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Laurence’s Manawaka Stories“

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Christina Seidl

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o.Univ.-Prof. Dr. Waldemar Zacharasiewicz

In loving memory of my mother, Wenche Seidl, who never doubted my potential to reach my goals.

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1. Introduction

With my paper, I will describe the reasons for the dissatisfaction of the protagonists in Margaret Laurence's *A Jest of God* and *The Diviners* in the fictional prairie town of Manawaka. I will explain how, by experiencing intimate relationships with representatives of different cultural backgrounds, they are assisted in gaining personal liberation.

With the help of an initial historical overview of the Scottish and Ukrainian immigration and the emergence of the Métis communities in Canada, the cultural differences between the diverse ethnicities in Manawaka will be better understood and will lead to a deeper insight into the social hierarchy of the town. In the following chapter, I will draw attention to Rachel Cameron's feelings of repression and loneliness as a result of social expectations and how she eventually breaks free from her feeling of imprisonment as a result of experiencing a profound sense of joy and fulfilment through her contact with a descendant of Ukrainian immigrants. Furthermore, I will portray Morag Gunn's desperation for freedom from the small town gossip, as well as her search for her true identity and how she ultimately manages to find peace within herself after relating with various complex and wounded male personalities. To conclude my research, I will compare the protagonists according to their similar inner struggles and individual paths to maturity.

2. Building the Canadian Nation¹

As the protagonists of the novels *A Jest of God* and *The Diviners*, Rachel Cameron and Morag Gunn search for their own identity as descendants of Scottish immigrants in Canada, it is necessary to understand the development of Canadian immigration and how the English-speaking citizens managed to dominate all fields of Canadian society.

A century after Columbus's arrival in South and Central America in 1492, the Italian sea-captain, John Cabot, and French mariner Jacques Cartier became familiar with Canada's eastern gateway. John Cabot touched the north of Cape Breton Island, declaring the area property of the English. In 1535, by following the St. Lawrence, Cartier discovered the area of Quebec, formerly named 'Stadacona' by the Indians, which led him further direction Montreal, known by the natives as 'Hochelaga'. After Sir Francis Drake had reached the Pacific by sailing around the Horn, he arrived at today's San Francisco. The area would from then on be referred to as New Albion, as another English territory. Drake's discoveries awakened England's curiosity about the large area of the New World. Sailors following Elizabeth's orders began to search for a trail to the Far East by travelling around the North of America, the so-called North-West passage. In 1610, Hudson discovered Hudson's Bay, which further led him to the east coast and James Bay, in the center of northern Canada.

2.1. A Wave of Migration from Overseas

While the first Scots left their native country after 1770, a far greater number of Brits began to populate Australia, New Zealand, and the British provinces in North America in 1815. Among the reasons for emigrating was to settle on soil which had up to then been untouched by humans. As the United States were closer to Britain than Australia, 800,000 British citizens entered the New World between the years 1815 and 1850. Thus, the number of inhabitants in the USA tripled since the settlers only amounted to 400,000 at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Another motive for rapid emigration was the desire for harmony after having been at war with the Thirteen Colonies, and with France and Napoleon. Fatigued and in despair due to unemployment and poverty as a result of the wars, Europeans hoped to find

¹ The information on the ensuing historical sketch is taken from George Brown's *Building the Canadian Nation*, which was firstly published in 1942, see Bibliography

advantageous living conditions in the New World and elsewhere the colonies. In the course of the 1830's and '40's as trade began to flourish, the media provided positive outlooks on pioneering experiences.

On the one hand the numerous British immigrants were assisted by the British government and altruistic organizations on the British Isles and in North America, while on the other hand, an even larger number of relatively wealthy people managed to start anew on their own in their new countries. Yet despite their fervent conviction of finding peace and prosperity in the New World, many travellers died on their journeys or upon arrival since their ships had been overloaded and diseases had spread quickly. Despite their hasty departure for the new world, thousands of emigrants died when cholera spread in 1832 and when 'ship fever' broke out after the potato famine in Ireland in 1847.

Despite the loss of many lives, the new immigrants contributed to a large increase in the number of citizens, new settlements and successful commerce. Between the periods of 1815 to 1850, hundreds of towns came into being in the eastern provinces of Canada, developing similar town structures with stores and governmental houses, such as schools and churches.

When the number of Canadian inhabitants reached over 2,300,000 by 1851, the English and the French experienced tensions since the political goal was to enlarge the number of English speakers in Lower Canada. Now that businesses lay emphasis on timber, wheat and farmers, interest in furs had disappeared in the eastern regions of Canada.

After Champlain's introduction of the nature of French living standards, the far more numerous English-speaking immigrants dominated the scene, arriving from the British Isles and the United States. At a time when these pioneers were greatly assisted by the churches, the Church of England was established in Halifax. Soon Presbyterian, Methodist, Congregational, and Baptist churches expanded from Nova Scotia to other areas. The Reverend Thomas McCulloch arrived at Pictou as a Presbyterian missionary from Scotland, founded the Pictou Academy in 1816 and later became the first principal of Dalhousie University. Another Scotsman named John Strachan began to spread the influence of the Church of England in Upper Canada from 1799 on. As a result of his efforts, King's College, now the University of Toronto, and Trinity University were created in 1827 and 1852, respectively. The first Roman Catholic priest in the St. Lawrence was Rev. Alexander

Macdonell, originating from the Highlands of Scotland. The Methodist preacher Adolphus Egerton Ryerson contributed to the standardized organization of schools in the provinces.

Apart from the nearly two million immigrants from the United States and Great Britain between 1897 and 1914, another million arrived from Germany, Austria-Hungary, the Russian Ukraine, the Balkan countries, and Italy. While British and American immigrants could quickly adjust to Canadian living standards and lifestyles, Eastern and Southern Europeans were faced with far greater difficulties concerning the foreign language and customs of the New World. While all Canadian provinces welcomed these foreigners, the West was the most strikingly affected at the beginning of the twentieth century. With the assistance of churches and pioneering families emphasizing the importance of school, many small towns came into being and prairies were dominated by grain farmers within a short period of time. Not only was the West largely populated by non-English-speaking inhabitants, but tens of thousands of English speakers left the Eastern provinces in order to start life anew in the West, by contributing in building railways, erecting churches and developing institutions, education, industrial techniques and other occupational prospects.

After the two provinces Saskatchewan and Alberta had been formed in 1888, they were ruled by the Dominion. However, twenty-five years later, they were given equal status with all other provinces. With the agency of homestead systems large amounts of land were acquired by the government and individuals. After the Klondike gold rush had attracted thirty thousand men from across the world in 1897, steamboats were integrated in the river and railways were extended.

After a large number of Canadian soldiers had fought during the First World War, Canada was included as a member of the League of Nations in 1919 and was nominated as a component of the League's Council. Still representing the British Commonwealth in 1939, 265,000 Canadians offered their services during the Second World War. When these men had defended their posts in Newfoundland, Iceland, the British West Indies, Hong Kong and the British Isles, the Canada's navy recruited another 30,000 volunteers. The country of Canada was chosen to host the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan, since she was unlikely to be attacked and was endowed with a vast territory suitable for military training.

2.2. An Historical Overview of the Métis²

Since Jules, as a representative of the Métis, greatly contributes to Morag's personal liberation and fulfilment in *The Diviners*, it is necessary to gain an insight into the origins of the Métis. With this historical overview the cultural differences between the Métis and the Scottish descendants in Manawaka may be understood on a far deeper level.

The Métis societies developed as a result of 'First Nations' and French immigrants being involved in the fur trade. They have emphasized their diverse heritage and have considered themselves an uncommon, distinctive result of unique events and conditions. They originally raised their children in a manner in which these would be occupied in various fields of the fur trade. These family units shared customs which differentiated them both from First Nations and Euro-Canadians. They grew to cover more than twenty-five per cent of the native population during the 1870s, consisting of 40,000 Indians and 15,000 Métis. The two most famous groups were the Great Lakes Métis, who came into sight after the destruction of Huronia in 1648-50, and prospered in the century from 1725 to 1825; and the Plains Métis of the Prairie-parkland, originating in the Red River Settlement, but eventually moving northwest to the area of Fort Edmonton between the years 1785 and 1885.

2.2.1. Origins of the Plains Métis

The Plains Métis have their origins in the emergence of freemen who preferred to end their service in the trading system further west than at Montreal at the end of the eighteenth century. They supplied necessities and furs to the forts. Their thriving lifestyle demanded the vigorous collaboration of the brokers in the trading posts and the toleration of the Indian groups with whom they lived in the prairie-parkland region.

When Western Europeans discovered the bountiful natural resources in the New World, their first encounters with natives led to a number of years of trade with these people. In particular, the Indians from further west in the country provided furs in exchange for European goods. The trade business with Europeans began at the coast of Brazil in the 1500s and extended to the shores of the Hudson Bay in the latter part of the seventeenth century. This structure

² The following historical sketch is based on *Native Peoples: The Canadian Experience*, edited by R. Bruce Morrison and C. Roderick Wilson, which was reprinted by the John Deyell Company in 1989, see Bibliography

furthermore spread along the St. Lawrence to Quebec in 1608 with the help of Samuel de Champlain, and proceeded to Montreal after 1641, when the Europeans agreed to co-operate intensely with the remarkably skilled Huron traders. Some French agents accompanied their native business partners during their hunting activities, joining their material good fortune with their counterparts and marrying women of trading families. These intercultural trading partners developed solid friendships and contributed to raising children, who for the most part would grow up within the Huron lifestyle. The small number of Métis children living in New France were referred to as ‘Canadien’.

However, due to attacks by the Iroquois in 1648-49, Huronia was ruined. Social and political factors in the Great Lakes, as well as constant Iroquois assaults on hunters, prevented Huronia’s successors, the Ottawa, from restoring the trading business. From then on “en déroutine” (itinerant peddling) dominated the scene, during which Canadiens adopted the role of the Indian traders, bringing furs from the interior to individual merchants in Montreal. The leader of this industry tended to accompany his hunters during their activities, to share his material fortune and to marry among their women. During this time, business for brokers flourished, while many sons raised within these communities took on tasks as Indian hunters and trappers, and daughters were married to other clerks to maintain good relations with other vendors. Thus, the Great Lakes Metis societies emerged, which after 1763 added British merchants to their leading figures. Only during the next century did these communities fail when US American settlers began to dominate the area.

2.2.2. The Emergence of the Plains Métis

Before 1773, Cree and Assiniboiné Indians had traded furs to the Hudson’s Bay Company; during half of the year, they only hunted buffalo in the parkland regions. When their services were no longer needed, they tended to hunt buffalo all year round. As a result of not requiring European goods, many of these Indians rarely returned to their European business partners. Other freemen who maintained interest in European products remained in close contact with the trading posts, and in turn were given better prices than the Indians previously as their appearance became more valuable. The descendents of this new generation were associated with the Plains Métis.

2.2.3. The Red River Plains Métis

The union of the Assiniboine and Red Rivers was the core of the Red River Settlement. It consisted of roughly 55 percent Métis in 1835, with a small number of Canadien members further south and west of the river. Other Métis communities lived in the north, and were neighbours of the “Hudson Bay English” and the Indian Village (Saulteaux and Swampy Cree). Both Métis communities understood each other in Cree or Saulteaux, however they were divided by being French and Catholic, or British and Protestant. The Red River and the Métis living on the Saskatchewan were differentiated by their own churches, schools, and various fields of the neighbouring administration such as magistrates.

Although these Métis had peacefully received the Highland Scots crofters in the spring of 1812, they were persuaded by the North West Company that the new settlers were seizing Métis property. Tensions led to the Battle of Seven Oaks in June, 1816, resulting in the deaths of more than twenty Scots inflicted by a group of Métis.

In the 1820s, Métis families remained on river lots in the south and west of the Settlement with support from the Company. Later on most families journeyed to Pembina, bordering the United States.

In 1849, Guillaume Sayer was found guilty of having traded furs in disobedience to the Hudson’s Bay Company. 300 Métis used the opportunity to convey their frustration concerning their unequal treatment as fur traders by encircling the court house.

In 1870, Riel’s government was convinced that the Métis communities had developed a strong enough political system in order for their lands to maintain businesses. Ignoring the Métis’ desire for trade, the Canadians believed in the necessity of granting individual citizenship to Indians, instead of supporting a federal group. These differing ideas led to the passing of the Manitoba Act.

During the year 1874, frustrated by not having reached their goals with the Manitoba Treaty, a large number of Métis migrated toward the west. This relocation from the Red River Settlement symbolized an escape from a discouraging future and the hope for promising prospects elsewhere. Métis and Indians shared the desire to be accepted as companies

contributing to the success of business in the West. However, with their loss at the Battle of Batoche in May, 1885, Métis aspirations seemed to vanish in the course of the following years. Many Métis were relocated to the edges of society, underlining their own French and Catholic background and clinging to their ambition of retaining their own government.

During the years 1896 to 1911, eager settlers from Ontario and Upper Canada were willing to pay for land grants in order to begin grain farming. Due to lack of possessions, many Métis were not able to afford these Halfbreed scrip land grants, which resulted in their scattering to the North and West fringes of society, where they often to live together with relatives.

2.2.4. The Métis Today³

Today, the Métis communities predominantly live in Ontario and Canada's three Prairie Provinces; Manitoba, Alberta and Saskatchewan. With the help of the Métis Nation, founded in the course of the Constitution Act in 1982, the Métis strive for acceptance and understanding for their native independence, the expansion of Métis communities and their desire to be part of the Canadian confederacy. In 1983, the Métis Nation formed the Métis National Council as a nationwide voice. According to the census of 2001, 262,785 Métis lived in Ontario and in the western provinces of Canada, embodying 26% percent of the aboriginal residents, among which two-thirds lived in large Canadian cities. With the help of the countrywide classification for Métis nationality in September 2002, approximately 350,000 to 400,000 were said to be of Métis origin. In 2007, the Métis represented the largest Canadian aboriginal working force, reaching 64.1%, among which 60% of Métis women tended to obtain professional careers. The most aboriginal peoples engaged in business were in Alberta, Saskatchewan, Quebec and Manitoba.

³ This brief survey is based on the internet sites on the *Métis National Council*, *Métis Nation (Canada)* and the article on *Social Determinants of Health*, see Bibliography

2.3. Ukrainian Immigration to Canada⁴

In *A Jest of God*, Rachel Cameron experiences a transformation in her own personality after having an affair with Nick, a Ukrainian descendant. Therefore, it is essential to comprehend the reasons for and the struggles of Ukrainian immigration in Canada.

2.3.1. Characteristics of the Ukrainian People

Ukraine was a feudal society before it partially was divided as subject of the Habsburg crown land, and in part incorporated by Russia. When the aristocracy began to communicate in Russian, the working class maintained its Ukrainian language and customs. These people concentrated on their own good harvests, leading to their personal feeling of freedom in their homeland. However, they felt repression and as a consequence many left for Canada. With their positive outlooks on the future, their power of endurance and humorous nature, they learned to overcome difficulties and establish their own homes in the New World. In 1891, the first Ukrainians began their homestead in Winnipeg, encouraging thousands from future generations to follow their example.

2.3.2. Waves of Ukrainian Emigration

At the end of the nineteenth century, Ukrainians were invited to settle on the prairies by the Canadian government. The first group of settlements developed in Winnipeg and at Beaver Creek, forty miles east of Edmonton. Ukrainians first hoped to find new agricultural opportunities in neighbouring countries, but eventually they eagerly entered Canada as a result of the lack of political liberty, without any possibility of higher education in their own language or military advancement in Central or Eastern Europe and extending poverty due to financial crises during the Habsburg reign and the resulting loss of land. In 1896, a large group of Ukrainians left for Canada, convinced of the liberties of democracy and the advantages of settling in a vast area of unspoiled land. From then on, until 1914, the number of Ukrainians arriving in Canada grew from year to year, with a peak at 22,000 in the year 1914 when the First World War broke out. The estimated number of Ukrainian immigrants reached 200,000, though many of them were registered as Austrian, Russian, Polish,

⁴ The knowledge on Ukrainian immigration in this section is taken from Senator Paul Yuzyk's *Ukrainian Canadians*, published in 1967, and Ol'ha Woycenko's *The Ukrainians in Canada*, revised in 1968, see Bibliography

Hungarian or Romanian. They put down their roots in unsettled regions, beginning from the south east of Manitoba, continuing across the prairies to northern Alberta.

On millions of acres of untouched soil, Ukrainian immigrants began to cultivate farms and establish communities. Having arrived in Canada as skilled farmers from the “black-earth” region of Ukraine, they contributed to Canada’s prosperity in the cultivation of wheat, oats and vegetables. They have also been involved in the construction of railroads, buildings and houses, mining, manufacturing and businesses.

