petites mortes* could affect Stacey enough that she could leave her entrapment. In "The Rising of the Moon," Frye tells us that "a perfect human harmony could . . . be symbolized by perfect sexual intercourse . . . a union of this kind would restore [woman and] man to the unfallen world"

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(257). Stacey cannot communicate with her husband and does not feel like an erotic being with him. She struggles with thoughts of death and the "sound barrier" (203) that she abhors within her family. Luke offers her freedom from these "dragons" but accepts her refusal to travel with him. He gives her one more clue as to where her salvation lies when he says, "Ladybird, ladybird, / Fly away home; /Your house is on fire,/ Your children are gone" (209). With this reminder of potential danger to her family she realizes that they mean more to her than she had understood. She knows she must find a way to work within her marriage and keep her family.

Two traumatic events act as catalysts to improve communication between Stacey and Mac. With Buckle's death, Mac softens and shares his feelings with Stacey. Then, after a terrifyingly close brush with Duncan's life, Stacey sees that, like the child's second chance, her marriage has the opportunity for a rebirth. Mac shows he cares about her when he asks about her father's gun and "[s]he finds it neither easier nor more difficult to explain now than she did when she said the same thing to Luke" (279). She comes to know that her husband's nonverbal nature is not meant to shut her out. He shares his anger and grief with her about his job and Buckle. She and Mac make love as friends again, "gently, as though consoling one another for everything that neither of them can help or alter" (279).

Pratt et al. tell us that women protagonists seek change at several periods of their lives: "adolescence is not the only period of development in the lives of women heroes . . ." (17-8). Rachel and Stacey hear their calls to leave the "garden" in middle age. These same critics also note that, "[i]n the simplest sense, the hero recognizes, sometimes in a blinding flash and other times as

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the result of a gradual process, that things-as-they-are are not inevitable" (79). We have viewed their separate falls from innocence, and now we must see if they have, in fact, successfully slain their "dragons," if they understand that change is possible. Because their current quests are complete before they turn forty, these sisters will have sufficient time to claim their treasure.

To a certain extent, Laurence rejects the "odd-woman" archetype in the growth that she gives Rachel. I believe she wishes to challenge societal ideas that marriage is the only fulfilling role for a woman. As we will see in chapter three, she also does this for Morag. Rachel finds her voice during her quest. When she thinks that she is pregnant, she feels that her child will "have a voice" (169) if she gives it life. She does not have a child but I believe that she uses this heretofore unheard voice herself. Her communication seeks as much truth as is possible within delicate human relations. She talks calmly to her mother, her colleagues, and, through Hector, to her father . She continues to give all of them what they need, but the difference is, she also takes what she needs.

Rachel begins her journey as a child but completes it as an adult. May says to her, "Rachel, you're not yourself" (Jest 199). Atwood states that, this character, "having realized the childishness of her own mother . . . tak[es] her true place in time. . ." (215). Interestingly, the culmination of her inward journey is the beginning of an external one. Rachel is relocating with her mother to Vancouver. She faces the future realistically, knowing that "anything may happen. Nothing may happen. . . . I will be different. I will remain the same" (208-9). She is now an adult, ready for "change" and "evolution" (208). She is prepared to be the mother in her relationship with May and an aunt to Stacey's children. Rachel is no longer an "odd-woman" but a fully functioning part of "the

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new-family." Her reward is a heightened sense of wholeness and hope.

The treasure that Stacey claims is similarly an integrated self with both herself and her family as benefactors. Because her Erotic self has been accepted and nurtured, Stacey is now willing to "mutate into a matriarch" (281) even if she cannot quite manage to be "a great courtesan" (281). I feel that Stacey surpasses the archetypal enclosure of marriage and ends on a more or less equal level with her husband. She thinks, "I was wrong to think of the trap as the four walls. It's the world" (276). As well as fighting for her own wholeness, she also realizes that Mac does not find his roles as father and husband any easier than she finds her roles.

As a symbol that the communication in the MacAindra family is going to improve, Jen finally utters her first words: "Want tea, Mum?" (273). When Stacey and Katie are able to talk about the difficult subject of drugs, the reader senses a more open communication between them (274). There is also hope that Duncan and Ian will communicate better with the family because of the near drowning of the younger brother and the responsible actions of the older one. They have both connected more closely with Mac and this is something they had lacked. Stacey uses her voice to give Mac's father, Matthew, a gift when she calls him "Dad" (256). Stacey tells Mac that she wants more communication between them but also accepts that there is more to communication than talking.

By the end of The Fire-Dwellers, Stacey is able to take Matthew into their home as another dependent and she knows she can cope with helping Rachel look after May when they arrive from Manawaka. Heidrick notes that "[i]n the opening scene of the novel, Stacey's bedroom pictures of her wedding and

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children are indicative of how she sees herself in terms of professional identity and precisely what identity she explores and questions throughout the rest of the book" (125). The novel also ends with Stacey in her bedroom thinking about her family. Now, she feels, "[t]emporarily, they are all more or less okay" (281) and this means that she is also all right. At the end of her heroic quest her "new family" has expanded and Stacey Cameron MacAindra is prepared to deal with it because she is no longer a fragmented woman.

Several critics comment on the success or lack thereof of Stacey's personal development in the novel. Demetrakopoulos feels that Stacey "has the hardest job of self-actualization of all of Laurence's women. The constant distractions and interruptions that a house wife lives with make it easy for her to fall into a peculiar kind of sin . . . [due basically to] under-development or negation of the self" (49). While I agree that Stacey has a most difficult task, I feel she does succeed in slaying her "dragons." Bailey feels that The Fire-Dwellers "does not record the process whereby Stacey has come to the point of individuation, Jung's term for the wholeness of the integrated self" though she does call Stacey, "a woman of remarkable strength" ("Identity" 109, 116). Still, when her growth is viewed as a quest by a hero, Stacey clearly makes satisfactory progress. Pratt et al. maintain that, "[a]lthouth many novels depict wives as debilitated or insane, a few suggest that men and women can transcend gender norms to create authenticity within marriage" (41). I believe that, after her quest, Stacey has reached this higher plateau. She attempts to redefine the example of wife and mother that she sees around her, and, as she is not satisfied with the status quo, she seeks a sexual and maternal integration within herself. She also learns to appreciate the type of communication that is a

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part of her family. As Sylvia Fraser says, "Stacey discovers the strength to rededicate herself more courageously to life" (286).

Laurence has Rachel and Stacey complete successful archetypal quests and she also presents both sisters as "heroes" within a feminist definition. Even thirty years after the publication of A Jest of God and The Fire-Dwellers, the opportunity is there for readers to learn from the struggles, the lives, and the wisdom of these characters. As "heroes," they "share our conflicts and struggles . . . [and] help . . . by teaching . . . " (Fisher 189). As humans, we learn values and patterns of behaviour from our families and our society. As adults we often have to reconcile these learned behaviours with a changing set of values just as the Cameron sisters do. When viewing the growth processes of the "heroes" in these novels, the reader has a strong sense of sharing and understanding the problems of these women.

Rachel teaches us to assert ourselves as adults. She shows us that if people allow the fear of adulthood to delay their journey through life, they never reap the benefits of maturity which include some measure of autonomy. Rachel initially attributes her stagnation to not being "ruthless" enough (18), but we learn through her that people can have compassion for others and succeed at their own goals as well. She also demonstrates that speaking up for oneself is the first step toward maturing. She teaches us acceptance when she admits that her future life may not be so different than life in Manawaka. Most importantly, she shows that self-affirmation brings joy. At the end of the novel Rachel is much more carefree than the anxious woman we saw a the beginning. She says, "Sometimes I will feel light-hearted, sometimes light-headed. I may sing aloud, even in the dark. I will ask myself if I am going mad,

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but if I do, I won't know it" (209). She exhibits the courage and humour that we all require to get through life.

Stacey teaches us that to allow everyone else's needs, desires, or whims to supersede one's own is to negate one's own humanity. Stacey moves past Bertha and Tess and unlocks the doors that are confining her. We see that Stacey accepts the limitations of her life but does not let them imprison her. Like her, we realize that we can continue dancing in our minds as long as we wish to. We watch as Stacey finds a voice -- or some form of communication -- that works for her. Her attempt at honesty with her family is most admirable considering her upbringing. The reader can see her achievements as inspiration for their own circumstances. Her understanding that there is more than one way to effect intercourse is further explored in The Diviners, as the following chapter will reveal. Through Stacey, we gain understanding into the complex question of human exchange.