Each of the three stages of Ukrainian immigration to Canada came to pass as a result of different conditions in the motherland. In the course of the first wave between 1891 and 1914, the number of permanent farmers reached 100,000. Among these the majority were young men seeking excitement, who settled vast areas on the prairies. Due to their lack of capital, poor education and limited knowledge of the English language, most of their efforts to build up businesses failed. Only after the first Canadian-born Ukrainians entered the scene, did small bakeries and shoe-repair shops begin to have financial success.

During the inter-war era, the second group of immigrants reached 45,000 citizens. These were often better educated than the first group and sought political freedom after having suffered during the First World War. Some turned to agriculture, while the majority strove for better occupational opportunities in the cities during the Great Depression. These immigrants were supported by the Canadian-born descendents of those of the first phase and together they developed religious and secular institutions, as well as a Ukrainian press.

Although the immigrants of the third wave, the post-war period, also left their homeland due to political injustices, they were largely professional tradesmen and specialized in academic areas. Thus, they tended to move to Ontario and establish their own national organizations, refusing to co-operate with the already established Ukrainians from previous stages. They amounted to 38,000. With their professional abilities, they ultimately achieved a breakthrough for Ukrainian-Canadians and established companies and businesses in a large variety of fields, such as hotels, bakeries, agriculture and manufacturing.

Then, most Ukrainians originally settled in the prairie regions, while many have moved to cities, particularly in Ontario, throughout the twentieth century as Canadians commonly

moved from rural to urban areas in the hopes of achieving greater professional success. Thus, the largest concentrations of Ukrainians in the urban environment today are in Winnipeg, Toronto, Ontario and Edmonton, Alberta.

During the First World War, 10,000 Ukrainians volunteered to assist their Canadian countrymen against Germany and Austria-Hungary, despite having to undergo discrimination and even aggression from many British-Canadians. Many of these Ukrainians lost their lives while fighting against the inhabitants of their former homeland. By the time of the Second World War, the Ukrainian-Canadians were entirely accepted as Canadian citizens and 40,000 of them supported their new country in the army, navy and air force.

According to the Toronto-Ukrainian Genealogy Group, after the third wave of immigration began to decrease by 1960, a fourth phase began in 1991 as a result of the Ukraine abandoning its ties to the Soviet Union. These recent arrivals have tended to remain among their own group and have not valued the communication with already established Ukrainian-Canadians from former immigration phases. Members of the latest influx have largely sent their children to Ukrainian schools, have been purchasing Ukrainian magazines and newspapers and have been greatly concerned with the political development in Ukraine.

2.3.3. Ukrainian Church Life

The majority of the first settlers had shared the Greek Catholic religion of their Galician homeland. In the course of their arrival the Ukrainian Catholic Church grew quickly. On the other hand, the Ukrainian Greek Orthodox Church also developed and began to expand. While both congregations developed from the Church of the Byzantine rite introduced under Grand Prince Volodymyr the Great, they split with the Catholic Church, adhering to the superiority of the Patriarch of Constantinople and not of the Pope in Rome. When the Uniat Church was declared in 1596, accepting the Roman Catholic belief and disciplines but maintaining the Old Slavic liturgy, many Ukrainians dreaded that their country would assimilate with Latin and Polish traditions. Thus, the Greek Catholic Church developed into the national church of Western Ukraine. The other parts of the country remained Greek Orthodox. Most immigrants in Canada came from West Ukraine and were Greek Catholics, while a dissenting group began to follow the Greek Orthodox Church in 1918. Since Ukrainians were very religious, they established church organizations upon arrival to help one

another with their initial settling in the new country. In the course of events, secular institutions developed, such as literary groups, educational institutions and newspapers. When the Ukrainian Canadian Committee was founded in 1949, all Ukrainian organizations were inter-connected and supported by the committee.

Similar to maintaining their religion and traditions, they continue to speak the language of their ancestors with family members.

Ukrainian immigrants from all three phases and their descendants valued the political freedom and democracy in the new country, as opposed to the memories of previous injustices on all levels of Ukrainian society. Despite their differing backgrounds, all Canadian-born Ukrainians identify with one another through their common religion, language and culture.

2.3.4. Ukrainian Canadians Today⁵

Today, the areas of digital technology, commerce and free enterprise have gained an important role for Ukrainian employees. On the other hand, their involvement in manufacturing, the human sciences and administration has declined. They are, however, well represented in the field of medicine and education.

Not only are they known for their agricultural progress, but also for their folk-dancing in colourful clothing, their handicraft and their literature. Ukrainian history, language and literature can be learned at elite universities in both English and French-speaking Canada.

Grateful for political and social freedom, as opposed to having been exploited and politically subjugated by leading powers in the Ukraine, they have increasingly become involved in the political scene in Canada, beginning with municipal affairs, working as mayors and moving up the political hierarchy to the position of senators. One of them, Ramon John Hnatyshyn, also even served as the 24th Canadian Governor General from 1990 to 1995.⁶

⁵ The following overview is based on *Ukrainian Canadians* by Senator Paul Yuzyk and a lecture by Professor Isajiw summarized in the Toronto Ukrainian Genealogy Group Site, lastly updated on January 14, 2011, see Bibliography

⁶ Information taken from *The Governor General of Canada*, see Bibliography

3. Rachel's Personality and Development

3.1. Rachel's Heritage

3.1.1. Actions to Prevent Gossip

Rachel is a descendant of Scottish immigrants in Canada. She experiences the Scottish heritage in her family through having strict parents, who cause her to feel as though she constantly must be doing something productive.

Manawakan values are work, devotion to duty, "decency," and respectability – above all, respectability. Rachel has incorporated these values, often against her will and better understanding. (Morley 88)

Although she is not entirely clear whether she believes in God or not, she regularly attends Sunday service of the Anglican Church, firstly because it is a tradition for the family to attend and, secondly, her mother would not understand why Rachel would not want to go. "The source of Rachel's fear of foolishness is the small-town emphasis on appearances – how things will *look* – at its strongest on Sundays" (Stovel 29). As a result, Rachel feels forced to go to church in order to prevent the Reverend from wondering whether she is not feeling well, and in order to prevent a bad impression on the community if the school teacher did not attend Sunday service (JG 45). She feels trapped in her narrow world, as she fears that she immediately would become the town's gossip if she did not follow these expectations. "Rachel succumbs to her pressure to attend church for the sake of appearance" (Morley 94). Since she is very self-conscious, Rachel would feel very humiliated if she did cause the people in her community to feel disappointed by her actions.

Rachel and her mother both feel embarrassed when an old man wishes to perform a solo in church despite his bad voice (JG 48). Rachel remembers a mongoloid boy who used to attend service and would "talk aloud, in a high slurred voice, all through the service...and wouldn't leave unless he started saying swear words...And everyone would sit with burning faces, pretending they hadn't heard" (JG 49). Here Rachel makes it clear that the reaction of feeling uncomfortable when observing inappropriate behaviour has not only been inherited within the generations of her family, but it is a common attitude of the members of the Manawakan Anglican Church that all members feel embarrassed when they witness something inappropriate. "More than madness, Rachel fears being a fool [...] She loathes seeing other people make fools of themselves" (Stovel 29).

Rachel experiences the authoritarian, hegemonic push and pull of her mother, of Willard Siddley, the principal, and of others who wish to dominate her. By such means Manawaka society reproduces itself as it moulds individuals to accept the *status quo* and their place within it.⁷

One of the strict expectations of Manawaka society is for girls to maintain their virginity until they are married. Rachel does not resent this religious demand since she also desires to marry and have a family of her own. Mrs. Cameron expresses her deep-felt disappointment and anger when she tells Rachel that Cassie is pregnant with twins out of wedlock (JG 64). Being pregnant with a child out of wedlock is regarded as a sin, while expecting twins means that the transgression is an even larger disgrace. Rachel, however, does not feel the same shame as her mother for Cassie having gone against the Anglican belief. Rachel rather feels concern for how Cassie will manage to bring up her children while the whole town will be gossiping about her and her children for several years after the children are born. Rachel is fully aware of how harsh the town's criticism is, and therefore cannot attempt to help Cassie, as she then also would be frowned upon.

The town imposes rigid standards and restraints on its people – a Protestant work ethic, an unrelenting drive towards respectability and success as these are corporately and narrowly defined – and at the same time its ethos provides a strength of purpose that supports its people, conformists and rebels alike.⁸

When Rachel has an intimate relationship with Nick for the first time, she is reluctant to undress in the open field, not only because she is still a virgin and does not know Nick very well, but because it would be a disgrace in the eyes of her mother and the town if she was seen naked in public. “Rachel cannot think where to go for contraceptive advice, because she fears the ‘prairie drums’ (81) that will carry the news directly to the town gossip” (Stovel 23). When she fears the possibility of becoming pregnant, she is afraid that her mother may have another heart attack due to a resulting shock and shame felt vis-a-vis the members of the community. Rachel is aware that she would never be respected anymore if she really were to become pregnant out of wedlock. Therefore, one of her first thoughts after having had her first sexual experience with Nick is to run away in order to prevent herself and her child from being persecuted for the rest of their lives.

⁷ Hughes, Kenneth James. “Politics and A Jest of God.” *Margaret Laurence: An Appreciation*. Ed. Christl Verduyn. Peterborough: Broadview Press, 1988. p. 101-127, here 103

⁸ Thomas, Clara. “Planted firmly in some soil: Margaret Laurence and the Canadian Tradition in Fiction.” *Critical Approaches to the Fiction of Margaret Laurence*. Ed. Colin Nicholson. Vancouver: U of British Columbia Press, 1990. p. 1-15, here 4

When she goes to Doctor Raven for a pregnancy test, he outrages her by confirming complacently, “there’s no question of one thing, anyway, with a sensible girl like yourself” (178). (Stovel 61)

With this utterance Dr. Raven also embodies the Scottish values of the community of Manawaka, which he, without a doubt, believes Rachel fulfils.

Thus, many of Rachel’s actions are done out of fear of gossip, or of disappointing her mother. Although she is middle-aged, she feels the burden of having to live together with her mother, as she otherwise would feel guilty for being regarded as a selfish and inconsiderate daughter. While she longs for liberation from her oppressed state, her Scottish values force her to remain in her mother’s house without any chance to personally develop. “Rachel’s real enemy, the true antagonist of the novel, is the town, for Manawaka imprisons Rachel with manacles of repression that stifle her freedom” (Stovel 27).

3.1.2. Scottish Restrictions Compared with Ukrainian Frankness

When Nick narrates the story of his father’s experience on the immigrant ship, Rachel becomes angry when Nick assumes that Rachel cannot sympathize with what he is talking about (JG 112).

My grandfather came over on an immigrant ship, as a boy...None of it filtered down to me. So then I forget, and feel apologetic towards people like your family, that they went through all that. But so did mine – only it was longer ago, and the memory’s gone now. (JG 112)

Since the members of Nick’s family express their feelings openly at home and in public, Nick’s father often re-tells his story of his immigration experience. By hearing this story many times throughout his life, Nick is always fully aware of his family background. While Rachel is also aware of her Scottish ancestry through religion and daily rituals, her family never expresses emotion (JG 94). It is common among the Scots to speak in order to avoid silence, as stillness is regarded as embarrassing when several people gather. However, Rachel mentions that her grandfather had immigrated to Canada on an immigrant ship, but that she never heard any stories about it. Similarly, although her father was a soldier in the Great War, he also never told her about his experience (JG 112). In this way, the negative emotions associated with the difficulties of immigration and assimilating into the community

have disappeared from Rachel's family and she will never know how her father or her grandfather truly felt as newcomers in Canada.

Although Nick's parents cherish their relationship with the Podiuks, who share the same immigration experience as Nestor, Nick does not wish to meet them when he travels to Winnipeg where they are said to live. Nick is relieved to hear that they are deceased, as he does not associate his personality with Ukraine. Nick confesses that he does not care about Ukraine although he knows that this hurts his father's feelings (JG 112-113). "Nick remembers the alienation felt by Ukrainian children in a town where the power structure, the hegemony, was Scottish" (Morley 97).

While Rachel cannot tell any of those stories, she feels embarrassed when Nick suddenly changes the subject and asks her if she likes teaching. She thinks "I'd rather listen to him talking. There isn't much to say about myself, nothing that can be spoken" (JG 112). Since Rachel has always lived in Manawaka surrounded by Presbyterians, Nick's family history seems much more exotic than her own. Therefore, she feels as though there neither is anything interesting to say about her life nor about her family's history.

"Rachel is attracted to someone who possesses a liveliness and boldness which sharply contrast with her own restrained, but 'respectable,' family background".⁹ She gives an impression of how she experiences the Scots and Ukrainians in town. She remarks that they

always seemed more resistant...more free...More outspoken...You always think things are easier somewhere else. I used to get rides in winter on your dad's sleigh, and I remember the great bellowing voice he had, and how emotional he used to get – cursing at the horses, or else almost crooning to them. In my family, you didn't get emotional. It was frowned upon. (JG 94)

In comparison with her own family, she feels as though she had to control her emotions and to learn how to behave suitably in public. Among Nick's family members she notices strong emotions and how the family members seem to be more convinced of their own beliefs and attitudes. While Rachel is controlled by her mother's worries, expectations and the town's gossip, the Ukrainians seem to behave how they wish and do not have to worry about anyone else's opinion but their own. These are some of Rachel's reasons why she is attracted to Nick. He represents the person she wishes to be.

⁹ Blewett, David. "The Unity of the Manawaka Cycle." *Margaret Laurence: An Appreciation*. Ed. Christl Verduyn. Peterborough: Broadview Press, 1988. p. 176-192, here 181

3.2. Rachel's Insecurity

3.2.1. Fears

“Fear is the dominant force in *A Jest of God* [...] Rachel Cameron's story is a study of anxiety bordering on madness, and of the society that nurtures these fears” (Morley 88). Already as a teenager Rachel feels uncomfortable when going out with friends because she fears that nobody would ask her to dance. She is not brave enough to invent excuses as she is used to as a grown-up (JG 66). Her insecurity begins at a very young age, and she is not able to overcome her difficulties, as her environment does not change and she does not have any opportunities to gain more confidence. Apart from becoming a teacher her life remains similar to her childhood; she still lives in her mother's house and, in this way, is still dependent on her mother.

3.2.1.1. Rachel's Fears at School

The novel begins with second-grade teacher Rachel Cameron reflecting on her childhood at the same school she now teaches.

Rachel's role is reversed [...] Rachel may have the power, but she feels imprisoned in this school where she has been trapped for fourteen years in a perpetual childhood [...] she does not have the courage to break out of the childish cocoon in which she has been enclosed. (Stovel 24)

She is now “no longer the one who was scared of not pleasing, but the thin giant She behind the desk at front, the one with the power of picking any coloured chalk out of the box and writing anything at all on the blackboard” (JG 7). She is proud to have power, but at the same time feels incredibly intimidated by her own thoughts, which she believes are becoming eccentric because she experiences the same routine every day. “Widows can become extremely odd as well, but at least they have the excuse of grief” (JG 8). “Rachel is painfully conscious of the social myth that women, especially single women, are prone to hysteria and eccentricity” (Morley 92). While the children she teaches eventually grow up and begin their own lives, she continues her profession as a teacher in the same building where she herself has once attended school.

As Rachel stands inside the classroom, she is haunted by the discontinuities between her inner and outer worlds, by shifting signifiers, mishearings and misinterpretations, while at the same time she is conscious of the doubleness of her perceptions.¹⁰

She is afraid of the school principal, Willard, although he is always welcoming to her and never gives a bad report on her teaching.

It's that pompous manner of his, I think, the way he has of seeming to insist that his slightest word has significant meaning, and if you aren't able to see it, the lack is yours. (JG 12)

She fears that Willard will scold her for not disciplining her students, but he merely invites Rachel to dinner. She does not appreciate the offer, as she feels as though Willard pitied her for being a lonely single teacher. She rejects Calla's invitation to join the church service that night for the same reason. Although Willard and Calla are both happy to see her and treat her with respect and friendliness, she feels incredibly uncomfortable around them and uses her mother's bridge night as an excuse to not be able to spend time with them in the evening.

After speaking with Willard about James Doherty's continual absence, Rachel is worried that the principal might beat him when he is sent to his room for not attending school. Rachel wishes to go in and stop Willard, but she remains at her desk "thinking quite calmly how much I would like to leave this school. How is it I can still be afraid of losing my job?" (JG 32). Margaret Laurence states that

[b]ecause everything comes through Rachel's consciousness and because her mind is so completely, believably, neurotically obsessed, she cannot really see the world around her or the people in it. (qtd. in Stovel 86)

Although she is worried about James being intimidated and punished by the principal, Rachel does not feel the courage to protect him from Willard's beatings. She is on good terms with her boss but she rather fantasizes about being somewhere out of town than thinking of how to help her student. Due to her own insecurities she believes that she cannot please her boss, her students, and not even herself.

¹⁰ Howells, Coral Ann. "Weaving Fabrications: Women's Narratives in *A Jest of God* and *The Fire-Dwellers*." *Critical Approaches to the Fiction of Margaret Laurence*. Ed. Colin Nicholson. Vancouver: U of British Columbia Press. p. 93-105, here 96

3.2.1.2. Rachel's Fear at the Tabernacle

Calla invites Rachel to join her at the special church service and “has warned Rachel that ‘the gift of tongues’ has been granted to the congregation of the Tabernacle” (Stovel 52). This causes Rachel to fear that Calla may receive the gift of tongues and Rachel next to her would feel embarrassed by Calla’s uncontrolled speech. “Most threatening of all to Rachel is the congregation of the Tabernacle” (Stovel 52), but she knows that she cannot let Calla down again, so she joins her for the service.

It is not so much fear of open utterance that deters Rachel when she is invited to go to the Manawaka Tabernacle of the Risen and Reborn where some of the congregation have received the gift of tongues, but rather a fear of the incomprehensible.¹¹

“She is appalled when a young man stands, his eyes closed, ‘like a blind seer [...] come to tell the king the words that no one could listen to and live’[...] Rachel is terrified that Calla will rise and testify” (Stovel 53). Rachel feels uncomfortable when standing up to sing, when sitting down and when hearing the preacher cite St. Paul, “*God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints...all things shall be made clear, and the doubts of the doubters shall be laid low*” (JG 39). With his sermon the preacher declares that there is no need to be frightened, and yet Rachel becomes more and more afraid. Despite her desperate desire to leave, escape seems impossible since she neither wants to disappoint Calla nor the other familiar people within the congregation.

Saint Paul advises moderation – of this we are well aware. And that the gift of tongues should not replace the more usual forms of worship – of this we are well aware. But if we speak of ecstatic utterances, my friends, we must ask – ecstatic for whom? In the early Church, the listeners were ecstatic. Yes, the listeners as well as those gifted by the Spirit. Thus can we all participate – yes, participate – in the joy felt and known by any one of our brothers or sisters as they experience that deep and private enjoyment, that sublime edification, the infilling of the Spirit – (JG 40)

With this utterance the preacher says that the act of speaking in tongues is not the clearest path to Christ, but if one is blessed with the experience others should rejoice with him. This statement might help Rachel to calm down and understand the deeper meaning of the “gift of tongues” she so fears. However, by the time these words are spoken, she is so frightened that she cannot concentrate on the content any longer. Indeed a man in the midst of the congregation seems to begin to speak in tongues, which causes Rachel to feel her deepest

¹¹ C.f.: Howells 97

sense of shame and fear. When the voice stops, the preacher sings, “*Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel/ Shall come to thee, O Israel!*” (JG 42). Although this experience would be associated with joy and ecstasy, Rachel can no longer stay there and finally realizes that it was herself that was speaking in tongues.

Rachel’s fear of religious exhibitionism is a symptom of her more serious repression, which is emotional and sexual [...] The voice that Rachel hears is the voice of her long suppressed desires, buried in an emotional crypt but now dragged forth [...] though still incomprehensible, that is, cryptic, to others. But this traumatic episode is the beginning of Rachel’s discovery that giving voice to one’s emotions, that is, being a fool, is healthier than the decorous stifling of expression that Manawakan respectability encourages.¹²

Safe at Calla’s flat, Rachel can allow herself to cry and let out her emotions, until the moment when Calla kisses her on the cheek and then on the lips. These actions cause Rachel to hurry out of the flat and run home.

Here we hear the outcry of both Rachel’s spirit and body, her need for both spiritual and sexual love erupting after a lifetime of repression. But Rachel rejects this knowledge and dismisses her outburst as hysteria. She also rejects Calla’s offer of comfort and love, recoiling in revulsion from Calla’s kiss. (Stovel 53)

She knows that Calla only means well when she invites her to her church, but she now must recover from the profound shame she feels toward what happened in church and in Calla’s flat. While both the preacher and Calla have the intention to soothe their fellow citizens, Rachel’s fears render her blind and deaf.

3.2.2. Insecurity

She dreams of her father telling her to run away (JG 25), which is her unconscious telling her to start life anew some other place, where she would not constantly feel observed and judged. With these dreams she becomes conscious of her personal desire for freedom. She is aware that she is unhappy in town, but she is too afraid to take further action in order to find contentment. Although she has lived in this small town her whole life and knows many families, she is so insecure in her natural surroundings that she feels lonely and judged wherever she goes and whatever she does. Although she enjoys going out in the evenings, she rejects every offer to go out by the people she knows best. She is not free to express her emotions openly and must pretend to regret not being able to go out.

¹² C.f.: Blewett 187

Rachel's insecurity is well expressed when Nick Kazlik, a high school teacher from Winnipeg, invites her to the cinema. At the movies, Rachel wonders if he will put his arm around her. She thinks to herself,

He is past such gauche and public performances. What are you worried about, Rachel? I'm not worried. I'm perfectly all right. Well, relax, then. I am relaxed. Oh? Shut up. Just shut up. (JG 77)

Although Nick's invitation to have coffee with Rachel after the movie is a clear sign that he is enjoying her company, Rachel is so held up in her own insecurity and her worries about her mother that she cannot believe that Nick may be interested in her. Due to her self-consciousness, she is not able to enjoy her time with Nick because she is constantly worried whether she is behaving according to Nick's expectations. After her mother has settled down and is ready for bed, Rachel is convinced that Nick will not want to see her again, since she believes that her company is not the kind that he is looking for (JG 80).

3.2.3. Sense of Guilt

Her actions and feelings are based on guilt. At night, she fantasizes about an attractive man and how they have an intimate relation when she is suddenly awakened by her dream and notices that she has masturbated. She immediately regrets her action and tells herself that "[I]t was only to be able to sleep" (JG 25).

She wishes to have an intimate relationship with a man, not merely for the sake of pleasing her mother and her community, but in order to fulfil her own physical desires and to feel protected. She is convinced that she can only find fulfilment in her life in the marital union with a husband.

Rachel is psychologically paralyzed into immobility. She intensely desires both a husband and children, but [...] her strength of will has been frozen. (Hind-Smith 37)

A week after their first date, Rachel is disappointed that Nick has not called. When Calla asks her if they can meet some time, Rachel lets out her frustration by responding very impolitely and inventing the excuse that she is busy with an extended English course. She says, "Well, I was busy. That's what I said" (JG 82). She then regrets having sounded so irritated, but at the same time is very angry because Nick is not the one who phoned her. Calla wants to go out with Rachel as friends some time, but Rachel thinks that she merely feels apologetic

about Rachel's experience at the Tabernacle. In this way she hurts Calla's feelings because Calla notices that Rachel just does not want to spend time with her, as she knows that Rachel has not been attending an English course. Rachel also must continuously apologize to her mother, who happens to overhear Rachel's responses over the telephone. Mrs. Cameron keeps on saying that it is alright, she just would have liked to know about the English course (JG 84).

3.2.4. Shame

When Willard remarks that "an old friend of yours is going to be there" Rachel asks who this friend is, and he does not answer. She then feels ashamed for asking who is visiting him, "Why did I have to ask him who? Like that. So eagerly. Was that how it sounded? As though I couldn't wait to be told" (JG 15). All at once she feels as though she has conveyed too much of her own selfishness and insensitivity. Immediately after this realization, she again feels humiliated because she wanted to touch his hands, while at the same time he repulses her. Feeling embarrassed at her own desire for physical contact with a man, she forces herself to stop thinking about Willard. Her desire to touch him illustrates her loneliness.

Rachel's desire to touch Willard's hairy hand is at once an expression of her sexual frustration as an individual and a sign of her temptation as an individual and type to accept the authoritarian *status quo* and her alienation.¹³

The second time Nick invites Rachel on a date, she is very excited about meeting him again and hopes not to make any mistakes and humiliate herself in front of him. When Nick begins to undress her she feels terribly ashamed because she has never been this intimate with a man before, and because they are in an open field and she is afraid of being seen by other people. She feels terribly tense as she does not know how to react to Nick, to the pain and to the other sensations that go on in her body during intercourse. At home, she feels terribly embarrassed when she realizes that she was very tense during the act with Nick and pleads to God for a second chance with Nick, this time in order to not be so rigid and to give Nick a more pleasant experience (JG 96-101).

¹³ C.f.: Hughes 120

3.2.5. A Life Controlled by her Mother

When Rachel prepares for her first date with Nick, her mother is upset that she did not tell her about it earlier. She says that she does not know who Nick is, although Rachel has already told her about him the first night she met him. Her mother is surprised that he has graduated from university, as he is the “milkman’s son” (JG 73).

The dominant Mrs. Cameron exercises a defensive tyranny over Rachel [...] for Mrs. Cameron, the passionate barbarian hordes are just over the tracks and must be kept there in a subordinate position within a system dominated by class power and bourgeois rationality [...] The middle-class emphasis on mind must protect itself from the lower-class emphasis on body [...] Characteristic of her Victorian conservatism is an equally Victorian racism which assumes certain others to be naturally inferior. She believes that Ukrainians and Scots, like oil and water, cannot mix. For this reason she cannot approve of Rachel’s relationship with Nick Kazlik.¹⁴

Mrs. Cameron pretends to be fine with the fact that she will be home alone for the evening, while at the same time causing Rachel to feel guilty by saying that she might do the laundry, although both are fully aware of her fragile heart condition. “Her bad heart is the main source of the power Mrs. Cameron wields over her daughter Rachel” (Stovel 33). Rachel is aware that her mother wants to manipulate her into staying home and even says “[M]aybe I shouldn’t go” (JG 73). But then her mother encourages her to go out and says that it hurts her when she is not told who her daughter is going out with. Although “Rachel is [...] afraid to go out, lest her mother have a heart attack in her absence and die” (Stovel 33) she goes out with Nick. When they kiss in front of the house, Rachel cannot completely enjoy the experience as her mother may be watching.

[I]t is her mother [...] who keeps Rachel in the bondage of semi-childhood. A hypochondriac who conveniently suffers a heart attack every time Rachel attempts to lead her own life, her mother has managed to stifle Rachel’s developing womanhood. Rachel is tied like a child to her mother who is equally tied like a child to her. Rachel [...] needs to break the pattern of spineless obedience to her mother [...] (Hind-Smith 37)

When Rachel returns home she notices that her mother has neither done the laundry nor taken her sleeping pill. But this time they do not get into an argument and Rachel observes how her mother has been getting ready for bed.

¹⁴ C.f.: Hughes 116-117

She has washed off her powder and what little lipstick she uses, but she's brushed her hair, I see, coaxed it into grey lace around her head, so that although wan she looks her best. Very touching. Oh – can I possibly be this mean? She might really have been ill when I was out, and might have died, and then I would have been forever in the wrong, not so much for going out but for feeling this way, for letting myself. (JG 79 – 80)

In her mind she mocks her mother for her apparent useless efforts to maintain a respectable appearance, although she is an old lady and spends most of her time at home alone. But Rachel then realizes how unreasonable her thinking is and regrets having mocked her mother when she thinks of how her mother could have died while she was having fun. She would never be able to forgive herself if something really had happened to her while Rachel was not home (JG 80).

After her third date with Nick, Rachel is very angry at her mother for asking her so many questions about her relationship with Nick (JG 120). It bothers Rachel that she herself does not know how Nick feels about his relationship with her. She becomes very angry at her mother for always being in her way when she deals with something important to her. In this case, Mrs. Cameron merely makes her aware of questions that she herself would like to have answered by Nick.

During this episode, all of Rachel's anger and resentment towards her mother are expressed in her thoughts. Rachel must always apologize to her mother when she does not tell her about her plans, such as her imaginary English course and that she would be going out with Nick during her bridge night. While Rachel sometimes needs to spend an evening on her own, she cannot enjoy the whole evening because she knows that when she comes home her mother will be upset. She must apologize several times to her mother before the latter calms down and sometimes Rachel decides to change her plans in order not to upset her mother more.

When her mother is asleep, she thinks to herself

[i]f only she wouldn't question me. If only I could stop myself from answering. Why can't she ever sleep and leave me alone? Or die...you mean it all right, Rachel. Not every minute, not every day, even. But right now, you mean it. Mean. I am. I never knew it, not really...surely I love her as much as most parents love their children. I mean, of course, as much as most children love their parents. Nick – listen – I love you. (JG 120 -121)

She realizes how angry she is at having to always consider her mother's feelings and not having the freedom to stay out as long as she likes and spend time with whom she likes. She recognizes that she sometimes wishes that her mother was deceased, or at least living

somewhere else, so that she could live the lifestyle she desires. She finally admits to herself that she is not happy with living together with her mother with all of her restrictions. She is aware that she loves her mother, but regards herself as her mother's mother. In her imagination, she tells Nick that she loves him, but is so insecure about their relationship that she imagines how it would be if Nick broke up with her (JG 120 -121).

Women like me are an anachronism. We don't exist any more. And yet I look in the mirror and see I'm there. I'm a fact of sorts, a fantasy of sorts. My blood runs in actual veins, which is as much of a surprise to me as to anyone. (JG 123-124)

She feels like an invisible creature, a ghost wandering around town, yet she is aware that she is alive, even more so now that she is afraid that she may be pregnant. "She cannot grow up into adult independence because she is still dominated by her hypochondriac mother and dead father" (Stovel 32). Having to always live up to her mother's expectations and inventing excuses for things she does not want to do, cause her to feel non-existent as she is controlled by everybody else in society but herself. She seems to exist for the comfort and happiness of all others in the community but for herself.

[T]here is so much to be longed for in private thought, yet so little that can be spoken. And ironically, it is this very failure to speak that condemns the silent to continue in lonely suffering. *A Jest of God* allows its readers to hear what cannot be spoken: Rachel's voice in all its ambiguities of fear and longing. There is a whole novel's worth of things to say about herself, yet very little of it can be spoken aloud because of her fear of what people might think, of their gossip and their judgment.¹⁵

The facts that Rachel is not able to express her feelings openly with her mother and that she does not know whether Nick values her as much as she values him, cause her to feel confined in a relationship with two people who she is not able to relate with as freely as she sincerely wishes to. By constantly having to consider the feelings of others and not being able to act according to her own desires, she does not feel her own value, and her existence does not seem to have a purpose. She realizes that she is very unhappy in her current state of being and wishes to liberate herself from her meaningless life.

¹⁵ Brydon, Diana. "Silence, Voice and the Mirror: Margaret Laurence and Women," *Crossing the River: Essays in Honour of Margaret Laurence*. Ed. Kristjana Gunnars. Winnipeg: Turnstone, 1988. 183-205, here 188

3.3. Rachel's Liberation

3.3.1. Rachel Gaining Confidence

When she meets Nick for the first time she keeps on doubting whether her comments are appropriate. When he invites her to a movie Rachel replies: "Oh. Well – I guess – well, thanks. I –yes, I'd like to" (JG 70). She is very surprised that a man whom she has not seen in years suddenly invites her out on a Friday night, and is hesitant to show her approval at first. She arrives home at half past twelve in the evening and, as usual, must defend herself against her mother, who has been wondering what was keeping her away from home so long. Instead of Rachel's habit of apologizing repeatedly, she replies with "Oh Mother. For heaven's sake. It's only half past twelve. I was talking to someone. Nick Kazlik, actually..." (JG 71). By using the phrase "For heaven's sake" she shares her opinion that her mother is being ridiculous, as it is "only" half past twelve and not very late for her to still be out. Although it is late enough for any mother to worry about her daughter's absence, this time Rachel defends her late arrival and does not feel as guilty as she usually does when she comes home later than expected. When her mother wonders how Nick managed to become a teacher in the city, Rachel replies with "I couldn't say. Some miracle, I suppose. Divine intervention, maybe". Her mother then replies with "There's no need for you to speak to me like that. If you please" (JG 71). Rachel then apologizes for her mocking statement twice, meaning that she is aware of how much better the Scots think they are than the Ukrainians and that she is making fun of how ironic the fact seems that Nick has a university degree and Rachel does not. As her mother looks down on any other representative of ethnic backgrounds in Manawaka she understands how Rachel is mocking her and is upset.