In reading A Jest of God and The Fire-Dwellers as "sister novels," the reader also learns lessons from the "heroes." Rachel sees her sister as "decisive" (Jest 17), "outspoken" (Jest 27), and "positive she understands everything" (28). In Stacey's opinion, none of this is true. Similarly, at the beginning of The Fire-Dwellers, Stacey thinks that Rachel was "always so clever" (12), yet we know that Rachel feels inept at most everything. By the end of her quest, Stacey has perhaps learned that we can never be sure what it feels like to be another person or to understand another's problems completely because she says, "At least my mother had the consolation of believing herself to be unquestionably right about everything. Or so I've always thought. Maybe she didn't" (F.D. 275). In viewing the novels together, we learn about differing

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perspectives and judging others.

When discussing her sister novels, Laurence writes, "Optimism in this world seems impossible to me. But in each novel there is some hope, and that is a different thing entirely" (qtd. in Foster Stovel 136-7). I feel that this is the main lesson that the reader can take from Rachel and Stacey -- that there is always a way to make change in one's life. Change brings hope for the betterment of life.

As archetypal heroes who "slay their dragons," plus feminist heroes who teach us valuable lessons, the Cameron sisters are heroes twice over. The critics who find Rachel and Stacey only partially triumphant in their achievements need only view these women as questers and role models to see their true success. Rachel matures to full adult status to "slay her dragon" while Stacey finds a way to blend Eros and maternity. Both sisters prevail in doing battle with their communication "dragons" and consequently find powerful enough voices to effect change in their lives.

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Chapter 3

Morag - The Hero With a Vocation

Morag Gunn is a questing hero just as the three Manawaka women before her have been and the epic nature of The Diviners heightens the awareness of this. By calling the epic tradition to mind, Laurence expects the reader to see the protagonist as a hero. Unlike Alexander Pope's The Rape of the Lock, where a female hero is used to parody epic convention, Morag is a hero who honourably does battle throughout her forty-seven years. She hears calls to leave the "garden," encounters a seducer, is assisted by guides, takes voyages to the underworld, has green-wood lovers, and slays her "dragons." Such conventions of the mythic quest deem her an archetypal hero. Like Hagar, Rachel, and Stacey, Morag also fits a feminist idea of a hero. She is a role model that teaches her readers to fight for their right to a career, as well as be wives and mothers.

In The Manawaka World of Margaret Laurence, Clara Thomas says that "the five parts [of this novel] form a structure that is epic in both its intention and its techniques " (132). While I do not dispute that the epic format provides structure to the work, I assert that the epic nature of The Diviners is mainly a call to acknowledge the heroic qualities of the protagonist. I feel that the heroism seen in epic characters such as Piper and Morag Gunn, in Christie's tales, and Louis Riel and Rider Tonnerre, in Jules' tales, has a dual purpose: it gives strength to Morag on a personal level and it insists that we compare her accomplishments with the other heroes and find them all valorous.

To prove that Laurence uses the epic to emphasize heroes, and especially Morag as hero, I wish to reiterate a point from the introduction.

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Because of the adventure fiction that Laurence read as a child, she imagined herself a hero "doing deeds of bravery." She also comments "what a pity that the girls of my generation had so few women role models in fiction who were bold and daring in life and work" (Dance 64). As a mature author, Laurence puts these ideas together when the tales from Christie and Jules furnish Morag with examples of bravery, mostly on the part of males, that give her personal courage in her life. Morag, the writer, then uses this learned courage in her stories of heroism. As a child, she produces female characters who have their "head fastened on right" (11) and who have power, strength, and conviction (42). Later, in her novels, Morag also constructs females who struggle through their problems. Like Morag, and true to her own wishes, Laurence gives her readers heroic protagonists.

As in previous chapters I maintain that the hero has two "dragons" or personal problems with which she must come to terms or "slay." I identify Morag's first "dragon" as a struggle with language and communication; this is the difficulty that is shared with Hagar, Rachel, and Stacey. As an accomplished writer, Morag's "dragon" is on a different level than that of the other women, but she battles it all the same. Thomas notes, " Morag works with words and she plays with them; she is constantly and obsessively translating experiences and impressions . . . into her medium, the word" (Manawaka World134).

Morag's second "dragon" is her fight to be a career woman in a society that slots women, especially mothers, into the role of exclusive domesticity. Laurence introduces this theme on the first page of the novel when Morag's daughter Pique leaves a note on the typewriter, the tool of her mother's trade,

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"where [she] would be certain to find it" (3). Proof that her career / vocation[19] is at odds with her other roles also comes very early in the novel:

> I've got too damn much work in hand to fret over Pique. Lucky me. I've got my work to take my mind off my life. At forty-seven that's not such a terrible state of affairs. If I hadn't been a writer, I might've been a first- rate mess at his point. Don't knock the trade. (4)

Her struggle to have her work taken seriously is a frequent occurrence as family and neighbours interrupt her writing. I identify Morag as a "hero" with a vocation because it is evident that she has always sensed a strong suitability for her writing profession.

The Diviners may be viewed as a female *Kunstlerroman* but, like Susan Ward, I prefer to examine the career woman theme in the novel.[20] Ward explains that fictional career women typically have a variety of difficulties: motivation, the feeling that their career is a part of their identity, the role of mentors and teachers in their lives, the tension between their careers and expectations placed on them to fulfil traditional roles, and their desires for romantic heroes (180-3). All of these issues are apparent in this novel and

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[19] I plan to use the words career and vocation interchangebly because it is not the issue of being especially suited or driven to a type of work that is relevant here. What is important is society's views of women's roles.

[20] Ward's article, "Morag Gunn in Fictional Context: The Career Woman Theme in The Diviners"(1996), is not an archetypal analysis and it does not use the term "hero" in a quest-myth sense or a feminist sense. She views Morag mainly as an artist. I feel that Morag's struggle with language, communication, and work follow her through her life as a career woman but mostly as a female. In viewing Morag's battle to pursue a vocation / career as a quest, I demonstrate how the journey is a treacherous one and how, by succeeding, the character is heroic.

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contribute to Morag's role as a hero.

Like the Manawaka women before her, this protagonist acquires her "dragons" in the "garden" of her youth. For Morag, this "garden" is the time before she marries. Unlike Laurence's other heroes, Morag is provided at a young age with guides that show her she need not fit into a domestic role. Some of these guides are the heroes of the epic tales she hears or manufactures, whose bravery and sense of purpose she internalizes from a very young age.

The imaginary characters of young Morag's "spruce-house family" show that she was born to be adventurous: "Rosa Picardy, [her] alter ego, . . . did brave deeds, slew dragons, and/or polar bears, and was Cowboy Joke's mate" (11). We also note her indifference to accepted gender roles when her alter ego does not die grieving for her lover: "*No. Rosa Picardy had her head fastened on right. Not for her the martyr's death, ... Rosa was right in there pitching* " (11). These undaunted fantasies come from songs of male heroism that "she must have heard" (10). Being too young to understand gender roles, she simply manufactures female characters, like herself, who are equally as heroic as the males. It is in this "garden" of innocence where Morag's strength of character is forged. With "the metallic clink of the farm gate being shut" (15) this five year old girl leaves her dead parents without shedding a tear. The bravery of Rosa Picardy goes with her.

Before she even goes to school, Morag questions language with the numerous "what means" that charm the reader. Sometimes she questions the meaning of words; oftentimes it is the nuance of language that is confusing: "Paris Green. What a music name for that poison stuff" (28). Her impressions of

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words are always poetic: "Cream-coloured blinds, all fringed with lace and tassels. The windows are the eyes, closed, and the blinds are the eyelids, all creamy, fringed with lacy lashes" (31). This interest and perceptivity with language increases as Morag ages and ponders how the language that tells of history and of life can be true and not true at the same time.

Morag also learns that that the proper use of language is a powerful tool. She realises that she has an advantage at school because she learns to read and understand grammar quickly. She feels superior to Prin and to her classmates who are less adept than she, and she struggles to use language to her advantage. She only uses Christie's salty language in her mind: "If you swear at fourteen it only makes you look cheap, and she is not cheap, goddamn it. Gol-darn it" (89). With Christie and Prin as her examples to the contrary, Morag learns that correct and polite language is one way to be accepted in society.