When their conversation is over, Rachel confesses to herself that she is not sorry for mocking her mother.

The Ukrainians knew how to be the better grain farmers, but the Scots knew how to be almightier than anyone but God. She was brought up that way, and my father too, and I, but by the time it reached me, the backbone had been splintered considerable. She doesn't know that, though, and never will. (JG 71)

She explains how the Scots believe to be on the top of the hierarchy in the town, although the Ukrainians have many positive characteristics and farming skills. Rachel and her parents have grown up with this belief, but Rachel now does not entirely agree with it, as she simply is happy about spending time with a man who seems to show interest in her. At the same

time, she is letting go of her strict Scottish roots and is mingling with descendents of other nationalities. “Rachel must learn to bridge that ethnic gap or cultural chasm if she is to develop as a character” (Stovel 22).

Pride and anger sustained the first few generations of Scots in Manitoba, but by Rachel’s time the backbone has “splintered.” [...] To Mrs. Cameron, Ukrainians are Galicians or Bohunks, unfit companions for her children. She is surprised that “the milkman’s son” has achieved a university degree, and oblivious to the related irony that her daughter has not” (Morley 97).

Rachel illustrates how she wishes to find her happiness with a husband and children more than to keep her own Scottish values unbroken. She realizes that in order to find happiness she must abandon some of her mother’s values and discover what attitudes are best for herself.

3.3.1.1. Rachel’s First Experience of Sexual Intercourse

At “the banks of the Wachakwa where they are protected from prying eyes and gossiping tongues by ‘bluffs of poplar with their always-whispering leaves’” (Stovel 26) Nick begins to kiss Rachel and she enjoys feeling the weight of his body on hers. She is hesitant to take off her clothes in public, but then ignores her fears. After becoming aware of the desire that Rachel will have her first experience of sexual intercourse with Nick, she says “Put it in, darling” (JG 97). Rachel is able to repress her fear of being observed by other people in town and her fear of the pain that she may feel during intercourse. Aware of Nick’s desire to have a sexual relation with her, she willingly accepts his invitation, as she feels flattered that a man would be interested in her in an intimate way. The self-conscious Rachel finally is able to have the intimate relationship she dreams about at night, and in this way feels more value as a person.

Although Nick has not brought any contraceptive device, Rachel decides to risk becoming pregnant. Despite feeling physical discomfort and pain, Rachel begins to enjoy the experience. After Nick has achieved climax Rachel thinks, “I don’t care about anything, except this peace, this pride, holding him” (JG 98).

When Nick says that it is never good for a couple the first time, Rachel feels as though he told her that it was her first time and asks if it was so obvious, but Nick interprets that as if she was merely pretending to have had her first sexual experience in order not to lose her reputation. With this thought, Rachel feels released from the burden of letting him know that

it was her first time and then hurries home (JG 98-99). In the car on the way home, she feels very comfortable with him and wishes to sit closer to him. "Rachel experiences the sense of peace that Calla said was vouchsafed to those given the gift of tongues" (Stovel 64).

Sex with Nick is the beginning of Rachel's inner peace and self-confidence: the knowledge that he will somehow "inhabit" her gives strength "against all reason" (JG 104). Rachel thinks of sex as a deep sharing, a "tender cruelty." (Morley 92)

For the first time in her life she is able to be completely happy when being together with a man. While she usually worries whether her outfit is appropriate or if she responds properly in conversation, she is able to forget all of her worries and enjoy the moments together with Nick. When she arrives home, she also knows how to speak to her mother in a way to please her by offering to make her a warm drink, instead of worrying whether she has upset her again for coming home late. After having her first sexual experience with Nick, she feels more confident about herself.

Right now, I'm fantastically happy. He did want me. And I wasn't afraid. I think that when he is with me, I don't feel any fear. Or hardly any. Soon I won't feel any at all. (JG 100)

While reflecting on her intimacy with Nick she wishes that she had not been as tense as she was during intercourse. This feeling of embarrassment would normally be a reason for her to doubt her own value in front of Nick and she would believe that Nick would not call her again. But instead of feeling a lack of confidence, she rather longs for another date with Nick in order to have another more successful experience of intercourse with him. She wishes not to be as tense as she was this time, so that Nick can also have a nicer experience together with her (JG 101). In this way, she shows how she believes that she is able to make Nick happy and will also feel valued as a person.

Despite the pain Rachel feels during intercourse, she learns to enjoy the experience (Riegel 99) and is grateful for being able to sexually satisfy Nick. In this way she can adjust to Nick's behavior and gain her own happiness by acting according to someone more experienced than she is.

3.3.2. Finding Release, Joy and Disappointment

3.3.2.1. Release from her Mother's Control

When her mother expresses her disappointment that Rachel wants to abandon her on a bridge night, Rachel says, "I'm sorry, honestly" (JG 107). Her mother agrees that it is alright for her to go, but still causes her to feel guilty by reminding her that she needs her help. Out of habit Rachel feels tempted to say the words, "*I won't go, then*" but she

force[s] them back. This newfound ruthlessness exhilarates me. I won't turn back. If I do, I'm done for. Yet I can't look at her, either, or see the sallowness of her face. (JG 107)

Rachel is aware that her mother is upset, but at the same time she is very excited about being able to meet Nick again. She has realized that she has her own needs, which her mother is not able to fulfil, and that Nick allows her to experience exciting emotions. With this knowledge, Rachel finds the courage within herself to not give in to her mother's wishes, but to consider her own happiness and enjoy another evening together with Nick.

She is also at ease with her decision since her mother's friends are visiting. With the help of her friends, Mrs. Cameron will neither be alone nor upset when Rachel suddenly leaves. Rachel has finally managed to release herself from her mother's bondage by maintaining her own standpoint, instead of giving in to her mother's wishes. Although Nick has surprisingly called Rachel during the bridge night and invites her to go out, she does not reject his offer, as she earlier did when Willard or Calla asked whether she wanted to spend the evening with them. She rather gratefully accepts Nick's spontaneous invitation and decides that she will not allow her mother to prevent her from enjoying her time in the evenings any longer. The fact that her mother's friends are already at her house helps Rachel to not feel guilty about leaving her mother alone, since Mrs. Cameron will not attempt to do the laundry or do anything that would risk her to suffer from a heart attack while her friends are around. In this way, Rachel feels the support from her mother's friends, who represent the Manawaka community, to be able to live her own life, which is another step towards her own personal freedom. Not only in front of her mother, but in front of members of the community she is able to express her opinion freely, and in this way has achieved another level of development in the novel.

3.3.2.2. Rachel Happy to Put Nick's Needs First

When Nick takes Rachel to his parents' house for the first time, they have intercourse for the second time. Feeling inferior to Nick due to lack of sexual experience on her part, she is pleased for having helped him to achieve the climax. Rachel also pretends to have experienced a climax in order not to disappoint him (JG 110). She ignores her own gratification for his sake, while she is content with this outcome as she still feels overwhelmed by the fact that a man shows sexual interest in her.

Despite being able to provide Nick with sexual gratification, Rachel fears that Nick does not value his relationship with her as much as she does. She becomes aware of her frustration towards this uncertainty and as a result fantasizes about Nick in her room. She strongly desires a deep emotional bond with Nick, as she believes that he would be the solution to her loneliness and problems.

While Rachel's dates with Nick have helped her to gain more confidence about her own value, she constantly worries whether she is acting according to Nick's desires. She feels inferior to him, as Nick seems more sexually experienced than her. Despite her insecurity in terms of satisfying Nick, she is very grateful to him for being able to experience this new level of intimacy, and she therefore makes every effort for him to enjoy the sexual experiences with her. Rachel believes that she has fallen in love with Nick and longs for him to become her husband.

[...] her perception of herself in the sex act is completely defined by his needs [...] she is uncertain of the nature or even existence of her core [...] in this passage. But she can offer it to him as long as she knows he wants it [...] Rachel is offering much more of herself than Nick offers back [...] She has expressed her love and he has regarded it as a problem to be solved by someone else.¹⁶

At the same time when listening to Nick speak about his struggles with his father she realizes that Nick has problems which she is not able to understand (JG 118). She is aware that Nick's experiences with Rachel are not as meaningful to him as they are to her and she comes to realize that she cannot make him love her the way she loves him, despite her best efforts to gratify his needs. She becomes aware that Nick merely uses her for his own

¹⁶ Franks, Jill. "Jesting Within: Voices of Irony and Parody as Expressions of Feminisms," *The Writing of Margaret Laurence: Challenging Territory*. Ed. Christian Riegel. U of Alberta Press. 1997. p. 99-118, here 109-10

satisfaction¹⁷, but she still longs for a close relationship with him. She ignores his negative characteristics and fantasizes about him as her future husband. Nick does not tell Rachel whether he feels that their relationship is serious, which eventually causes Rachel to doubt that this relationship will last. Despite her doubts, she still hopes that Nick will eventually love her the way she desires him to, which is a reason for her to continue to try to satisfy his needs.

Nick, as individual, has a major flaw. The prodigal son cannot come to terms with his past, for he rejects as an embarrassment the Ukrainian family and culture into which he was born. Thus, he is left as an isolated and alienated individual pursuing illusions about himself into a future over which he can have no control.¹⁸

3.3.2.3. Release from her Father's Past

Resulting from Rachel's confusion about her relationship with Nick she no longer can remain in her room and leaves for the funeral chapel when she notices the lights. She is hesitant to knock, but then tells herself "Go ahead, knock. He'll answer". After more moments of hesitation, she slightly knocks and Hector Jonas, the new owner of the funeral parlour, opens (JG 124). In contrast to the episode at the movies when she is not able to relax (JG 77), here she finds the courage she needs and knocks on Hector's door, having overcome her timidity. The Rachel from the beginning of the novel would not have paid a visit to Hector at so late an hour out of fear of bothering Hector and possibly causing gossip in town. The new Rachel, however, is so frustrated about Nick's secretive behaviour in Manawaka, but at the same time has gained confidence through her relationship with Nick, and therefore possesses the bravery she needs to knock on Hector's door. In this way, she allows Hector to notice her very emotional state and allows him to understand her frustration about her deceased father. She has ceased to worry about what others may think about her, but she learns to act according to what she needs in order to find peace within herself.

Only after she has come to life with Nick does Rachel have the courage to descend to that forbidden nightmare place to search for clues to the mysterious disappearance of her father [...] So desperate is Rachel to find her father that she actually says what she thinks for the very first time in the novel, when she demands that Hector open the door [...] Rachel's inner voice [...] is echoed by her outer voice, signifying a unification of her split personality [...] (Stovel 47, 60)

¹⁷ C.f.: Hughes 110

¹⁸ C.f.: Hughes 118

When Hector recognizes her, he is very friendly and she asks him to, “Let me come in” (JG 125) feeling too frustrated to keep her usual polite manners. Since Hector is aware that Rachel is struggling with something, he tries to distract her by talking about his business and later on helps her realize that her father must have been happy with the life he chose. Rachel learns to accept that her parents have their own responsibilities which she cannot interfere with, and that she is capable of leading her own life (Stovel 47).

When their conversation comes to an end, out of habit, Rachel begins to apologize for having disturbed Hector so late. But then she notices how much at ease Hector looks and then rather thanks him for his company, to which he replies with gratitude as well (JG 134). “She even learns to stop apologizing for living [...] she changes her tune [...] Having faced death, Rachel can now turn and climb the stairs back to life” (Stovel 49). Now being more composed about her father’s life, she also can feel better about her own situation and does not blame herself for her father’s early death. She now can truly learn to live her own life without feeling guilty towards her parents.

3.3.2.4. Ultimate Joy

Although Rachel has been going on several dates with Nick, she still maintains her initial excitement when he invites her out for the last time. She longs for a telephone call from him so strongly that she even runs out of the bathroom naked in order to answer his call (JG 146). Aware that her mother is deeply embarrassed at the sight of her naked daughter, Rachel still continues her conversation with Nick until they decide to meet again. She illustrates her great excitement about being able to see Nick again and forgets about all that is around her. She learns to let go of social restraints and learns to behave how she wishes to.

At the Kazliks’ house when Rachel suggests for Nick to stay and teach in Manawaka, Nick responds with “Not possible, darling” (JG 148). By having for the first time expressed her desire in words for Nick to stay in Manawaka, Rachel feels humiliated yet liberated for appearing so vulnerable to Nick. “No, I have no pride. None left, not now. This realization renders me all at once calm, inexplicably, and almost free” (JG 148). She finally has the courage to express her desire to Nick that she wishes him to stay, even though this feels like a sign of weakness to her. Although she anticipates his rejection, Nick does not say anything to ridicule her or cause her to feel ashamed, which is a response that helps Rachel to feel free

from guilt or humiliation. Despite her embarrassment, she feels liberated for having been able to express her feelings unreservedly to Nick (Stovel 59).

After Rachel has realized that she can speak openly with Nick, she enjoys his company even more than before. His apparent spontaneous and easy-going attitudes toward life are very attractive to Rachel, which cause her to long to be able to relate with him just as easily as he does with her.

I want to yield to his laughter, to have everything happening on his terms, lightly, not as though it were the beginning of the world. But I can't. I don't know how to make it unimportant enough. (JG 150)

Her thoughts express how meaningful every moment is that she spends with Nick. Since Nick is the only man she has been dating in a long time, this event is too incredible for her to take easily and she therefore lacks the confidence to be the tranquil person she wishes to be. However, when they become intimate again, Rachel can feel free to order, "Nick – take off your clothes...Go into me. Now. Right now" (JG 153). Usually Nick initiates the sexual act, while this time Rachel strongly desires Nick and feels enough liberty and confidence to tell Nick what to do. She is able to forget about her usual passive reactions to Nick's initiations and can be the spontaneous initiator, by imitating Nick as her role model.

Rachel greatly enjoys their intimacy and feels that "He inhabits whatever core of me there is" (JG 153). She then experiences her first orgasm and at last confesses, "If I had a child, I would like it to be yours" (JG 154). Rachel finally is able to enjoy the full experience of sexual intercourse, which is a very meaningful moment for her, since she already feels as one with Nick before she experiences a climax.

For the first time, she lets herself go, losing consciousness of herself in her awareness of another being [...] Now that she has learned to love Nick, Rachel can love herself. (Stovel 64)

Rachel now feels so content and confident in her relationship with Nick that she even expresses her greatest wish, which is to have a child. She is able to trust Nick that he will take care of her if she does become pregnant and believes that they will both spend their future together. Her deepest desires seem to be fulfilled, which cause her to feel ultimate joy.

3.3.2.5. Ultimate Disappointment

However, her new-found joy and happiness are instantly ruined when Nick rejects her desire by replying, "I'm not God. I can't solve anything" (JG 154). With his comment, he shows his belief that Rachel just wants a child with him so that she can pretend to have a happy family with Nick in order to fit into Manawaka's society. "Nick realizes the depths of her desperation [...] Realizing that he [...] cannot fulfil her needs, Nick withdraws" (Stovel 97). He shows that he is not longing for long-term happiness through his relationship with Rachel because he does not struggle with social pressures in Manawaka. Nick's main problem is that he cannot develop a better relationship with his father, which is a conflict he does not want to be confronted with any longer.

When Rachel asks Nick to tell her what he is thinking, he becomes defensive and says "I've said more than enough" (JG 155). He allows her to believe that the boy in his photograph is his son, while in reality it is a picture of his childhood self. "The pain is unspecified, as though I hurt everywhere." (JG 155). After Rachel finally is able to believe in the possibility of becoming happy with Nick, her hopes are shattered by Nick's photo. Her overwhelming feeling of wholeness with him has now turned into pain, knowing that she will never feel as happy with Nick as she was only a few moments ago.

The need to have Nick love her is so strong that she willingly creates a fantasy world around him. But when she becomes convinced that Nick is married and a father, she has to deconstruct her fantasy and acknowledge that she has created a Nick who does not exist [...] She has perceived her affair with Nick as a jest of God, because she now understands that her belief that there was love and commitment between them was just a fantasy.¹⁹

When Rachel finds her mother sleeping at home, she wishes that her mother were awake to ask her questions. She feels left alone now that she believes she knows the truth about Nick and desires to feel cared for and appreciated. She tells herself that it does not matter if Nick is married in order not to feel guilty for having caused him to cheat on his wife. Yet, she is very angry and disappointed that Nick is not the person she imagined him to be and lets out her anger by imagining an attempt to kill his wife. She finally must accept that she will dissolve her relationship with him and will be living alone again. Even though she may be pregnant with his child, she knows that Nick would reject it, since she believes that he is married (JG 156-157).