Morag also receives another societal suggestion at a young age. She learns that males do the talking and females do not. Morag knows that Christie has knowledge that interests her but she will not always ask him as she does not want to appear "dumb" (31). Morag sees that if girls want to "get in good with the boys" (31) they giggle and only add comments in the background. As a teen, Morag wants to be liked by boys: "She has therefore gone back to not speaking much . . ." (95). She also learns that to be popular she should hide her intelligence. The young men at the dances like girls "who will say *Gee! Really?*" (121) to boost male egos but not challenge them. Males use their voices to show superiority as if voiced intelligence is their prerogative.

Manawaka also teaches Morag how society entrenches sexism -- like

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racism and classism, which fall beyond the scope of my study -- to slot people into narrow roles. Laurence uses Prin and Mrs. Crawley as examples of females in domestic roles. Prin is not accepted in the community partly because she does not do what a woman is expected to do. She does not keep up an acceptable image for herself or her family; she sends Morag to school in dresses that are too long. When Morag is able to manage her own appearance, she works at Simlow's Ladies' Wear where she is praised because she has "smartened [her]self up a whole lot "(94). She learns that she will be ostracized if she does not fulfil the role that society dictates for women.

Laurence describes Prin as "almost motionless . . . a tub with [vague] eyes" (140). In her study of Laurence's revisioning of feminine archetypes, Demetrakopoulos says that, Prin in her obesity, is an example to Morag of the Good Mother[21] who loves her child but also a woman enclosed in a Hestian or domestic role.

> Prin is a fascinating study of a woman trapped . . . not by a man or society so much as her own limited intelligence and lack of will. . . . She is one of the terrifying (especially for women) faces of the feminine and represents the way that the flesh can swallow up the feminine spirit. Buckle's mother in The Fire-Dwellers is . . . another rendition of psychic nothingness that women fear. (52)

While I agree that it is her low intelligence and inertia that are at fault for her situation, I feel that Prin knows that looks are important because she is embarrassed by her weight. I propose that she seeks seclusion rather than dealing with society's expectation of her as a good housekeeper and mother.

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[21] Demetrakopoulos takes this description of the Good Mother from The Great Mother trans. Ralph Manheim, 1963 : "the Good Mother is frequently seen as mostly torso with tiny legs and head and no eyes" (52).

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Mrs. Fennick, the former prostitute, also sought shelter from an unaccepting society. It is a denigrating society that swallows up the female spirit. Laurence's main point and Morag's lesson from Prin is that being a good mother should not require a woman to meet the expectations of society. It does, however, take time and experience for Morag to understand this.

Unlike Prin, Mrs. Crawley, Morag's landlady, is an example of a woman that is respectable in her society. Although only in her late twenties, the ever-pregnant Mrs. Crawley has lost her youthful good looks. She has also lost her identity as we only know her by her married title. A "defeated" (146) housewife, she craves romance and sex but ends up with more children. Her male-dominated religion is part of her oppression in not allowing her to control the number of children she has. She voices these regrets: "if I'd known before I was married what I know now, I'd have had some fun, eh?" (142). Mrs. Crawley is affirmed in society because of her domestic role, but Morag does not want to emulate her.

As well as taking note of women in domestic roles, Morag also learns in the "garden" that strength is not accepted as part of a woman's character. This is where her concept of herself as a strong individual comes into conflict with societal roles. Because of Christie's heroic stories and her fantasy life, Morag identifies with the tales of Morag Gunn, "a strapping strong woman . . . with the courage of a falcon" (41), and is disgusted that men are attracted to girls like Eva Winkler: "frail creatures . . . with unblinking eyes like a baby bird" (121-2). Morag understands that women are seen as sex objects and questions whether she "really want[s] to join the circus, be a performing filly going through her prancing paces" (121). Morag realizes that if she insists on showing her

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strength she risks not having relations with men. While traditional female roles and character traits are unappealing to her, she knows she will face unwanted ostracism if she does not fit into standard roles.

Had Morag experienced only the female role models of Prin, Mrs. Crawley, and Eva, her chances of becoming a writer or a hero would be nonexistent. Luckily for her, the "garden" also provides guides that give positive perspectives both on using language and on defying gendered roles. As a mentor and teacher, Christie is a guide for both of these aspects. He flouts convention as a jester who laughs in the face of his critics. It is not until she is well into her adult years that Morag acknowledges Christie's importance in the formation of her strong character, though she obviously learns from him early on. Because of Christie's defiance in word and deed, she learns to stand up to those who would confine her in conventional roles. On the ball field, she "grins open-mouth clowney" at those who taunt her (50).

Christie is also a mentor for Morag's writing. Ward notes that "[t]he relationship between Christie's tale-telling and [Morag's] own fiction writing is evident; directly after Laurence records the telling of Christie's first Piper Gunn, she shows us the young Morag composing the Tale of Piper Gunn's Woman . . . " (181). While Ward sees this as inspiration for a young writer, I also see that these stories provide her with the strength and determination that she requires to be a questing hero. Unlike Rachel's height, that is used as a parody of Amazonian women, Laurence makes Morag tall and solid to draw attention to this image of the epic hero. Because of Christie's tales, her belief in a courageous heritage fortifies her in daily life and encourages her heroism.

Young Morag's tale of Piper Gunn's wife says that the character "Morag

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was never afraid of anything in this whole wide world. Never. If they came to a forest, would this Morag be scared? Not on your christly life" (42). When the young writer has her namesake "laugh and say, *Forests cannot hurt me because I have the power and the second sight and the good eye and the strength of conviction*" (41), we sense that Morag will emerge heroic in the traditional epic tradition. The early stories by Christie and the similar stories told later by Jules hold a double lesson for Morag: they warn her to keep language alive and they encourage her to fight the roles that the dominant society intends for her.

Another guide and mentor from the original "garden" is Miss Melrose, Morag's teacher at Manawaka College. As a female guide she demonstrates that a single woman can have a successful career. As a mentor she talks to her pupil "about what is good and bad in writing . . . "and encourages her to submit her work to the school paper (98-9) . Acceptance of her talent gives Morag strength because "she has known for some time what she has to do, but never the knowledge to any other person or thought that any person might suspect" (99). This contact with someone who respects her writing causes Morag to dream about publishing work and provides her with motives for writing -- a way to earn money -- a way to escape Manawaka.

The four deaths that Morag witnesses in Manawaka are a call for her to exit this "garden." The fire that kills three of the Tonnerre family and Eva's abortion are signs that she must leave to survive. The newspaper that she works for does not allow Morag to write of the Tonnerres' ancestors fighting with Riel. Piquette and her children are silenced and Eva will never hear her children's voices. Past lives, present lives, and future lives, are suppressed in

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this society. Because, as a writer, Morag is committed to expose truths, not hide them, she leaves Manawaka to further her education and appears prepared to do battle with language and her vocation. Christie and Miss Melrose have been guides to show her the way and, in Winnipeg, she gains Mrs. Gerson as another mentor.

Mrs. Gerson is an example of a strong working woman bringing up children on her own. Even though "[h]er daughters are her life," she has a job and numerous interests (148). She encourages Morag to keep her mind on "higher things" than attracting men and introduces her to literature of a broader scope (149). She also shows Morag that a woman can nurture and be strong at the same time: "It is not only Mrs. Gerson's ability to reach out her arms and hold people, both literally and figuratively. It is also her strength" (150).

Morag gains a lifelong guide and confidant in Ella Gerson, who takes over from her mother, encouraging Morag that she must fight to achieve her desired vocation. Though her male guides give her valuable advice, it is of an esoteric nature, while Ella assists with practical suggestions and a good example. Ella continues to work while raising children and she and Morag commiserate what it feels like to be "living too many lives simultaneously" (173). Morag calls Ella when she needs to "feel better" (174) and gets understanding from someone who is walking a similar path. While Christie's tales gave her respect for the strength of heroic figures, Ella gives her the encouragement she requires to carry on being a writer and a woman simultaneously.

As proof that her first "garden" burdens her with tenacious "dragons," Morag falls prey to a "seducer" despite her guides and her convictions. As seen in previous chapters, a "seducer" is someone who first appears to aid the hero

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in her quest but then does not allow her to kill her own "dragons," that is, to make her own decisions or achieve her own goals. As her teacher, lover, and husband, Brooke Skelton has the understanding to assist Morag's writing but, because he demands that she be his wife before anything else, he becomes her "seducer." We see Morag change from the girl who thinks, "That will be the day, when [I try] to please a living soul" (50) to a woman who tries so hard to appease her husband she almost loses the capacity to communicate or write.