¹⁹ C.f.: Franks 112-113

When Nick, as individual, misleadingly allows Rachel to believe that the picture he shows her is of his own son, we see one manifestation of his alienation. He uses her; to him she is an object to be consumed, fit only to satisfy his sexual desires. She is not for him a whole person with whom he is capable of having a lasting spiritual and physical relationship [...] Nick's failure as an individual, therefore, is also his failure as type, for while Rachel can be seen as the type symbolic of a Canada seeking to free itself from an authoritarian colonial past and to make its own future, Nick cannot serve this function because he, along with the ethnic community that he represents, has not been freed from the past by coming to terms with it so as to prepare for a future.²⁰

While Nick does not maturely confront his problems and does not care about his parents' difficulties, he does not personally develop and therefore cannot find happiness and peace in his current state of affairs. On the other hand, with the help of her affair with Nick, Rachel is able to become aware of her own strengths and her desire for independence. In contrast to Nick, she has always been aware of her tyrannical mother and the oppressive society of Manawaka, but has never found the courage to defend herself and fight for her own rights. After having been confronted with "selfish Nick", she has learned to also think selfishly, but at the same time she maintains respect for all members of the community. "Rachel the unmarried schoolteacher is still unmarried and still caring for her mother at the end of her narrative".²¹

While Nick simply seeks momentary gratification, Rachel is looking for permanent happiness. Although Nick disappoints her by abandoning her and shattering her fantasies, she has learned to understand her own desires and has found her confidence to stand up for herself and act according to her own needs. The Rachel from the beginning of the novel might have lost all of her confidence after having been abandoned by someone who means so much to her. However, Rachel has gained enough confidence in order to think of the future. Despite possible criticism in town for being a single-mother, she feels confident and motivated to raise her child on her own, as becoming a mother is her greatest desire. Although Nick has greatly disappointed her, Rachel has gained enough self-respect from her relationship with him that she feels confident to be able to look after herself and her child on her own from now on, not knowing yet that she is not pregnant.

3.3.3. Rachel Confronting and Accepting the Truth

After ten days of not hearing from Nick, Rachel finds the courage to phone his parents. She is disappointed and confused at why he has left without telling her, but she then realizes that

²⁰ C.f.: Hughes 119

²¹ C.f.: Howells 94

Nick has returned to his home in the city because he cannot stand being with his parents any longer. She finally accepts that Nick's affair with her this summer did not mean anything very serious to Nick and that she also was not the reason why he went back to the city (JG 158-160). However, the fact that she has been emotionally hurt has consequences when the new school year begins. While Rachel usually has a secret favourite student, this year she is lacking the energy to feel a special kind of love for a single person. Since her love has been rejected, at the moment she feels as though she is not able to love anymore. She has lost a part of her own happiness when she lost her love for Nick and does not feel confident enough to love somebody again in another way.

I wonder who will be the one or ones, as it was James last year? All at once I know there will be no one like that, not now, not any more. This unwanted revelation fills me with the sense of an ending, as though there were nothing to look forward to. (JG 161)

She meets Willard and thinks "there never was any need to be afraid. It was only my nervousness that invited his sly cruelties" (JG 162). Again she is anxious when he asks her how her summer was, but then she looks at him more closely and only sees an expression "hoping for some slight friendliness from me, possibly" (JG 163). She realizes how Willard also struggles with his own lack of confidence and that Rachel can easily give him reassurance simply by listening to him and paying attention to his facial expressions. "Rather than threatening her, Rachel realizes that he might just have found her attractive and hoped for 'admiration or reassurance'" (Stovel 43). After having spent the summer separated from him, having had an intimate relationship with a man and possibly being pregnant, she has learned to pay more attention to her surroundings. She notices other people's problems and does not neurotically worry about her own appearance. Rachel has learned to perceive the concerns of other people and that she has the ability to comfort them (Stovel 64-65).

Despite not always having appreciated Calla for being a friend, Rachel knows that she can trust her. Although Rachel was very harsh to her over the phone in summer when she clearly did not want to spend time with her, Calla still always makes Rachel feel appreciated when they speak. By experiencing this act of kindness Rachel can turn to her when she is desperate to know whether she is pregnant or not.

When Rachel believes she is pregnant, the person she turns to is Calla, because she realizes that there is "Only one person" (173) who can help. Calla's response to Rachel's cry for help is to offer to drop everything to help Rachel in her moment of need. (Stovel 40)

She finally accepts the fact that she has to see a doctor in order to know for sure whether she is pregnant or not. “Her conviction that she is pregnant coincides with the discovery that Nick has left. This precipitates Rachel’s crisis, her turning point, and eventual release” (Morley 92). She sets aside her fear of gossip or prejudice and visits Dr. Raven, who shocks her by telling her that she has a tumor. While she has been getting used to the idea of having a baby and looking forward to looking after a child, she is surprised to hear that she may be dying instead of gaining new life. Despite the joy and wholeness she was able to experience with Nick, what has physically remained with her after having had an affair is a benign tumor. She may interpret this as a sign that her relationship with Nick was a mistake and that since it is benign she will have a second chance to prove her own value to the world. After her operation she says out loud “I am the mother now” (JG 191).

Only when [her tumor] is removed is she freed from the mortal fear which she carries within herself, and only then can she speak her deepest desires, which are not erotic but maternal [...] Through her phantom pregnancy she has given birth to herself as mother, caring for ‘that elderly child’, her own mother, and assuming responsibility for both of them.²²

She feels mature enough to be a mother since she was brave enough to go to the doctor and experience the criticism of the town if she was pregnant. “[W]hat really delighted her was that she had acted and there had been living consequences of her actions” (Scheckels 116). Now she will be responsible for her own actions and not allow others to make her feel humiliated or ashamed.

3.3.4. Rachel’s Final Freedom

She meets Nick’s mother in the street and asks how Nick and his wife are doing, when his mother replies that he is not married (JG 196).

He had his own demons and webs. Mine brushed across him for an instant, and he saw them and had to draw away, knowing that what I wanted from him was too much. (JG 197)

She may be hurt and angry with Nick for allowing her to believe that he is married, but also accepts the fact that he also has many problems of his own which Rachel is not able to help him with.

²² C.f.: Howells 99

Although he may have been aware of Rachel's needs, he knew that he was not mature enough to take care of her and himself. Rachel, now instead of feeling resentment towards Nick for lying to her, feels empathy for him and is now aware that they both must solve their problems on their own. Rachel's feelings were deeply hurt when Nick showed her the photograph of his apparent son, that he leaves Manawaka without telling her, and that he pretends to have been married. However, she still is able to sympathize with Nick, as she is aware of how difficult it is to live with a controlling parent. The new Rachel has learned to understand that she is not the only one with problems, such as when she notices that Willard merely is in need of her company rather than criticizing her teaching methods. After having heard about Nick's struggles with his father and his heritage, Rachel can regard him from the position of an objective observer, rather than a woman who is in love with him. After Nick says that he cannot solve her problems for her, she realizes that she must learn to look after her own well-being, just as Nick must also learn to solve his own problems in his own time. She might feel that Nick had used her merely for momentary sexual gratification and therefore could have been very angry with him, but instead she rather feels liberated from her feeling of loneliness and unattractiveness. In having had sexual intercourse with a man, she has discovered her sexuality being able to enjoy the experience of being intimate with a man. Her fantasies have become reality, despite her feeling a lack of true love from Nick's side. While Nick seems to not have gained anything positive from his visit to Manawaka, but only momentary gratification by thinking of his own desires, Rachel has maintained her Scottish virtues of keeping a good reputation in society and remaining a hard-working citizen. Nick apparently only thinks of himself, while Rachel always worries about how others think and feel. These opposing attitudes ultimately cause Nick's despair and Rachel's final breakthrough. She has managed to maintain her dignity as a teacher in town, while at the same time, she has gained the confidence she needs to overcome her fears and doubts about her own every-day actions. While she used to always feel uncomfortable when being asked to go out, she now realizes that she is always treated with great respect by all members of the community. She has realized that her mother does not have the right to control her life all the time, but that she also has the authority to decide over her own life and over that of her mother.

Although she is disappointed that she is not pregnant, she is also relieved that the tumor is benign and that nobody except Calla knows that she has had an affair. In this way she feels

grateful to have another chance to find happiness in life and finally realizes that she will not find it in Manawaka. This gives her the courage to apply for a job in Vancouver.

The final scene in *A Jest of God* shows Mrs. Cameron crying and begging for Rachel to remain in Manawaka, the town she has lived in her whole life. Rachel shows concern and sympathy, but at the same time has enough arguments to win the fight against her mother. She has released herself from her mother's domination (Stovel 35). Rachel is aware that her mother's heart is very weak and that moving to Vancouver will be a strain for her (Stovel 68), but she takes the risk because her mother has lived a long life and has made her own choices (JG 201-202). Now Rachel must hold the authority.

Now it is Rachel's turn to make her own decisions. She needs a new start somewhere else, where she does not feel restricted by social pressures or gossip. Now, she finally has the courage to follow her own desires and she believes that she will find happiness in Vancouver.

4. Morag's Path to Maturity

4.1. Morag's Childhood

4.1.1. Morag's Freedom with her Parents

When the older Morag recalls the first five years of her childhood, she only connects happy feelings with the time she spent with her parents. Although she has only one photo of her parents, in which both appear rather uncomfortable about being photographed, Morag remembers them as cheerful and loving people (D 6). She recollects her mother being of a gentle nature by teaching Morag to play the piano in a manner in which Morag discovers her musical talent at an early age (D 9). She remembers her father being playful and supportive (D 7). In this way she illustrates how her time with her parents was the most carefree and happiest time of her life. Since she lived on a farm, which was situated far away from other families, Morag was given the undivided attention of both her parents and her imaginary friends (D 10). In her parents' shelter and by inventing games to play with her fantasized friends, she never felt criticised or judged, but merely cheerful and content during the freedom of her childhood. She enjoyed being able to do anything she desired without any fear of punishment or regret.

4.1.2. Morag Losing her Freedom

Her first unpleasant memory is when she was five years old and Mrs. Pearl stays at her house her since her parents are sick. This is when Morag begins to lose her freedom. She desires to see her parents but Mrs. Pearl holds her arm and does not allow her to go upstairs to see them (D 12). Not only is she not allowed to speak with her parents for the first time, she is even restricted in her own house by not being permitted to sleep in her own room. Instead, she must sleep in the unfamiliar kitchen with the locked door so that she cannot secretly go to her parents' rooms. Knowing that they are alive and only one floor away from her, she is hurt and confused at why she is not allowed to see them and why they do not ask to see her. Since the Pearls now seem to dominate the farm, Morag develops anger and hatred towards them for preventing her from visiting her parents and for denying her the freedom she is usually enjoys in her house (D 13).

When one night Mrs. Pearl forgets to lock the door Morag hears unusual lamenting noises coming from her father. Instead of using the chance to see her parents she hurries back to the

kitchen, frightened by the unfamiliar howling sound (D 13). Since she knows that she is not supposed to go upstairs she rather goes back to the kitchen, where she is safe from being punished by Mrs. Pearl and where she does not have to hear the terrifying cries from her father. Now that Colin himself is struggling, he does not appear as the strong man Morag associates him to be and she is traumatized by the weakness of her father.

Through Mrs. Pearl's red face when telling Morag that her parents have gone to a "happier land" (D 13), Morag can sense that Mrs. Pearl does not believe in this "happier land". Morag also does not believe in a pleasant place but understands the meaning of her parents' deaths. The experience of being abandoned by her parents is traumatising for Morag since her usually so caring and loving parents do not warn her in advance about their illness and have not even said goodbye. When she goes upstairs to look for them after they have died, Morag is disappointed to find the rooms empty (D 14). Now that Morag so abruptly is deserted by her parents, she no longer feels the love and security she once felt in their presence. She now feels the desire to defend and protect herself against every person she encounters.

A new period in her life begins when she must move in with Christie and Prin Logan, who live on Hill Street, which is "the Scots-English equivalent of The Other Side of the Tracks, the shacks and shanties at the north end of Manawaka, where the Ukrainian section-hands on the CPR lived" (D 24). Morag quickly recognizes that Hill Street is socially below the rest of the town and is inhabited by those who would never make good, by drunks, people on relief and labourers (D 24). She feels intimidated and unhappy when she arrives at their house and notices the smell of urine. Morag does not respond to Christie's and Prin's welcoming words and merely desires to sleep (D 25). The curiosity and cheerfulness she enjoyed when living with her parents has now vanished with their deaths. She feels unhappy in her new environment and does not show any interest in her new foster parents. The fact that she immediately goes to bed illustrates that her former self has died and she now must gain a new life in this new part of town. The fact that the older Morag does not remember anything from her first year at Christie's house signals her initial rejection of Christie's and Prin's lifestyle. As a result of the traumatising experience of being forced to leave her natural environment and moving in with strangers, she discards her first experiences within this household. Christie's and Prin's characters, however, will be part of her heritage and as a fundamental part of her personality when she is an adult.

4.1.3. School as a Further Loss of Freedom

As a six-year-old, Morag is frightened by the great number of children on her first day of school and also upset that they ridicule Prin and Christie. While she is relieved to see her next-door-neighbour, Eva Winkler, she wonders why Eva cries so bitterly. When Eva humiliates herself in class by accidentally defecating into her clothes, Morag recognizes how quickly the school children tend to mock other pupils. Morag's desire to protect herself from the criticism of others is activated when she determines never to show any sign of weakness or fear at school (D 25-28).

Morag is eventually grateful for being able to live with the Logans but also strongly aware of their primitive lifestyle. Due to her refined observation skills, she quickly learns that adults as well as children will continuously mock her until she will move away from the Logans' house. Additionally, "Christie [...] is a burning embarrassment to Morag as she becomes aware that he is a clown-figure to the town" (Thomas 139-140). Morag recognizes the differences in class structures, which make it impossible for her to be part of a family equally respected than the majority of her class mates belong to. She is not able to be friends with children from upper class families, as these children are forced by their parents to maintain relationships with people from their own social background.

Morag learns the authoritarian and hypocritical structure of society; power and justice are not synonymous, and courage is needed for survival. (Morley 123)

With her awareness of the careless mockery in town, Morag is determined to protect herself from being teased at school by not showing her emotions. Although she cannot control the amount of disrespect she must undergo as Christie's foster daughter, she at least can prevent additional mockery at school with her appearance as a smart and confident pupil.

4.1.4. Morag's Struggles as Christie's Daughter

When Morag decides to accompany Christie on his daily routine to the "nuisance grounds", she enjoys her observations of the fireworks the blacksmith seems to be producing, and the view of the middle class houses they drive by (D 30). However, her fascination develops into feelings of deep shame when "[t]he kids jeer at him, calling him 'The Scavenger,' and he replies by making foolish faces" (Thomas 140) in front of Morag. She is terribly embarrassed

by his behaviour and decides to walk home without seeing the nuisance grounds (D 31). She expects Christie to defend himself against the children's foolish remarks and to show them that he is a respectable person, but instead he acts according to their desires and does not care about his own reputation. For Christie, it is amusing to make the children laugh instead of getting involved in an unnecessary argument. He is not troubled with other people's judgements concerning his behaviour, but merely tries to prevent problems. Morag is too young to understand Christie's selfless attitude and only feels ashamed at his apparent insensitivity towards other people's insults. Not only does she feel imprisoned in town for being his daughter, but as he gives in to the expectations of the people, she will never be completely liberated from the town's mockery. She is shocked that Christie only seems to be encouraging more mockery. Since Morag cannot understand how Christie is able to endure all the criticism and remain content with his daily life, she grows angry about his behaviour. She has yet to learn of Christie's awareness that people ridicule his position in order to feel better about themselves. Due to his role as the garbage collector Christie will never be regarded by the inhabitants in town as equally important as all other members of the community.

Morag is very upset at the women who criticise her for buying doughnuts for Prin. As a result of performing a good deed for Prin and being rewarded with delicious food, she is confronted with criticism, which leads to her determination to never appear in the bakery again (D 35-36). She struggles with the fact that ordinary people do not allow her to enjoy the simple pleasures of life. Although the bakery is a lovely place for her to be when seeing the great variety of bread and cakes, she feels as though she must be denied these treats in order to prevent additional gossip in town. By developing strategies to protect herself from humiliation, Morag learns to become more emotionally independent of others than most children in town depending on their parents for emotional stability.

As the adopted child of a couple despised by the establishment, Morag experiences blatant discrimination [...] *The Diviners* portrays class prejudice in an ostensibly democratic society. Attempts to humiliate Morag only encourage her inner toughness. She hates the Logans for exposing her to pain, and hates herself for her failure to respond adequately to their goodness. (Morley 124)

By observing Gus Winkler beating his children, Morag becomes aware of a harsh reality that is even worse than the constant gossip she fears in town. Morag is disappointed that neither Christie nor Prin try to stop Gus from hurting his children. She is also confused when seeing Christie have a nervous fit inside the house, which is a result of his time in the war. At the

same time Morag begins to appreciate Christie for never physically hurting her and she is grateful for living with him, despite his bad reputation and crude manners (D 37). Although Morag resents the fact that she is unable to live with her parents, she realizes that many terrible things happen to others in town which are much harder to cope with than her own struggles.

When many people try to collect wooden boxes from the nuisance grounds for heating wood in winter, Christie has the possibility of taking advantage of his occupation as the garbage collector and gathering all of the wooden boxes for himself. With his behaviour, he could enjoy the power to cause suffering to all others in town as a result of their constant insults towards him. However, instead of taking everything for himself he leaves plenty of wood for other people to take, as he regards the nuisance grounds as the shared property of the town. Once again he shows humility in front of the members of town, putting their needs first and in this way showing his understanding for the people in his community. Although everyone despises him, he is aware of their needs and is willing to help them in times of difficulty. By observing Christie's behaviour, Morag discovers Christie's concern for the members of the community. Morag understands how Christie is not affected by criticism, but merely enjoys working constructively for the community. In this way, he demonstrates how a representative of the working class embodies true solidarity, as he knows that he will never be rewarded for his efforts. He lives free from anxiety by merely following his conscience. Morag observes how Christie deserves more respect and appreciation than anyone else in town since he is the only person who seems to sincerely care about the members of his community. With this knowledge, Morag still struggles with the town's mockery, but can endure her stay with Christie as she knows how caring a person he in fact is. By learning about how content Christie is with his lifestyle, Morag has the possibility of finding her own freedom by adopting Christie's view that what other people say about him does not matter since he is aware of how good a person he is. However, since Morag is not able to ignore the constant gossip she hears in town, she cannot feel secure. This is the main reason why she cannot imitate Christie's self-sacrificing attitude.

4.1.5. Christie's Tales of Piper Gunn

While Christie's book on *The Tartans of Scotland* does not mention clan Gunn, with the help of his stories of Piper and Morag Gunn leading the crofters of Sutherland to Manitoba, Morag

feels a connection to her ancestry (D 42). Although she cannot discern whether these stories are true, Morag feels proud of her ancestry since she recognizes Christie's pride in his heritage when telling her these stories. While Christie was born in Scotland and came to Canada as a teenager, he clearly remembers the place at which his ancestors have lived, and he therefore recites these stories with conviction. Since Morag was too young to learn of any ancestral history from her own parents, she now can adopt Christie's heroic version of her ancestors and does not feel completely like an orphan who does not know anything about her cultural heritage. Christie's version of her ancestry provides her with a sense of pride and belonging. With the knowledge of Piper Gunn's ability to motivate all others to emigrate to Canada and his skill to defeat others in battle, she is convinced that she too has the potential to achieve something heroic in her life.

With these narrations, Christie represents Laurence's conviction that communities are in need of their own legends created by their artists in order to understand their own identities (Thomas 146). By accepting these myths as part of her own ancestry, Morag can begin her search for her own identity.

Thomas notes that folk literature becomes myth when it is deeply accepted by an individual as personally relevant. It then assumes power to shape that individual's identity. After Christie's first tale Morag goes to sleep comforted by a bravery she now feels as her own. (Morley 128-129)

The fact that her father saved Christie's life in the war also provides Morag with a sense of pride and happiness. By witnessing his nervous shaking, she sees substantial consequences of Christie having been in the war. By observing how strongly Christie still suffers from his traumatic experiences, Morag without doubt believes all of his stories about her ancestors to be true.

4.1.6. Morag Developing her Confidence

As a result of feeling the need to defend herself against ridicule at school, at the age of twelve Morag has learned how to beat the other children. She intimidates them and prevents them from mocking her. Although she does not understand how Eva must constantly appear as a fragile little girl and often cries, Morag also protects Eva from the mockery of her fellow pupils by threatening them with her toughness (D 50-51).

Morag sits in the back row in order to not feel observed from behind, and does not let anybody know that she cannot see the board from her desk. Despite her efforts to avoid

humiliation, she is not able to prevent it, as when she does not know how to spell the word 'Egypt' when she is asked to. With Skinner's help, she feels less embarrassed since, through his smile, she understands his implication that what others think of her does not matter. Despite their mutual understanding, she does not speak with Skinner since he frightens everyone as he beats everyone who insults him. Since he is a Métis, referred to as a "half-breed" by the townsmen, nobody in the community speaks with him. He seems to live according to the same principles as Morag, which is to not express any sign of weakness or emotion. He does not convey his anger when someone mocks his sister, who suffers from tuberculosis (D 56). However, as Skinner is Morag's only classmate who comes from an even lower background than Morag, she feels a mutual understanding between them as the "everlasting outsider" (Thomas 143).

Although Morag feels a connection to Skinner, she also feels the need to defend herself in his presence. This is why she denies his simple offer of a cigarette during her first exploration of the nuisance grounds, and why she does not express her aversion against travelling home together with Christie in front of Skinner (D 59). When Christie begins to explain how he can perceive the living conditions of the families in town by looking at their garbage, Morag is rather fascinated by his knowledge than embarrassed about Skinner seeing her together with Christie (61).

He tells Morag that people of any class are "only muck" [...] Meanwhile, "nice" people in Manawaka pretend that cruelty, class discrimination, and the dump itself do not exist [...] Christie has few delusions about human nature, yet is himself generous and loving [...] (Morley 126)

With new insights into the difficulties of several families, Morag once again becomes aware of Christie's humility towards the people in town. As Skinner also is intrigued by Christie's explanations and does not mock him, Morag does not feel ashamed about Christie's stories and can learn more about the people in town. She begins to understand why he does not defend himself against criticism in town. While she is too proud to express her emotions in order to avoid mockery, Christie even encourages ridicule in order to please everyone but himself. He finds delight performing small tasks while Morag easily becomes upset and believes that she can only find true happiness when leaving Manawaka. Christie may appear as a fool, but in reality he is the true hero of Manawaka, since he allows people to behave as they wish and does not complain about anybody. He also makes sure to keep secrets although nobody else hesitates to gossip about him. He is not ashamed about taking useful items from

the nuisance grounds home and is not aware of whether Prin or Morag are humiliated of his behaviour or their own clothing.

4.1.7. Morag's Effort to Maintain a Presentable Appearance

Morag feels embarrassed to be seen together with Prin on their way to church since Prin has become extremely obese. Morag is also worried that someone in the congregation may recognize the hat that Christie found for Prin in the nuisance grounds. Being aware of the Logans' careless attitude toward their own public appearance, Morag works at the women's clothes shop and spends all of her money on nice-looking garments. In this way she makes certain not to be mocked about her attire (D 90).

When Mrs. Cameron purchases a dress originally designed for teenagers, her daughter, Stacey, and Morag smile at each other, both silently acknowledging how ridiculous Mrs. Cameron looks when wearing this dress (D 94). Morag is pleased to be able to communicate with Stacey in this way, but she is also aware that social expectations do not permit Stacey to converse with Morag at school since she must remain with her middle class friends.

Although Morag is hurt by being rejected by her classmates, she too treats Eva in the same way when Eva enters the shop (D 92). She is angry at the town for treating her as a person of less importance than others, and resents girls who are better off than herself. At the same time, she is very much aware of her own appearance and makes sure not to do or say anything inappropriate. While she pretends not to mind other people's rejection, she admires them for their seemingly uncomplicated lives. Due to her stubborn desire to become financially successful as an adult, she treats Eva with the same rejection as the others treat her in order to avoid further gossip about herself in Manawaka. Despite Morag's efforts to maintain her genuine characteristics as an observant and sympathetic person, she has inherited part of the arrogance of the people of town. She even risks her friendship with Eva, who has been her only true friend.

When Julie Kazlik invites Morag to sit in her boyfriend's car and observe the people in town, Morag is very excited to spend time with a group of teenagers on a Saturday night. When she notices several businessmen mocking Christie, Morag quickly draws attention to the soldiers in the streets (D 97). Morag is so insecure about Julie's attitude towards Christie's foolish

behaviour that Morag cannot feel free to be herself. As she does not associate with many people she strongly wishes to maintain her friendship with Julie. Morag must apparently give much more effort than others to maintain a presentable appearance, as she is aware of how easily everyone can feel appalled by Christie and Prin. Although Morag knows how to present herself well, she seems to be cursed with her adoptive parents, which is another reason for her longing to leave Manawaka in order to be accepted for the person she is and not criticized for the people she lives with.

Although Morag is a bright pupil, she does not raise her hand often when she knows the answers at school since she does not want to humiliate Julie, who is not as smart as her. When her teacher wants to publish her homework in the school paper, Morag feels frustrated since she strongly desires to prove her intelligence in order to gain success, but also fears the possibility of losing her friend since Julie does not seem to value a higher education as much as she does herself (D 99).

‘The Depression’ seems to have affected Morag’s attitude, as well as Christie’s reputation. However much he tries to be an honest worker, he will always be looked down upon. Morag is aware of this structure and wishes to liberate herself from it. She wants to be on top of the social hierarchy, so that she must not always feel defensive about her situation, but be respected enough to behave as she wishes. At the moment, though, this freedom seems impossible.

4.1.8. Morag’s Relationship with Skinner

When Morag is in Grade Eleven, she is surprised at how happy she is to see Skinner, after his having spent time at the Air Force. As opposed to their previous encounter along the Wachakwa River when Morag is frightened by their mutual attraction and hurries home, she now is not afraid of Skinner but rather curious about her relationship with him. After having enjoyed her first experience of sexual intercourse with Skinner (D 112), Morag discovers the new feeling of desire for a man within herself. After this experience Morag begins to miss Skinner (D 124), since he seems to be the only person in town to accept her for the person she is and not for pretending to be somebody else. Both Morag and Skinner also can relate well with each other since they have never truly felt at home in Manawaka. They find comfort and assurance in each other’s presence that they will eventually break free from their feeling of imprisonment in this town.

Morag is fascinated when hearing Skinner's tales of his ancestor, Rider Tonnerre, who defeated the English at the Battle of Seven Oaks, and of his grandfather, Jules, who fought with Riel at the Battle of Batoche and who arrived at Manawaka on his own after having been shot in the leg (D 117-120). By hearing Skinner's tales Morag gains an understanding of the Métis perspective of the same battle stories she has heard from Christie. She becomes aware of the historical fact that her ancestors fought against Skinner's ancestors. She now can understand the difficulties the representatives of both cultures had during the waves of immigration in Canada. By presenting the viewpoints of the natives and the newcomers in Canada, Margaret Laurence illustrates the significance of history and myth to the pride of a family (Thomas 146). Now that Morag comprehends how Skinner's personality is shaped by his ancestral legends, she will continue to regard him as a representative of a proud, yet suffering race, rather than as a lonely individual on the fringes of society.

4.1.9. Morag Growing up

Since Eva is terrified of her father's beatings if he learns that she may be pregnant, she aborts the baby, resulting in her inability to have children in the future (D 123). Since Morag has always felt pity for Eva for being beaten by her father, she now cannot bear thinking of Eva not being able to have children. Knowing how terribly unhappy Eva now must feel, Morag's determination to leave town is even stronger than before (D 124).

Sex and power: Morag's inner growth is partly a coming to terms with her own strength. She learns early that weakness attracts bullies. Her humiliated friend Eva, sterilized by a bungled abortion, illustrates what happens to a lower-class girl without Morag's determination: "Morag is not-repeat *not*- going to be beaten by life." (Morley 132)

Morag notices how easily she could share the same destiny as Eva if she felt the necessity to have sexual intercourse with soldiers or upper class boys in order to feel a stronger sense of value. However, since she feels attracted to Skinner and misses him while he is at war, she is not interested in developing a serious relationship with any other young man. While Eva's self-confidence is minimal as a result of being beaten by her father during her childhood, she feels unattractive to boys and needs a boyfriend in order to feel appreciated as a young woman. While Eva is desperate to leave her father's house, she willingly sleeps with boys in the hope of starting a better life by getting married. As opposed to Eva, Morag is rather anxious to leave Manawaka in order to escape the criticism of the town. Morag believes that,

if she moves to a different city, she will feel valued as a person for her intellectual abilities and her personality instead of being looked down on as a member of the working class. Although both friends desire to leave their childhood homes, Eva allows society to control her, while Morag desires to leave the social hierarchy and create her own life with her own efforts (Thomas 147). She is determined to leave Manawaka “on her own terms, not the town’s” (D 124).

Morag’s final tragic experience in Manawaka is climaxed when she is sent by the editor of the *Manawaka Banner* to the Tonnerre shack, after Piquette and her two children have died in a fire (Thomas 147). She is overwhelmed by a strong sense of agony when noticing how Mr. Cameron helps Lazarus carry out the bodies of his family members.

Thomas sees this event as Morag’s passage from innocence to experience [...] the Métis deaths provoke a temporary mood of cynicism. [...] She is eager to leave Manawaka and her past behind, still ignorant of the fact that she carries them inescapably within her. (Morley 129-130)

When Morag is ready to leave for college in Winnipeg, Prin is diagnosed with premature senility since she barely moves around in the house. Christie has finally lost his pride in being the scavenger and regrets not having moved on in life (D 131). When Morag surprisingly meets Jules in the street, he acknowledges her excitement about her departure and her resolution to threaten anything that may prevent her from leaving (Thomas 147). Morag feels grateful to be able to see Skinner again after his having returned home from having served in the war. However she also feels very distant from Skinner since he feels the need to recover from his experiences and spend time with his family, while Morag now finally has the chance to leave the town she so often has struggled with. Morag feels disappointed by feeling as though Skinner is living in a different world, but she reminds herself that she will be leaving Manawaka soon and looks forward to new adventures (D 134).

4.2. Morag’s Experiences in the Cities of Winnipeg and Toronto

Morag takes the night train to Winnipeg in order to avoid travelling together with anybody else from Manawaka. She needs the time on her own in the train to mark her own right of passage from poverty to success. Despite the gratitude she feels towards the Logans for raising her, she still does not want to be seen with Christie when he takes her to the CPR station in his old truck since now she finally can liberate herself from her feeling of

embarrassment. However, since she has never left Manawaka, she is frightened by the big city and new people she will be confronted with and hopes to be able to respond accordingly (D 140-1).

While Morag rents a room at the house of the Crawley family, Morag observes how Mrs. Crawley, in her late twenties, is frustrated with her four children and a husband who does not show enough affection for his wife (D 142-3). In contrast to the cold room she stays in and the insights she gains into the difficulties of raising children, Morag finds a good friend in Ella, whose father has died and whose mother feels blessed with her three daughters. Mrs. Gerson expresses her joy in living in this city and never complains. Morag visits them often and feels overwhelmed by the warmth she feels in this house (D 147-150). Ella has become a close friend that Morag has always longed for and her sisters also treat her as though she is one of them. With the help of the Gerson family, Morag feels at home in Winnipeg and has someone to confide in when times are difficult. Here she does not feel the constant threat of being ridiculed for her intelligence or her working class background, but has the liberty to share her ideas, hopes and fears with her best friend.

4.2.1. Morag Falling in Love with Brooke

When Morag's literature professor, Dr. Skelton, offers to give her suggestions to improve the story she wrote, she is so overwhelmed by having been complimented by her professor that she stays up until three o'clock in the morning writing a non-sentimental story. However, she then loses confidence and believes that she will never be able to match his competence (D 153-154).

When Brooke asks her about her upbringing, Morag pretends not to be affected by the early deaths of her parents since she does not want pity (D 157). Brooke likes the illusion that her life seems to be starting now since she pretends not to remember very much about her past (D 158). Since Brooke is the ideal partner Morag desires to have, she prevents him from knowing how poor her family is. She wishes to prove her intellectual abilities to him and emphasizes that she is willing to work hard in order to gain respect as a competent woman. At the same time, her "voice adopted from Christie, that is tough, knowing, and cynical [...] recedes"²³ since she is now still afraid of what others think of her and she still makes an effort to appear

²³ C.f.: Franks 105

distinguished in public despite her expectations of being liberated from the gossip of the small town of Manawaka. When together with Brooke, she denies her own identity in order to appear as the woman he expects her to be. "Morag conceals from Brooke her dark self, the anger and guilt of her Highland inheritance and personal past" (Morley 124).

Brooke regards Morag as an innocent girl whom he longs to educate how to become an esteemed woman in society. Although Morag is startled by this belief, she rather conceals her knowledge about the dead baby Christie once found in the nuisance grounds and Gus Winkler's beating his children in order to correspond to Brooke's view of her innocence and willingness to learn.