As an English professor, Brooke's ability with words is better than any man that Morag has ever known and he initially encourages her writing, saying that her work is "extremely promising" (153). When she comments that she "would not take [being silenced] kindly," he replies, "Well, quite right, too" (155). He represents to her everything she wants: language skills, intellectual fulfilment, sexual satisfaction, not to mention prestige. At this point in her life, she is thrilled to give up her past as the scavenger's daughter. His words allow her to believe she will have the "everything" that she wants in life (147):

> I only want to know you as you are now, my tall and lovely dark-haired Morag, my love, with your very touching seriousness and your light heart. Never be any different, will you? (161)

For Morag, this everything includes writing at a professional level and communicating openly and equally with her husband and those around her. For Brooke, the same words indicate that he does not want her to grow.

In the description of Brooke's setting, Laurence alerts us that he is not a positive figure that will encourage the hero on her quest. It is restrictive in size with nothing natural in sight :

> A miniature living room with hideous pale mauve walls. . . . A worn

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> sofa covered with a very large and elegant white Kashmir shawl with intricately embroidered flowers and strange unworldlike birds in coral and black and leafgreen. (159)

There are only representations of life here, no real plants or animals. The paintings and ornaments signify the triumphs of man. Morag's marriage will mirror these elements in its sterility and narrowness.

What Morag fails to see is that, even early on in their relationship, Brooke silences her and, even worse, she censors her own conversation fearing that telling him about her past and her dreams will drive him away. Rather than being the guide to communication that she had hoped, Brooke quickly becomes a captor. While she is with him, it seems that her "dragons" might possibly consume her.

In Toronto, Morag begins the same type of wedded enclosure that we noted with Stacey. She has no one to talk to as she is shut up in an apartment. Even in her husband's company, she is silent while he works. He rewards her by saying "You're a good girl, sweetheart, to sit there so quietly all this time" (175). When she speaks at a gathering of his students, her opinion is suppressed. Her speech pattern becomes one of frequent apology even after Christie has told her that "sorry . . . is a useless christly awful word" (169). Because she is being silenced and her confidence undermined, her voice takes on the tone of a "spoiled child" and Brooke withdraws his affection when she does speak her mind (181). He is also guilty of silencing her with a form of manipulating rape. Before he permits sexual arousal, Morag must tell Brooke that she has "been a good girl. . . . [and] there can be no talk of it" later (200). She says, "[i]t has become his game" (200). He is choking the words and the

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life out of her just as Mac was doing to Stacey in The Fire-Dwellers.

Brooke quickly takes ownership as Morag becomes "his woman" (162). She is completely cut off from intellectual pursuits and her writing must fit into a schedule that does not interfere with her husband's routine. When she forgets to make his dinner because she is engrossed in writing, he says: "I thought you'd been suddenly stricken with something serious" (188). He believes his demands should come before her writing and sees her as his wife -- not a writer. She feels she must lie to him regarding the importance of her first novel to her.

Laurence's choice of names often indicates personal qualities of her characters and Brooke's given name conveys water imagery which generally symbolizes restorative power. This brook, however, is only a trickle of water; it is not a river nor the sea which gives new life. A babbling brook is what Morag thought she wanted in a marriage -- intellectual communication. His death-like surname, Skelton, discloses that this is a sterile relationship as Brooke will neither agree to children nor will he allow her any personal growth. In the end, all there is for Morag in this marriage is "nothing. Quit talking. Babble babble" (228). The barren relationship destroys Morag's desire to communicate with this "captor."

During her marriage, Morag encounters this first major "tension between career and female expectations"(Ward 182). She is not fulfilled being a "competent cook . . . [whose] chocolate cake with fudge icing is beyond compare" (18). Like the Manawaka heroes before her, she begins to question her sanity and says, "I really must be unbalanced" (183). Her married life is much like the "Illusion heels" she wears to appear feminine without adding any

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height (180). She changes everything about herself to suit Brooke and becomes a facade of the woman that he wants.

The hero now hears a call to leave her wedded "garden." Morag's marriage is a "garden" because, in it, she remains static and unenlightened. The call begins softly and then builds. Prin's death is an epiphany for Morag. Hearing that Vern Winkler is now Thor Thorkalson causes her to consider her altered self and her reasons for marrying Brooke. When Niall Cameron calls her by her maiden name, she realizes that she has changed her identity from Morag Gunn to someone that fits Brooke's mold, not her own. On her return from Manawaka, Morag stops cutting her hair in the "more feminine"(180) fashions that Brooke prefers. Like Sampson, this act reinforces her strength and is the beginning of her escape.

Morag activates her lost voice and tells Brooke that she is now a mature woman and she "[c]an't bear not to be taken seriously" (211). She insists on speaking the truth about her past and herself. Morag is a woman with a voice that needs to be heard; she is a woman who is a serious writer, not a wife and a housekeeper. She tells Brooke that she is proud of her height and her strength and will no longer be his "little one" (210). Because she no longer accepts his criticism of her writing, she submits *Spear of Innocence* to a publisher without telling him and, very significantly, she writes under her single name. She recovers her lost self and, in the process, puts her needs above his because she fears that "remaining [with him] mean[s] to be chained forever to that image of [her]self which he must have and which must forever be distorted" (211). She realizes that her need to pursue a writing career is more important to her than her wish to satisfy his needs for a wife. Initially, Morag saw Brooke as a

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romantic hero, but, as Ward notes, she leaves him because he stands in the way of her career: "the love plot and the career-development plot, are, . . . often at odds" (183). She now sees him for the "captor" that he truly is.

To assist Morag to complete this call to adventure, Jules Tonnerre re-enters her life as guide, a green-world lover, and a "shaman" (223). Jules is a part of Morag's sexual awakening and she associates his "brown hawkish face" (103) and his "crow"-like voice with nature (58) . But, because of the descriptions we are given for their encounters, Laurence suggests to the reader that this nature is in jeopardy. Outside of school, Morag's first encounter with "Skinner" is at the garbage dump (58).Their first attempt at sex is away from the city and surrounded by nature, but the usually rejuvenating water is "brown [and] muddy"(110). Jules and his father, Lazarus, act like male dogs after a bitch in the "collection of shacks" (111) that is the Tonnerre home. This once Edenic setting is tainted.

To counter the negative symbols that surround Jules, there are numerous indications that he is an important guide for Morag. He always appears out of nowhere and is referred to as a "Shadow" (58), which is, of course, an important Jungian archetype for "the darker side of our unconscious self" (Guerin et al. 170). J. Jacobi's interpretation of Jung states that the shadow "contains inherited, childish, or primitive qualities that would in a way vitalize and even embellish human existence" (qtd. in Bailey "Margaret Laurence, Carl Jung . . ." 312). Just as Jules taunts her to cross a swinging bridge in childhood, he challenges her throughout her life to face her fears. She must learn to do battle with the dark side of herself. Laurence gives Jules two names that are appropriate for his role as Morag's green-world lover and guide. As Jules,

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which she pronounces "Jewels," he is precious to her and she values her relationship with him. As Skinner, he is one who removes the outer cover to see the flesh and bones; he removes the facade to show the truths; he is a societal vivisector.

Interestingly, Jules connects with Morag in a largely non-verbal way. One would expect that any guide for a writer would be articulate but, for him, "[a]pparently nothing needs to be spoken" (348). Like a proper guide, Jules neither offers Morag solutions nor takes over the job of slaying her "dragons." He allows her to make her own decisions and mistakes. He does not ask her to marry him, even though they have a child together, nor does he protect her from Brooke. He says, "He's your problem" (220). He does, however, offer her support when she needs it: "Jules puts one arm around her, as though assisting along the street someone who is maimed or crippled" (220). This is a relationship of equality and Morag has the opportunity to do the same for Jules when he is dying.

As frequently happens along heroic journeys, the hero experiences an altered state of consciousness before she can leave the "garden" where she is stagnating. In Jules' room, Morag reaches the inner self that has been lost to her. In the presence of "red oriental poppies"(221), she "is overtaken by profound lethargy, . . . and sleeps as much as fourteen hours" (229) per day. Having sex with Jules gives her pleasure and solace as she falls from the innocence of her marriage bed. As noted with Stacey, when sex with Luke was restorative for her, the sexual union between Morag and Jules prepares the hero to enter a fresh new world.