When Brooke and Morag have sexual intercourse for the first time, Morag feels guilty about Brooke's conviction that she is a virgin. When she realizes that Brooke would not maintain his intimate relationship with her if he knew that she was not a virgin, she decides not to tell him about her previous sexual encounter with Jules. She willingly accepts his invitation to move to Toronto with him, as she still is surprised about Brooke's interest in her.

Since the life she has always longed for is about to begin, she believes that her marriage would be ruined if anyone from Manawaka attended her wedding. She especially does not want Brooke to see Christie's impolite manners and dirty clothing. By denying Christie the pleasure of seeing her getting married, she denies her past and her personality in order to conform to Dr. Skelton's version of his ideal wife.

Since Brooke represents the respect, success, shelter and happiness Morag has always longed for, she idolizes him and believes that he never struggles, but that he controls his emotions serenely (Thomas 151). Ella tries to convince her that he must also be nervous about his wedding, but Morag values this college professor so highly that she cannot believe that he possesses any form of weakness.

In their new apartment in Toronto, Morag reads all of Brooke's books and does not speak very much when they go out or have visitors. Since she is still learning about Brooke's lifestyle, she does not want to say anything inappropriate or embarrass herself. She now is in a state of learning and wants to absorb as much information as she can in order to match Brooke's talent.

4.2.2. Brooke Blocked from Sharing and Responding to Emotions

By learning about Brooke's childhood in India and at a boarding school in England, Morag becomes aware that his youth was even rougher than Morag's has been. Despite her longing to get to know him better and share her own experiences, Brooke rejects the proposal to share his deepest emotions and fears with his wife (D 179). Despite the fact that both Brooke and Morag have left their pasts behind and have reached the life they have always longed for, they both are still resentful about their pasts. Although both enjoy each other's company, both are still lonely in their own worlds and cannot feel understood by their partner. While Morag feels too inferior to Brooke to be able to ask him directly about his sorrow, Brooke wishes to protect Morag from feeling the pain he once experienced. Despite both efforts to please one another, they only become more frustrated and lonely. While Brooke presents himself as a successful academic, he does not take the necessary steps to overcome his resentment from his past and continues to lack confidence in himself as a person. Since Morag has always been an outsider, her painful experiences have increased her determination to become successful and maintain her own character traits. In contrast to Brooke, who is controlled by society and chooses not to confront his own emotions, Morag is fully aware of her own emotional needs and no longer depends on her social status in order to feel personal value (Thomas 150).

At age twenty-four, Morag becomes intensely aware of her misery. She humiliates herself in front of Brooke and his students when commenting on an author and becomes angry when Brooke calls her *child*. Although Brooke's habit of calling her *child* is a form of affection, Morag still feels regarded as an inexperienced girl and desires to be treated as an equal partner (D 183). Morag's toughness from her childhood is rekindled and "returns in force when she needs [her confidence] to tell Brooke off for calling her 'little one' for eight years".²⁴

When Brooke is depressed because he does not feel as though he is working hard enough as a professor, Morag wants to get to know him better in order to help him feel better. Brooke merely tells her that he needs her to stay happy and cheerful in order for him to stay happy (D 186). When he explains to her about his Hindu babysitter and how his father punished him for his apparently bad behaviour, he does not want to discuss his deepest fears and

²⁴ C.f.: Franks 105

resentment in detail. Once again Morag tries to understand her husband better and desires to help him overcome his difficulties, while Brooke merely says that he needs his sleep in order to get up early the next day (D 187).

Brooke makes it a habit to ask Morag if she has been a good girl before having sexual intercourse with her. Morag is upset at this behaviour and does not desire him any longer, but is also afraid of him becoming angry if she does not respond to his wishes (D 200). Despite her aversion to her husband's habits, Morag understands that Brooke's desire to control his wife is a result of him having had to endure the humiliations caused by his father during his childhood. Having overcome the status of a victim, Brooke now needs the reassurance of his own power by controlling those around him. When Morag realizes that Brooke will not change his habits, she accepts her need to liberate herself from her husband's own imprisonment.²⁵

After three years of writing, Morag finishes her first novel. Brooke criticizes that the protagonist of her novel is non-verbal, that she talks a lot but cannot communicate well and that the main character does not express anything they did not know before (D 201-202). Despite his practice as a literary academic, Brooke does not notice that the protagonist expresses the need of conversation, but is not understood by others. He can neither discover Morag's talent nor her development through her means of narration.²⁶

As her character is born and assumes life, so do we see Morag coming into being as a writer. The process is exhilarating, often painful, but always *necessary*. (Thomas 153)

Her initial admiration for Brooke as a professional in literature has diminished now that she has spent a long time on writing her own novel. Despite his disapproval, Morag believes that her novel is well-written and she submits it despite his criticism.

[...] the relationship becomes a prison and a lie. [...] Repressing knowledge of the lie adds to her feeling of being separated from herself. It is only when the decision to leave is irrevocable that Morag can acknowledge the chains, now broken. (Morley 132-3)

²⁵ Buss, Helen. „Margaret Laurence and the Autobiographical Impulse,“ *Crossing the River: Essays in Honour of Margaret Laurence*. Ed. Kristjana Gunnars. Winnipeg: Turnstone, 1988. 147-167, here 163

²⁶ C.f.: Brydon 188

4.2.3. Morag Aware of her Static Marriage

When coming back to Toronto after Prin's funeral, she feels as though her apartment were a cave. She stops going to the hairdresser, which causes her to argue with Brooke since he wants her to look presentable when they visit friends (D 209). When Morag expresses her desire to be taken seriously by her husband, Brooke replies that she worries needlessly and that her visit to Manawaka has upset her. He says she will get her hair done and they will not worry about trivial things anymore. Morag gives in to Brooke's orders, but now begins to realize that he will never regard her as equal to himself (D 211-212). She understands that Brooke does not feel confident enough to raise a child. Having recognized that their marriage has remained stagnant throughout the years, Morag understands that Brooke will never want their relationship to change. For this reason, Morag begins to feel more and more estranged from her husband, which will finally result in the termination of their marriage (Thomas 154).

When Brooke offers to help Morag make changes in order for her novel to be published, Morag is convinced that her writing will be accepted by another publisher without her having to make changes. When Brooke teasingly suggests that she can teach his class, Morag is so insulted that she throws a glass bowl across the room (D 213). Instead of trying to understand why she is upset, he rather thinks about his own anger and goes to his office to correct papers (D 213) instead of making an effort to comfort his wife. As a result of Brooke regarding his wife as a child, he also does not take her writing seriously. He feels insecure when his wife ultimately does achieve success with her novel (Thomas 151).

With the successful publication of her novel, Morag gains reassurance that she indeed is talented in writing, although Brooke never seems convinced of her creativity. She is so involved with her writing that she forgets to act according to Brooke's needs (D 187). With the help of her novel she can, unconsciously, stop behaving as the person Brooke imagines her to be. She becomes aware of her own unfulfilled needs and that Brooke is no longer able to make her happy. She realizes that, although she has matured during her years of marriage, Brooke has not personally developed. While Brooke continues repressing his childhood and expects Morag to do the same, Morag realizes that she cannot live without her past. Since

Brooke continues to regard her as childish and too inexperienced to be a writer, Morag no longer can believe in a further development in their relationship.²⁷

As her English professor, Brooke represents the authority of the cultural and literary tradition Morag reveres, but as she herself becomes a writer, her authority comes into conflict with his and destroys the marriage. But her writing also becomes the means of regaining the self she has suppressed to be with Brooke [...]²⁸

Now that Morag has married someone from a higher class, she no longer worries about gossip, but rather wishes to return to be the confident person she was as a teenager and not have to worry about the appearance Brooke now so eagerly wishes to present. Morag seems to have overcome her desire to achieve public appreciation, while Brooke is still controlled by the expectations of society to maintain a respectable public reputation. Aware of his never-ending desire for public recognition, Morag realizes that she no longer can share this lifestyle.

4.2.4. Morag's Liberation from Brooke

When Morag surprisingly meets Jules in the street (D 215), she is so overwhelmed by the feeling of home that she eventually spends the night with him. She can identify with Jules, as he also has always been an outsider in Manawaka, and Morag also has always felt out of place in the big city. After hearing Brooke's insulting remarks about the Métis, Morag follows Jules to his apartment. She apologizes for troubling him with her problems and realizes that she and Brooke have been living in their own fantasies (D 220-1). Both never truly knew each other but merely lived in their own worlds with their invented views of their spouses (Thomas 150-1).

After Morag calms down, she has sexual intercourse with Jules, which causes her to feel transformed. After having received care and support from Jules, Morag now shows concern for Jules and tells him how she was affected by Piquette's death. As both Morag and Jules are emotionally distraught, Morag stays with Jules during the night, both finding comfort in each other (D 222-225). Although Morag has a guilty conscience for having committed

²⁷ Hunter, Lynette. „Consolation and Articulation in Margaret Laurence's *The Diviners*,“ *Critical Approaches to the Fiction of Margaret Laurence*. Ed. Colin Nicholson. Vancouver: U of British Columbia Press, 1990. p. 133-151, here 142

²⁸ Greene, Gayle. „Margaret Laurence's *The Diviners*: The Uses of the Past,“ *Critical Approaches to the Fiction of Margaret Laurence*. Ed. Colin Nicholson. Vancouver: U of British Columbia Press, 1990. p. 177-203, here 190

adultery, she now feels liberated from the burden of feeling separated from her true self (Morley 124). She remembers her confident self from her teenage years and can return to behave as the person she really is.

The next morning Morag decides to travel west and find a job with the money she has earned with her novel. She returns to Brooke to tell him that she wants a divorce. Brooke is hurt, but stops talking and begins to mark papers when Morag begins packing (D 228). “Morag’s leaving is a desperate necessity and a kind of death” (Morley 124).

Thus, her initial desire for liberation from Manawaka has not led to the freedom she was hoping for. Although she has managed to find a good friend and has married a relatively wealthy man, she remains afraid of the city until her divorce. Brooke denies her the deepest wish she has to have a child, which is a reason for her misery. Brooke also has his own sexual rituals which tend to scare Morag and are a reason for her to seek for liberation in Jules. As she herself is for a long while willing to give up all of her desires in order to please her husband, Brooke does not change his lifestyle for her but expects her to adjust to his attitudes and cannot understand Morag when her desires differ. Since Brooke does not want to upset her when asking her about her past, he believes that she has forgotten her past with the intention to move on in life and to begin to enjoy the pleasures in life. Although close to the end of their marriage, Morag does not fulfil her duties as a housewife as well as Brooke expects her to, he still shows compassion for her distress about her novel and does not become upset at her for not acting according to his expectations. Even after she has had her affair with Jules, he is willing to forgive Morag for hurting him, which illustrates his sincere efforts to remain married with the woman he once loved so much for her innocence.

Brooke has felt that he *owns* his wife. When she leaves, he wants legal proof of what is and is not his property. Morag makes no financial claims. (Morley 133)

However, since their marriage is based on fantasies from the beginning, Morag can no longer live with these lies and finally must find her true identity and her happiness without a husband who does not accept her for who she truly is.

Although she cannot continue living with Brooke, she also cannot go back to Manawaka, because returning to her hometown would mean a reverse step in her development. Her ultimate liberation from Brooke is that she becomes pregnant after having her affair with

Jules. Now Morag can finally have what she desires most and can be reminded of Jules whenever she looks at her daughter. In this way, she will forever be grateful to Jules for helping her liberate herself from her hostage with Brooke.

4.3. Morag Gaining Independence

4.3.1. Starting Out Alone

After her divorce Morag goes to live in a rundown part of an area in Vancouver and works for her landlady instead of having to work as a typist (D 240-1). With this help Morag is able to better concentrate on writing, as this is now her only true occupational desire. While living with Brooke she has discovered the need to write stories but has felt oppressed by the criticism of her husband. Now that she is free to write without her husband's objections, she is financially dependent on the success of her writings, as opposed to her first novel which she merely writes as a result of having too much free time. With the success of her first novel, she now feels confident to earn a living solely through her own creative writing. She indeed achieves success with her short stories and then no longer must work for her land lady (D 246). With the help of her creative writing skills she can now better concentrate on looking after her daughter and can write stories with more confidence.

A few months after meeting Julie Kazlik, Morag and her baby, Pique, move into Fan Brady's house, whom Morag initially fears due to her occupation as a dancer in a club and her keeping a python in the basement (D 253-256). However, while observing how Fan struggles with her job but continues giving her best effort at work, Morag is reminded of her fictional character Lilac and is fascinated by the fact that Fan is a much more interesting character than Lilac (D 258).

4.3.2. Morag's Realization with the Help of Various Men in Fan's House

Morag is grateful for having her first sexual experience in a year of abstinence with a divorced news broadcaster named Harold. However, burdened with the emotional baggage she still carries with her since her divorce, and being reminded of how uncomplicated her relationship with Jules seemed, she regrets taking advantage of him for her own pleasure. She realizes, however, that Harold also uses her in order to repress his feelings for his wife. Morag and Harold both feel lonely with their own troubles and are not able to comfort each

other, as they merely look for momentary satisfaction. When Morag tries to comfort Harold when he misses his wife, both realize that they are not yet ready for another lasting relationship (D 264-265).

When Morag is seduced by Chas, one of Fan's occasional men, she does not satisfy him according to his expectations, which causes him to strike her with full force across her breasts. She is so frightened by this event that her body shakes when she later tells a good-night story to Pique and Pique notices that something is wrong. The next day she wakes up with menstrual cramps, relieved that she is not pregnant again with this brutal man's child. This event is so traumatising to Morag that she no longer longs for a relationship with a man since her daughter's well-being is more important to her than her own sexual satisfaction (D 267- 270). She accepts the fact that she cannot enjoy one-night-stands with various men since she cannot trust that the men are as sincere as she is. She is aware that she will not experience enough security with a man as long as she lives in Fan's house. "As Marian Engel observes, Morag's attempts at casual sex are disastrous because she is not a casual person" (Morley 132).

With her novel, *Prospero's Child*, which is about a woman who leaves her husband in order to find herself (D 270), Morag is able to overcome the resentment she feels toward Brooke for not having given her the life she truly wanted with him. In this way she does not need to verbalize her resentment to her friends but concentrates on being a good mother for Pique and enjoying her friendships with Fan and Julie.

When Brooke briefly visits Morag with his new wife named Anne (D 275), Morag realizes how Brooke is forced by society to maintain a respectful public appearance. Although he loved Morag very much, he quickly looks for another woman to marry in order not to remain a divorced man, as this is frowned upon in his society. Although he may not be in love with his new wife, maintaining a good appearance is more important than anything else for the successful academic. Morag can finally recognize that Brooke only loved her for her false appearance. By visiting Morag, Brooke may also have the intention to hurt Morag as he presents his new wife only a relatively short time after their divorce (D 275). He also shows her how he is moving on in life while Morag has made a mistake in his eyes. In this way Brooke can leave his past with Morag behind and may feel as though both have now paid enough indemnity for their own mistakes and can continue life without each other.

4.3.3. Pique's First Encounter with Jules

When Jules appears at Fan's house, both Morag and Pique are happy to meet him. Now that Jules stays in Vancouver to support his dying sister, Pique quickly feels comfortable around Jules and refers to him as *Dad*. Morag also finds joy in the unity the family feels when together and appreciates Jules for staying with them (D 277-281). While Jules is in emotional pain due to the deaths of his father and his brother, and his sister's serious sickness, he seeks comfort in Morag and in his daughter. He may merely use Morag's house as an escape from reality as he usually lives with Billy Joe and financially struggles due to his profession as a street performer, but he also finds comfort in his new family. Both Pique and Morag do not judge him for never having visited them any earlier but they take delight in feeling as a real family. Although Morag is aware that Jules is bound to leave again, she trusts him and therefore sleeps with him at night and enjoys his company during the day. When Jules departs, Morag and Pique are both depressed that they will not be able to spend any more time with him but they do not mention their misery to him. Although Pique is only five years old, she is aware that Jules does not belong in this household and does not expect to see him again. She has learned from her mother not to have expectations but to appreciate what she experiences at the moment. Since Jules' occupation demands that he travels across the country, it is difficult for him to remain at the same place for a longer period of time. As Morag has also lived in various places, she understands Jules' necessity to move on to the next city. She regards his visit as a sign of his concern and interest in his daughter's well-being. Now that the stories her mother has told her about family Tonnerre have become real by being able to meet her father, Pique can find comfort in Jules' visit with the awareness that she has a larger family in a different part of the country.