As well as being a helpful guide in Morag's quest, Jules is also a

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mentor for her writing and the one who teaches her about a type of communication that is unspoken. Laurie Lindberg states that "like Rachel and Stacey, Morag learns that words are sometimes inadequate" (198), I would add, they are also sometimes unnecessary. Early in their relationship, Morag and Jules share grins at the back of the classroom. As adults, when they have been separated, they often seek physical reunion before they converse. When Jules is dying, she quickly sits beside him and "[h]e puts one of his hands on her wrist . . ." (363). She knows there is "No way of talking to him any differently, now, than she ever had. No way of saying everything she would like to say, either. Maybe none of it really needed saying, after all" (363). Because the physical communication has always been good between them, words lose their import.

Morag also finds words inadequate when she tries to confront the racism that Jules and his family face. Lindberg says that "the burden of guilt that Morag bears by virtue of being one of the oppressors is so great that she feels that anything she might say would be presumptuous"[22] (198). When she hears that Lazarus is refused burial on his own land, "Morag cannot say anything. She has no right" (219). When she is the one to describe the scene at Piquette's death to Jules, he forces her to "Say it" (224). Afterwards, she knows, "There is nothing more can be said" (225).

Through Jules, Morag learns to accept that silence is as valuable as her way with verbal and written communication. Like Stacey, she comes to realize that forcing others to talk does not work and that "silence can sometimes be a language of its own" (Lindberg 198). Jules and Pique exchange glances that

[22] While I agree with this and other statements from Lindberg's "Wordsmith and Woman: Morag Gunn's Triumph Through Language," I disagree when she states that Morag reaches a higher level of success than the other Manawaka women because of her writing skills. I deal with this in the conclusion.

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express their thoughts, and their shared love of music is a bond that does not require explanation. Morag acknowledges that this father and daughter communicate "in a different way, a way I can see, although it's not mine" (348). Because of Jules, Morag is more able to accept that their daughter Pique is prone to silences and does not find it easy to explain herself. Without his example, she may have demanded more words than Pique is prepared to give.

Morag's experiences in Vancouver and England show the continued struggle with her "dragons." During this time, the "dragons" of communication and having a vocation appear to meld into one. As a single woman, she is assertive and communicates well with those around her but it is the written word, her career, that is both a solace and a torment in her life. As before, there are guides to assist her and captors to hold her back. Her role as mother exacerbates her struggle to be have a vocation as the balance of female roles versus career goals is further complicated.

The title of Laurence's fourth chapter,"Rites of Passage," calls our attention to the growth that the hero undergoes in this segment of her life; change is never easy but always necessary in a hero's journey. There are captors and events that threaten a successful quest. Morag trades married confinement with being "hemmed in" by Vancouver and motherhood. She feels 'threatened" by the surrounding mountains and her "Bleak House" residence on Hill Street indicates the up-hill struggle that she faces (239). Maggie Tefler, her first landlady, shows her the type of prejudices that she will encounter as an unmarried mother when she calls Morag a "slut" and makes derisive comments about Pique's "halfbreed" parentage (252). This confinement and treatment is indicative of Morag's future for many years to

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come.

Though Morag's next landlady is kind to her, Fan Brady puts temptation in the hero's path that has the potential to be fatal . A fallen Eve figure, Fan works as a "Danseuse" at the "Figleaf" and frequently has men in the house for meaningless sexual encounters because "[i]t passes the time" (259). Like Fan, Morag also seeks refuge from loneliness in sex. Chas, "one of Fan's occasional men," (266) turns out to be a "lunatic" (268) and, because of a double standard regarding sex, he becomes hostile and puts her life and Pique's in jeopardy.

Chas is sexist. Because Morag has a sexual appetite equal to his own, he sees her behaviour as "whore[ish]" (268) and feels justified in beating her. She learns a lesson from her carelessness.

> It may not be fair -- in fact, it seems damned unfair to me -- but I'll never again have sex with a man whose child I couldn't bear, if the worst came to the absolute worst. (270)

Her search for a "romantic hero" is more cautious from now on (Ward 183). Laurence says that "[t]he dark bruises on [Morag's] breasts only last for a couple of weeks" (270) but the insinuation is that the anger about societal inequities lasts forever as does the fear of violence from men. Almost twenty years later, Morag worries that Pique may be harmed when she is travelling alone.

In England, Morag's struggle to have a vocation is very difficult. It is not that she does not want to have loved ones or the responsibilities that come with them; it is the unfair pull between career and "trying to fulfil the traditional feminine roles" (Ward 182) that makes the dual roles such a conflict. Morag shows her attachment to Pique in continued devotion to her daughter but the necessity of financial remuneration from her writing becomes paramount now

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because she has a child to support. She deals with time and emotional restrictions on a scale that she has never faced before.

Ward says it is common for the "career woman heroine to try to separate her life as careerist from her life as woman" (182) and Morag does just this. When she was married to Brooke, she attempted to "get outside the novel" (187) before he came home and, now she gives her time first to her child and second to her writing. From the time Pique is born, Morag alters her writing time to accommodate her: she writes longhand so not to wake the baby; she writes at night so she can do things with the child during the day; she writes during the day when Pique is at school but walks her to and from class; when Pique is ill she does not write at all. When trying to write *Jonah,* Morag questions: "How to get this novel written, in between or as well as everything else?" and "Whose need is the greater?"(300). Trying to separate the career and the mothering is very difficult and she frequently feels guilty that her work takes away time that she feels she should be giving to Pique. Morag does relish her small successes and knows that what she is doing is heroic. After a victory "[s]he feels as though she has fought the Crimea War singlehanded, and won" (270).

Laurence uses Dan McRaith to highlight Morag's plight as a career woman and a parent. Like Morag, he is an artist, the difference between them being that his wife, rather than himself, takes care of their children and most of his daily needs. He does not stop work when the children have the sniffles, and he leaves for London when life at home is too chaotic. Both in London and in Scotland, McRaith has a studio of his own[23] while Morag sleeps in the living room of her flats so that she can work at night and not disturb Pique. As much

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23 In A Room of One's Own , Virginia Woolf states that a woman needs a personal space if she is to be creative . (1928)

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as Morag enjoys McRaith's company, she has to steal time from her writing or Pique to be with him. McRaith is not without his problems but he is allowed time and space to do his work.

As well as complicating her writing time, McRaith is both a green-world lover and a mentor for Morag. His fisherman's sweater and the landscape around his home in Crombruach identify him with nature. He respects her writing, as she does his painting and they communicate well both sexually and verbally. As Ward notes, "[a]lthough, after her divorce from Brooke, Morag never deserts the world of womanhood for the world of the desexualized writer, she is often bothered by the disjunction between the two" (183). Morag agonizes over making time for the things and the people that she loves:

> How to change our hours to suit? What to do, Lord? How to cope with it all? Maybe I should be able to write evenings, late, so as not to inconvenience anyone? Goddamn, why should I not inconvenience anyone? (306-7)

Because of his own commitments as a husband and father, McRaith is a good choice for Morag's romantic hero. He satisfies several needs for Morag, but, to protect her career, she does not want him in her life all the time. She knows that writing and mothering are all that she wishes to juggle.

In the same "Rites of Passage" section, the importance of another positive influence in Morag's life comes to the fore when Christie Logan dies. He plays multiple roles in <u>The Diviners</u>: he is a mentor and teacher for Morag's writing, as was discussed earlier; he is a Wise Old Man figure; and he is the person who allows the hero to come to terms with her parents. As a scavenger he is ridiculed and shunned by society. During this part of her voyage, Morag

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finally sees past Christie's loud oaths and his dirty appearance to the goodness and wisdom of the man.

As a Wise Old Man, Christie never tells Morag what to do. He allows her to make her own decisions. She must search for the truths within his stories and sayings. She feels truly blessed by Christie's last words and her reflections about him aptly parallel sentiments regarding Christ.

> No one knew him all that well . . . . He lived nearly all his life in this town, and everyone knew him to see him, and they all called him Christie, but nobody knew him, to speak of, or even to speak to, much, if it comes to that. (324)

His wisdom is resurrected in Morag's imagination and immortalized in her writing. Through contemplation, she comes to follow Christie's direction. When talking to young Dan about raising horses, she imparts Christie's ideas about words and perceptions being true and not true at the same time. She also talks about the inevitability of bringing the past into the present. Because of Christie's example, Morag is wise enough to know that the young man will not understand these things until he is older, and therefore she does not force her opinions on him.

As a stepfather, Christie is the figure that allows Morag to come to terms with her parents as the previous Manawaka heroes have also had to do. In her youth, Morag rejected Christie because he was an embarrassment to her and she felt "He's never tried to do anything"(109). Instead, she preferred to hold on to romantic notions of her dead father. Because, with age, she comes to the knowledge of how important Christie has been to her, she is able to put her biological parents to rest and say to him, "I used to fight a lot with you, Christie,

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but you've been my father to me" (323).

Close to the time of Christie's death, Morag receives another call to action. After a pilgrimage to Scotland to get in touch with her ancestral roots, she realises that Canada is the "real country" (319) for her and Pique. As an orphan, Morag is finally free to begin a new segment of her quest in Canada. During a time of refuge at Ella's house, in Toronto, Morag moves into an altered consciousness before she acts to complete this call:

> Morag goes through the days like a zombie or a sleepwalker. In fact, sleeping is all she really wants to do. She finds she can sleep far too easily, even in the days. Insomnia would be almost welcome, to prove she is alive. (337)

Morag questions whether divine intervention or fate produces her sanctuary at McConnell's Landing. However it comes, she is glad of it.

One can view the present-tense narrative of The Diviners as Morag's time in "the new family," that is, the reward of community and wholeness that is her due for a successful quest. This perspective assumes that her quest is complete. One might also see the present narrative as the last segment of her quest to which we are privileged. Then her quest will not end until death. I feel that Laurence blurs the edges of this distinction to make this a time that is equally as enlightening to the reader as are the years when Morag is more actively questing.

For this time in her life, Morag chooses a symbolic "garden" (332) in nature surrounded by the archetypically significant river. She continues to face her "dragons," but with a greater understanding of them and an awareness that they are probably not meant to be slain. Interestingly, the "dragon" of difficult

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communication, which all but left her in Vancouver and England again rears its head, while the "dragon" of having a vocation simply dies a natural death. With the wisdom of Christie to bolster her, Morag does not need a lot of guidance through this time. She is, however, grateful for another Wise Old Man in Royland whose name, no doubt, means king of the land.

In this last segment there are two aspects of Royland that make him an especially interesting guide for Morag. In contrast to Christie, Royland is as understated as Christie was brash. Laurence obviously makes the point that wisdom comes in a variety of packages. She also points out several similarities between Royland and Morag. Both the diviner of water and the diviner of words have poor eyesight, a symbol of a heightened inner sight or knowledge. They share a philosophy about their work, that you "just gotta do it" (22) and both are closely aligned with nature. These likenesses open the possibility of Morag becoming a Wise Old Woman figure in parallel to Royland's image of the Wise Old Man.

Laurence chooses an archetypally significant number for Royland's age. He is seventy-four, the reverse of Morag's forty-seven. Guerin et al. state that seven is "the most potent of all symbolic numbers -- signifying the union of *three* and *four*, the completion of a cycle, perfect order" (152). Three symbolizes spiritual awareness and the male principle, while four is associated with the life cycle and the female principle (Guerin et al. 152). His age signifies his ability to guide Morag to an understanding of the cycles of life. Morag's age indicates that she is capable of finding peace within the circle of life. With these significant numbers, the potential is there for the hero to successfully complete a cycle.

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Because Morag has a longer time with "the new family," than did the previous Manawaka heroes, we note more progression in resolving her "dragons." In the early part of the present-tense narrative, Morag continues to struggle with language. She calls writing a "daft profession"(21) because she knows that words cannot express everything that she would like to say. When trying to describe her surroundings she inevitably comes up with the "wrong words" (4); nature defies adequate description. She also struggles with personal communication. She recalls teaching her daughter about life with the most accurate and reassuring words that she knew and she also remembers her daughter throwing the painful words "*I despise you*" (81) at her. When Maudie tells Morag that Pique has the right not to communicate with her, Morag, as a mother, wishes it were not true but knows it is. Because of her nature and her profession, she has relied on words, but Morag now muses, "*I used to think words could do anything. Magic. Sorcery. Even miracle. But no, only occasionally*" (4). There is insecurity in this for her but, in her maturity, she reacts calmly.

By the end of the present-tense narrative, Morag moves toward resolution with her communication "dragon." She understands Jules' feelings on the unimportance of words. With Pique she accepts that there will always be somewhat of a language barrier between the generations but that it can be bridged with love and patience. She gleans from Royland that she would understand more if she had faith in herself rather than always "wanting to explain it" (369). She moves from frustration at the inadequacy of words to a level of acceptance of their place in the larger scheme of things.

While I agree with Lindberg that "[w]ords have helped Morag come to

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terms with herself as well as with others" (200), I feel that this "dragon" is only partly vanquished and then more by maturity than by her skill as a writer. I believe that this "professional worrier" (22), who cannot even quit her smoking habit, will never be totally satisfied with situations and emotions that resist words. She is also left with a niggling doubt about the power or "proof positive" of her words -- her "magic tricks. . . . She would never know whether they actually worked or not, or to what extent" (369). When she says, "In a sense, it did not matter," one infers that in another sense it does matter (369). Communication with words will always be more satisfying for Morag than the nonverbal way of her daughter, but she has the wisdom to accept Pique's ways.

Morag's career woman "dragon" continues in the present tense narrative, but, like the communication "dragon," it dies a natural death rather than having to be slain. People continue to interrupt her work with the attitude that it is not a serious part of her life. She says to A-Okay, "'If I spend all my time gardening, how in the hell could I get any writing done? No great loss, you may say, but it'd be a loss to *me* , and also I need a minimal income, even here'" (46). She continues to demand that people respect her work, but as the novel draws to a close, Morag no longer seems dominated by her career. Because she observed that her guides lost their voices, she accepts that this too will be her fate. Jules tells her, " 'I had some luck in my time. It's run out, that's all'" (363). Royland explains, "The gift, or portion of grace, or whatever it was, was finally withdrawn, to be given to someone else" (369). Christie's storytelling lives on in her and hopefully in Pique. The reason she does not mourn the loss of her gift -- her vocation -- is that there will be "inheritors" (369). When she is finished writing, Morag can take up "contemplating" (369) as a full time activity.

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To bring the epic nature of the novel full circle, Laurence ends The Diviners by having Morag satisfy what might be seen as an epic prophecy set down with the spruce-house family of her childhood:

> Peony and I, although warned not to by Blue-Sky Mother, went into a deserted grain elevator, hundreds of miles high and lived in only by bats, dragons and polar bears, on different levels, bats highest, and succeeded after many perils in discovering a buried treasure of diamonds and rubies . . . . (10)

With Peony as her dauntless alter-ego, Morag takes a path in life that is not advised by her society. She fights to keep communication and language alive and she perseveres to have a successful career. As a writer and a mother she receives the diamonds and rubies of her toil. She says with conviction, "I *am* okay" and knows it to be true (368). Toward the end of the novel, Morag realizes "[h]er quest for islands had ended some time ago, and her need to make pilgrimages had led her back here" (293). Laurence chooses this epic format to highlight the heroic nature of the protagonist's journey. Without a doubt, Morag is a successful epic hero.

In the same way that I have proved Hagar, Rachel, and Stacey are feminist- defined "heroes,"[24] I also assert that Morag aptly deserves this distinction. In The Diviners, Laurence calls our attention to the notion of the feminist heroic when Royland teases Morag that she and Joan of Arc mentally talk to other women. The female reader especially identifies with looking to other women for guidance. Both Joan of Arc and Morag use ethereal females as role models with whom they commiserate and from whom they learn. With

[24] As discussed earlier, the feminist definition of "hero" from A Feminist Dictionary states that she is a woman who shares our conflicts and struggles in a contradictory world and teaches others to struggle more successfully because of her knowledge.

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guidance, the corporeal women lead truly heroic lives.

Because the readers of the Manawaka novels have longer to spend with Morag as a fairly accomplished hero, we get a strong sense that she has already passed strength and wisdom on to her daughter. Pique's life is parallelling Morag's as they both feel the need to search for a place in life where they are accepted. Because Pique has seen her mother struggle with communication and being a career woman, the younger woman knows that she deserves the right to find these things in society. At the same age as Pique is now, Morag knew no such thing. Morag's journey paves the way for Pique to follow, even though the younger woman has her own set of "dragons" to slay.

From Morag Gunn, the reader has the opportunity to learn that pride in any job or vocation is a valuable part of a woman's self-worth and that every woman who wants a career deserves that others respect her choice. No individual or society has the right to place women in roles that confine growth and fulfilment. Morag gives up things like security and a committed love relationship to reach her goals so that we, as readers, knowing that this character has suffered for a cause, find the strength to do the same. The reader can look at Morag and think that if she has overcome problems with communication and having her career taken seriously, we can too. The mature reader also sees Morag Gunn as an example of a woman wanting to make the journey possible for those who follow. If women earn and demand titles as heroes, heroism will be seen as an attainable goal for younger women.

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Conclusion

Writing during the 1960s and 1970s, with many of her views regarding the place of women in society formed as early as the 1930s, Margaret Laurence would not have been as aware of the inhibiting nature of sexist language as we are in the 1990s. She did not call her protagonists "heroes." "Heroine" would have been the word most familiar to her. However, there is evidence in James King's biography, The Life of Margaret Laurence, and in her memoir, Dance on the Earth, and, that Laurence took exception to patriarchal institutions that sought to confine her. In later years, she called herself a "feminist" (4). Her own life story clearly indicates that she believes the influential women in her life were "very strong women who endured a lot and overcame a lot," who "struggle[d] to proclaim their lives, to be their own persons . . . (7-8). Laurence may not have called Hagar, Rachel, Stacey, and Morag "heroes," but her Manawaka novels prove them to be "heroes" twice over. Each of these protagonists succeed as archetypal heroes as well as feminist-defined heroes.

Unlike Laurence, we in the 1990s do know the importance of sexist language, hence my linguistic insistence on the term "hero" for the Manawaka protagonists. As Maggie Humm notes: "The power of naming defines the *quality* and values of that which is named and denies reality to that which is not named . . ." (185). Protagonists who are called "heroines" suffer from the romantic notion that they need rescuing by a male and are expected to succeed more through marriage than by their own struggles. Laurence's protagonists change their own lives. As critics, we must note the values that permeate the

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Manawaka novels and acknowledge that Hagar, Rachel, Stacey, and Morag are heroes.

In choosing accurate terms for women, it is not sufficient simply to drop feminine endings and fit women into male terms. Therefore, it has been my task to redefine the term "hero" so that it has relevance to women's lives. Rosemarie Tong comments that "postmodern feminists admit that it is extremely difficult to challenge the Symbolic order when the only words available to do so are words that have been issued by this order" (223) She maintains that, in continuing with feminist analysis of language within the language we have, writers such as Cixous, Kristeva, and Irigaray "offer to women the most fundamental liberation of all -- freedom from oppressive *thought*" (223). When the quester is also a person who shares our conflicts and shows us how to struggle more successfully by teaching what she has learned,[25] we not only have an archetypal hero; we also have a "hero" of another dimension. Since Laurence's Manawaka women are both archetypal and feminist heroes, they take the concept of "hero" to a level more relevant to the lives of women and free us from the androcentric OED definition of "hero." [26]

Because her protagonists are often battling the "dragons" of patriarchy, Laurence reworks images of the "hero" in a manner appropriate to women's psychological and social experience in her era. According to Pearson and Pope, the hero breaks the established order and finds a "new family" which is the reward of a better community. Due to the success that the Manawaka women have with their personal "dragons," the reader is encouraged to seek

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[25] These criteria for "hero" come from the definition in A Feminist Dictionary.

[26] As discussed earlier, "Hero" from OED is "a man who exhibits extraordinary bravery, firmness, fortitude, or greatness in soul, in any course of action, or in connection with any pursuit, work, or enterprise; a man admired and venerated for his achievement and noble qualities."

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solutions in her own world. The alleviation of women's societal problems would be an improved world community.

The majority of critics, including Bailey and Lindberg, see only a partial victory / enlightenment / individuation for the Manawaka women before Morag. Because each of the Manawaka women completes a successful quest, I feel justified in giving them equal status as heroes. They all accept the call to leave the "garden," learn from guides, struggle against captors, and find their way to "the new family." Because Hagar reaches the end of her journey with little time to perfect or practise her new skills, the reader cannot view her continued "reward of community and wholeness."[27] Laurence also removes us from Rachel and Stacey just at the point when they gain the wisdom and resolve that will serve them well in their lives. There are only hints of better things to come. With Rachel "becoming the mother" and moving from isolation into society, there is considerable hope that her new found maturity and stronger voice will continue. Stacey's new mind-set allows her to keep her erotic and maternal self together and, it is expected that her changed attitude about communication will help her cope better with her husband and her children. The Cameron sisters are young and have a reasonable chance of maturing into the woman that Morag has become.

With Hagar, Rachel, and Stacey, Laurence does not privilege the reader with the extra years after the hero reaches "the new family," as she does with Morag. Laurence allows us to view this hero after her quest because we meet Morag already living with the "new family," her "dragons" well in check. Although Morag feels she is fairly set in her ways, we do note even more

[27] This concept of the hero's reward being an improved community and wholeness, i.e., "the new family" is from Pearson and Pope's model for The Female Hero.

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progress with her communication "dragon" and her working woman "dragon" while she lives with the "new family." We see more of the rewards of community and family than we are allowed to see with the other women. It is not that Morag is more successful in "killing her dragons" than the other women; we just view more of her personal rewards.

When we think of the Manawaka women as heroes in the feminist sense, again, they all make changes that the reader can learn from. Demetrakopoulos notes "the variation in her protagonists reflects Laurence's knowledge that feminine individuation is pluralistic. . . she has never written the same novel twice; each of Laurence's novels traces a highly individual yet universal type of development. . . . She is re-visioning what it means to be a woman" (54-5). Morag's teaching is no more valuable than Hagar's, Rachel's, or Stacey's. Because readers have differing problems in life, one of the other Manawaka heroes may speak more to a reader's needs than does Morag.

As in the feminist definition of "hero,"[28] Laurence's correspondence proves that she believed teaching was an important part of life. In a 1985 letter from Lakefield, Laurence comments to Marian Engel on feminism, strong women, and her teaching role. She writes:

> Dear Marian - . . . Jane Austen, the more I read her and think about her, was such a subtle and strong feminist! *In them days!* But those days, apparently so far back, are not so very different from our own. Is this not always the way? I think so. Strong women did always have the difficulties that Austen presents, and people like you and I have lived through that, too. With, I may say, totable [sic] success. We pass on a whole lot of things to the

[28] This definition emphasizes teaching others directly or indirectly what is learned by experience.

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> children, both female and male, or so I hope and pray and know. . . . (qtd. in Wainwright 66)

Many of her friends and critics felt that Laurence gave too much time to coaching young writers because such commitments took her away from her own writing. It seems that she was compelled to teach; it was part of her philosophy.

The passing on or teaching of learned experience is a motif that we see as an undercurrent in the Manawaka novels. When Hagar leaves her mother's ring to Tina, there is a connection to another generation. Hagar also teaches Sandra Wong when she demonstrates a selfless act. Hagar has newly come to the community of women and she wishes this communion to continue. Stacey also connects with the next generation. Even though she plans to continue with Eros in her imagination, she acknowledges her eldest's daughter's right to experience the sexuality that had enhanced her own younger years. Morag, too, has already passed on independence and a form of communication to her daughter. She says Pique has "style" in her writing (Div. 4). As a song writer, the young woman continues to tell the type of story that her mother had written. "Pique's Song," in its grieving for the respect due to the Metis people, has parallels to Morag's *Spear of Innocence*, with its comment on the problems of women in society (Div. 187). Morag has passed the desire to be a social commentator to her daughter. Though we simply cannot be sure of Rachel's opportunity to impart wisdom to the next generation, we do know that, in Vancouver, she will be an aunt and model for Stacey's children. We can also speculate that her new momentum in life will be disseminated through her profession of teaching. The Manawaka protagonists are, by feminist definition,

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all "heroes" and pass on their experience to those who follow.

Language(and its problems) is another leitmotif in the Manawaka novels. Verduyn notes that, in our society mainly described by man-made language, women's perspectives remain "largely unarticulated -- unspoken, silenced, outside of language" (129). Therefore, it should not be surprising that each of Laurence's heroes struggles to "slay" a communication "dragon." Foster Stovel quotes Laurence as saying, "We must attempt to communicate however imperfectly, if we are not to succumb to despair or madness" (122). These protagonists are so troubled by their inability to be understood at times, that they question their sanity.

I believe that the importance of women communicating their thoughts and their emotions is central to Laurence's work. In a discussion of women's writing in the later twentieth century, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar include Laurence with poets and other writers "all of whom struggled to articulate -- in [Denise] Levertov's words -- 'what, woman, and who, myself, I am'" (1616). In The Diviners, Brooke says that Morag's character Lilac, in *Spear of Innocence*, is a protagonist "who is non-verbal, that is she talks a lot, but she can't communicate very well" and has nothing new to say. Morag explains that the importance of the character's communication is that "*she* says it" (emphasis added) (202), in other words, Lilac finds the courage to speak her feelings rather than hiding them. If Brooke, as a member of the patriarchy, does not understand or appreciate her message, it is his loss. I believe this is the point that Laurence makes about Hagar, Rachel, Stacey, and Morag: the lessons that these women communicate are important because *they* say them. Watching each woman struggle to overcome the problems of communicating with those

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around her is painful yet rewarding. Like Levertov's statement, the awkwardness of the communication from the Manawaka women shows the heroism in the fight to be understood.

In "Becoming My Hero, Becoming Myself," Barbara Godard explores the evolution of reading practices from women reading predominantly patriarchal texts to women reading and writing feminist texts. She maintains that in reading a patriarchal text, the female reader initially "attempts to create herself as a male in order to become her hero. Mentally she catalogues the female characters in the books she reads as insipid heroines or bitch goddesses, alienating herself from the life style, denying she is a female" (114). This brings to mind young "Peggy" Laurence having to pretend she is a female version of the adventurous Alan Breck. A resisting reader -- a feminist reader -- becomes aware of the "power nexus" that positions her as less than a hero and she takes "the first step in the creation of her own life" and refuses the female positions seen in patriarchal texts (Godard 115). According to Godard, the feminist reader is much more likely to "enter into a dialogue with a female writer. . . . We try to shape our lives as heroes, or more precisely, sheroes: we may become ourselves. Our drive to connect flows in the blood. To the text we bring our biological lives as women" (115-6). While I agree with Godard's ideas, I am concerned that, in effect, she excludes women from being heroes when she uses her own term, "shero." I feel that it is important that, in reading female writers, the feminist reader can see herself as heroic with whatever connotation she wishes for that term.

As an example of contemporary writers becoming free to write their own lives into whatever shape they wish, Godard gives Morag as an example. As a

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(fictitious) modern writer, Morag uses Catherine Parr Traill, a pioneer and author, as an heroic model for her own life and writing.

> Under the control of her model, the writer is only reader, not able to recognize and exert her creative powers, silenced by writer's block. When at last Morag acknowledges the different context in which her model lived and wrote, . . . the reader becomes aware of writing as *productivity*, as transformation, grounded, in this case, in the maternal practices of women's domestic labour. She see it as the shaping of meaning in the context of a specific life experience. (118)

In *Prospero's Child* Morag rewrites Prospero's story so that the female is the focus. Godard says that The Diviners is Laurence's rewriting of Prospero's story, "to show what the relationship between parent/ child, author / creature, writer / reader is like when the magician abdicates his power over the word and the knowledge it permits, ceases to be *author*-ity and lets everyone tell or write his / her own story" (118-9). When recognizing the freedom of rewriting a text, a writer allows the reader equal licence in reading herself as female AND as hero.

I believe it is with this sense of re-vision that women must come to Laurence's Manawaka novels. As women, we identify with Hagar, Rachel, Stacey, and Morag who are mothers, daughters, sisters, wives, and lovers; joyfully, we need not see ourselves either as male or as "others."

Berenice Fisher, who provides the definition of "hero" to A Feminist Dictionary, also writes an article entitled "Who Needs Women Heroes?" in which she asks: "How can we develop more realistic images of feminist

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heroism, and how can we convey these images to a broader range of women?" (13). I believe that Laurence is doing her part to answer these concerns. Laurence aims for "real characters" in her work and she means for us to identify with her protagonists: this is why she makes them insecure, stubborn, prideful, and cranky. But, in the end, all of the Manawaka women have become heroes in the eyes of the reader. While undertaking quests and "slaying dragons," these characters also become heroes in the feminist sense: they teach us how to struggle more effectively in our own lives. Because of the heroism shown by her protagonists, Margaret Laurence invites her readers to learn from and follow the lead of the Manawaka heroes.

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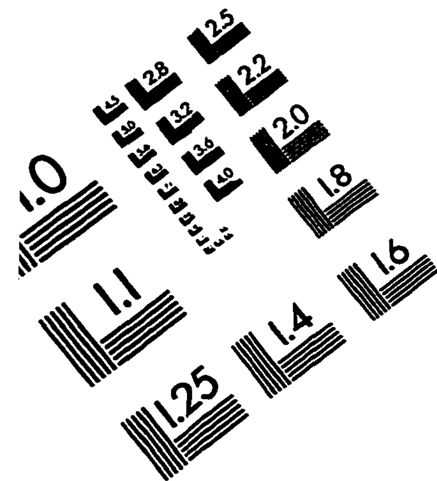

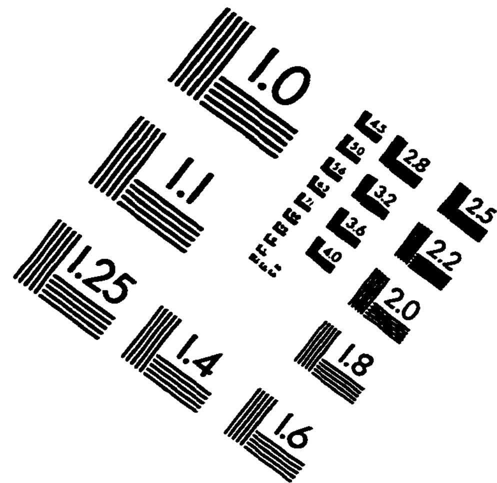

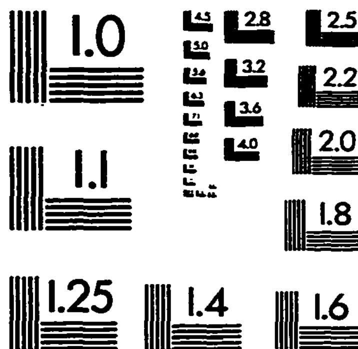

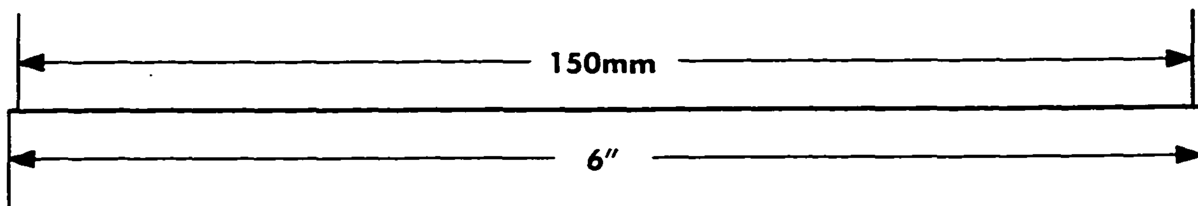

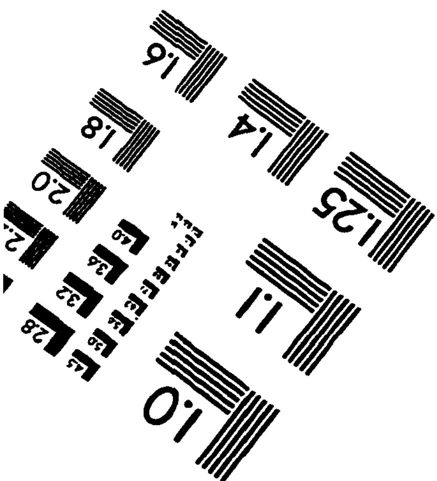

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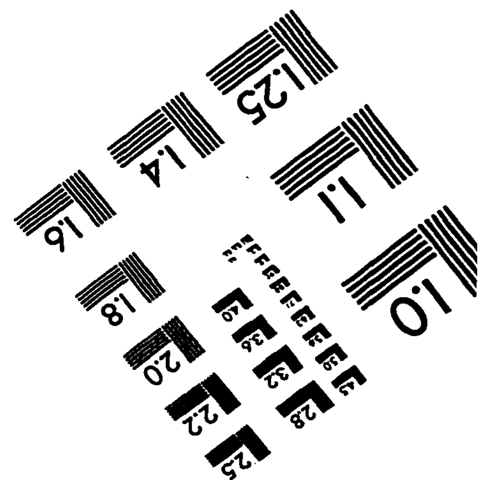

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