4.3.4. Morag's Adventures and Discoveries on the British Isles

When living in London Morag meets the painter Daniel McRaith, a Highlander, which reminds her of Christie and her own ancestors (D 303). She finds comfort and enjoyment with him and does not mind that he commits adultery with Morag. In contrast to denying her past during her marriage with Brooke, she tells Dan everything about her life and her past. In this way she can have an honest relationship with him. Due to the fact that he tells her that about his wife and children, Morag knows that she can trust him (D 305-306). But despite the enjoyment and comfort Morag feels when spending time together with Dan, she feels

unhappy and lonely when he is not in London (D 310). Although she is slightly jealous when Dan is together with his wife in Scotland, Morag acknowledges the fact that she is destined to live alone in London, since she needs time by herself in order to be able to concentrate on her writing (Thomas 161-2).

4.3.4.1. Morag Accepting her Ancestry at Culloden

When Morag and Pique visit the McRaiths in Scotland, Morag realizes that Dan always returns to his wife because she is a caring woman and he has known her his whole life (D 318). Morag realizes that, although Bridie is not as intellectual or beautiful as Dan would like her to be and always follows the same routine without a chance of personal development, Dan is still not able to abandon her and their children. Although he has moved on in his life and has personally developed into someone different from when he first married, he truly feels only at home in his small hometown in Scotland. Despite his sexual and intellectual longing for Morag, he cannot maintain his intimate relationship with her but must remain in Scotland since his wife will always offer him absolute loyalty and fidelity. He now must remain with his wife and return the favour she has been giving him her whole life. For him, Morag represents the excitement of the city, while at the end of the day he longs to return to his quiet home in Scotland. Morag cannot provide him with this quiet home and can only offer him momentary happiness. He realizes that he has no choice but to remain in his village in Scotland, and work on his relationship with his family.

When she visits Crombruach with Pique, Bridie and the children are made real to her, and McRaith explains the importance of this place to him: "When I look out there, I see the firth. It's the place that's important to me. The surrounding circumstances--well, they have happened and they are here" (The Diviners, p. 317). This trip results in two important recognitions for Morag: she knows that her love affair with Dan is over but that their friendship is a solid bond between them; and she accepts that her need to search for her ancestors in Sutherland has disappeared [...] (Thomas 162)

After realizing how Dan must remain with his wife and children, Morag must learn to accept that she cannot expect him to maintain his intimacy with her. She observes how simple life in this Scottish town is and that these people will always long for their true homes when they have left.

Thus Morag realizes that her true home is Manawaka. Her ancestors may have come from Scotland but they have searched for a new life in Canada, which now has become Morag's

true home. The historic legends of her ancestors have provided her with a sense of identity and pride²⁹, however, she now is grateful to her ancestors for having granted her a life in Canada, and she understands that it was their wish to have descendants in Canada. As Morag now feels like a tourist in Scotland she realizes that Christie is her true ancestor (D 319). She accepts her parents' early deaths and feels as part of Christie's family, despite her aversion to his poverty. Since she will always carry her childhood experiences with her throughout her life, she must not feel ashamed of her past but rather feel proud of her hometown. She recognizes that her past constitutes her present and her future. While her relationship with Dan has helped her feel closer to her Scottish ancestors, she now feels the freedom to release herself from her relationship with Dan when she realizes that her trip to Scotland will not provide her with insights into her ancestry. She must find her own identity in her own country (Morley 133).

4.3.5. Morag's Final Encounter with Christie

Now that Morag finally accepts Christie as her true ancestor, she willingly travels to Manawaka to visit him. She knows how difficult it is for him not to be able to speak due to his having suffered a stroke, as he always was very talkative and open about his emotions. She says that she has fought a lot with him but that he has been her father, to which Christie replies that he is blessed (D 323). She is grateful for the chance to be able to see him one last time and Christie appreciates her visit and recognizes her gratitude toward him. With this episode Morag is able to part with Christie in peace despite her having felt ashamed of his manners in the past. The fact that few people appear for his funeral and his dirty house do not bother her any longer. While Christie has been her only true ancestor throughout her life she no longer resents his having worked as the garbage collector. She feels as though Christie was very proud of his ancestors and also wanted to pass on his pride to her by telling her stories of Piper and Morag Gunn. This is the reason why Morag hires a piper player to play at his funeral, as Christie would have identified with this music. The piper's playing of "The Flowers of the Forest" marks Christie's funeral and Morag begins to mourn (D 329). When Morag realizes how Christie has never been able to reconnect with his past in Scotland, she values him for having been the humble man he was. His life now has been included as one of

²⁹ Thieme, John. „Acknowledging Myths: The Image of Europe in Margaret Laurence's *The Diviners* and Jack Hodgins' *The Invention of the World*,“ Ed. Colin Nicholson. Vancouver: U of British Columbia Press. 1990. p. 152-161, here 156

Morag's ancestral tales for Pique. Now that Morag has accepted her background, she can move on to a cheerful future.

4.3.6. Morag Ready to Settle Down

A few months after Christie's funeral Morag and Pique move to a farm at McConnell's Landing in Ontario (D 339). After having lived in big cities during the past fifteen years, Morag is now ready to move back to a small town, which will always remind her of her childhood in Manawaka. Within three years Morag finishes her novel *Shadow of Eden*. It is about the same period as Christie's tales of Piper Gunn (D 340-1). With this story Morag can now publish her beliefs in her ancestry and in this way make Christie's tales immortal. With Christie's help Morag has now come to terms with her childhood in Manawaka and can publish what Christie has taught her about her ancestry.

4.3.7. Jules Liberating Morag as well as Pique

Despite Morag's happiness about living on a quiet farm, she realizes that Pique struggles with having a Métis parent. Morag realizes that she cannot protect Pique from being looked down upon due to her appearance but that Pique must find her own way of dealing with the difficulties of society (D 343-4).

Morag's daughter [...] carries in her veins a heritage that she does not yet understand but is unwilling and unable to reject. (Morley 121)

The day Pique expresses her discomfort as a result of being mocked in school, Jules appears on the farm and provides comfort to both Pique and Morag. He now provides a sense of liberation to Pique as he tells her in greater detail about the deaths of Piquette, Paul and Valentine, and expresses his true emotions about his life by singing his songs (D 345-9). When talking about his brother Jacques' farm at Galloping Mountain, he offers Pique a hopeful picture of his family in contrast to the tragic fates of his other family members (Thomas 164). Pique now no longer feels alone with her difficulties of being a descendant of a Métis since she feels understood by her father and in this way finds the support and strength she needs in order to face the difficulties of every-day life. Although Jules only stays for one night, both Morag and Pique find comfort in his visit. Morag observes how Pique

welcomes her father into her life and how they are able to bond with each other without Morag's additional help.

The fact that Morag accepts the plaid pin with the motto of the clan Macdonald is due to the fact that the ancestor who motivated the Sutherlanders to emigrate to Canada was named Archie Macdonald. Despite Christie's efforts to convince Morag of Piper and Morag Gunn whom he described as the first ancestors to enter Canada, the real ancestor is Archie Macdonald. By accepting this plaid pin Morag identifies herself with the first ancestors who emigrated to Canada. Despite the different name, Morag can feel as though this pin represented her true ancestors and in this way she has a symbol of her true identity. She offers Jules the knife that Christie gave to her, which originally belonged to Lazarus, in exchange for the pin (D 352).

The culmination of their relationship is peace, marked by the strange coincidence of Morag's finding that the hunting knife Christie gave her long ago belonged to old Lazarus. She exchanges it for the plaid pin that Jules has, the pin that John Shipley had traded to Lazarus. [...] all their relationship, Morag realizes, has indeed been a fair trade—of their need for each other and their mutual reassurance. Morag identifies the crest from her *Clans and Tartans of Scotland*, recognizes and accepts the mysterious gift [...] (Thomas 164-165)

The Macdonalds' war cry *Gainsay Who Dare* gives Pique the courage to seek her own identity and the confidence that she will achieve her goal. By observing her parents' cooperation in helping each other, Pique now believes that it also is possible for herself to find peace within herself. With his visit, Jules significantly changes both Morag's and Pique's lives, which ultimately will lead to their happiness.

4.4. Morag Transforming Worry to Peace

4.4.1. Morag Controlled by her Anxieties

"The river flowed both ways" (D 3), is the opening sentence of the novel. The current moves from north to south but the wind comes from the south.

As the novel opens, this phenomenon introduces Pique's departure, and the apparent contrast between her daughter's way of life and Morag's own. (Morley 121)

In contrast to Rachel as a first-person narrator in *A Jest of God*, Grace claims that Morag, as a third-person narrator, creates a distinction between Morag as a writer and Morag as the

experiencing self. While speaking in the present tense about passed episodes as her experiencing self, and narrating about her current state as a forty-seven-year-old in the past tense, the novel is divided into her learning self and her resulting present maturity, creating two separate stories which finally intertwine at the end of the novel (Morley 123).

Since Pique has gone west by herself, Morag is very worried about her daughter's well-being. Morag finds comfort in her work which is supposed to distract her from Pique's absence. "Morag [has become ...] a watcher [...] on the sidelines of her daughter Pique's life" (Thomas 133). Now that Morag lives alone she misses Pique, A-Okay Smith and Maudie, who served as mediators between Morag and Pique's age group (Thomas 142).

When Jules is in jail for drug dealing and phones Morag he "is furious with Morag for letting Pique go" (Thomas 142-3). Morag is neither surprised nor accuses him for having acted illegally. Instead, she is comforted to hear that Pique has visited him and that she is doing well, but also deeply concerned about how Pique is doing after having visited her father in prison. When their conversation is over, Morag sits without moving, afraid that she may begin shaking like Christie did when confronted with intense emotions (D 48-49). This idea illustrates how connected Morag now feels to Christie and how she feels that she has inherited some of his characteristics. She becomes aware that it is her own fault for having denied a father to Pique (D 49) and begins writing in her notebook:

A popular misconception is that we can't change the past - everyone is constantly changing their own past, recalling it, revising it. What really happened? A meaningless question. But one I keep trying to answer, knowing there is no answer. (D 49)

Although Morag has been trying to leave her past behind for so long, she continually remembers different episodes with Christie or Jules. She tries to answer the question why she constantly tries to find a meaning to her past, while knowing that she will never be fully satisfied with her answers. In order to gain full clarity she would need to directly speak to Christie or her parents, which is no longer possible. In this way her past will forever remain a mystery.

Morag remembers their deaths, not their lives: "yet they're inside me, flowing unknown in my blood and moving unrecognized in my skull" (D 15). (Morley 122)

Since Morag has accepted Christie as her father, she feels content with her relationship with Pique, although she has never considered whether Pique is happy about having grown up without a father. Morag now feels responsible for her daughter's past but realizes that she cannot help another human being come to terms with their own history (D 49). She feels the burden of having caused pain to her daughter but cannot help her overcome the wounds of her past. This causes a feeling of helplessness in Morag.

Pique is not ready to marry Gord, as she is still confused about her own identity and must first come to terms with her own past and ancestry (D 194). At the same time, since her mother is divorced and her parents have never married, she now cannot believe in marriage and therefore feels distant from Gord for asking her to commit herself to something she is afraid of. Since Morag has never travelled anywhere until she was nineteen and began studying, she struggles with Pique's spontaneous travelling to the west all by herself and not knowing clearly what she is looking for. Morag must learn that Pique is an individual with her own struggles which Morag is not able to help her with.

The fact that Pique visits her father in prison, although she only previously met him twice in her life, shows how she longs for his attention and love. Despite Morag's efforts to tell Pique tales about the family Tonnerre in Manawaka, Pique is not satisfied with mere stories but longs for a personal relationship with her father. As he is in jail, Pique cannot spend much time with him but asks for the songs he has written (D 192), in order for her to learn them and understand what her father has been through. She too wishes to be a singer and a musician like her father is.

4.4.2. Morag Finding Comfort

When Morag is worried about Pique she reads a passage from *The Canadian Settler's Guide* saying that it is better to work than to be seated and worry. She imagines a dialogue with Catharine Parr Traill. To Morag Catharine represents the emotionally stable and independent woman, who is never upset or caught in self pity (D 79). Since she had many children to look after and a large farm to sustain, she did not have time to worry about facts she could not change. She was able to maintain her motivation to continue working hard until her death. Morag also wishes to be as hard-working and confident as Catharine, but continuously finds herself lost in her thoughts and worries.

Morag is relieved when Pique finally calls from Winnipeg and is comforted to hear that Gord is with her. But she is also angry that Pique was treated like a criminal in Manitoba and was almost sent to jail (D 85-87). Through this conversation Morag becomes aware of how the Métis are still being looked down upon by all other representatives of ethnic backgrounds in Manitoba. While Morag has always felt a connection to the Métis through her relationship with Jules, she is not aware that her daughter is also despised by the people in society. She feels confused at why she is able to love the aspects in Jules and Pique which she herself does not have, while others do not look for the positive characteristics in unfamiliar people but only look down on them. Morag is aware that Pique is hurt for being treated badly, but also cannot do anything to cheer up her daughter, since she knows that this will not be Pique's last negative experience as a descendent of a Métis. This is a reason why, although Morag knows that Pique is not alone, she is still very worried about her and cannot fully concentrate on her work.

Her freedom is a catalyst for the repressed anger of solid citizens, who resent her life style. Pique feels their anger, when she hitchhikes with a guitar. In Ontario she has been taunted for having Indian blood, and for having a mother who fails to fit a conventional social slot. The old patterns recur, Morag thinks. She remembers similar humiliations, and wishes she could spare Pique. (Morley 136)

Morag sees a picture of Brooke in the newspaper, who has become President of a university (D 140). Reflecting on her past with Brooke she now sees how Brooke was able to maintain his lifestyle and rise in the academic field. Despite his divorce, he has maintained his respectful public appearance and has become a nationally recognized citizen of importance. Although Morag has liberated herself from her life with Brooke, he will continue to be a part of her memory and her identity since, in his presence, she has realized what she really longed for in her life. Morag is impressed by his success, but is also satisfied with her own life since she is able to live her life in peace on her farm and away from the busy life in the city. However, similar to her life in the city, she is still afraid of walking alone outside out of fear of wild animals. She is also too afraid to go swimming in the river, not knowing what kind of plants or animals are there (D 292). The fear she feels has become part of her identity, since she has always felt the need to fight for her own freedom. Her need to defend herself against the unfamiliar still remains with her and always will be part of her personality.

4.4.3. Morag's Awareness of the Loneliness of Others

When Pique returns home, she mentions her visit to her father. Morag realizes that Jules was aware of how worried Morag was about Pique's travels and therefore gave Morag the security she needed by telling her of Pique's well-being. In this way he liberated her from her worries (D 191-2).

The following day Royland invites Pique to join him while divining, knowing that his divining has always fascinated Morag more than Pique. Since Royland is aware of Morag's constant worries about her daughter, he tells her about the mistakes of his past for the first time. When he was a preacher he treated his wife badly, which led to her running away from him. When he asked her to come back to him, she killed herself because she was so afraid of him. Therefore, he travelled west, began digging wells and remained at his farm in Ontario. After having realized how he hurt his wife he decided to treat people kind-heartedly (D 196-7). Since he has forgiven himself for his mistakes, he is not upset when reflecting on his past. He represents the person Morag would have liked to see Brooke become. As Morag does not have contact with Brooke any longer, she can now imagine an older and wiser version of Brooke and can find hope in Royland. When Pique says that he has always been like a grandfather to her she gives him the proof that he has become a gentle and caring person (D 197).

When Morag listens to a Gaelic song and regrets never having learned Gaelic, she reminisces about Christie, who claimed to be Scottish but never learned Gaelic. Jules only speaks broken Cree and French but also speaks English as though it were a foreign language, and Brooke regrets having forgotten Hindi although it is not part of his ancestry. She realizes that not only her, but everyone she knows must have some regrets about their past (D 199-200). Morag, Christie, Brooke and Jules all seem to have lived as foreigners at the wrong places at the wrong time. Prin's comment that Morag was a "mooner" as a child (D 42) applies to all three of these men. Morag can sympathize with each of them since they all have their loneliness and regrets.

4.4.3.1. Morag Aware of Pique's Struggles

Morag is slightly envious because Pique seems to be more interested in her father than in her mother (D 192). Jules has also matured and has learned how to treat Pique as a good father when they meet. Morag is not only jealous for Pique's rejection of Morag's stories but that Jules is a role model for Pique and provides her with comfort and hope in ways that Morag is not able to help her with. Now that Pique has inherited all that she could from her mother, she turns to her father for new and exciting stories, which are hidden in his songs.

Essentially, Morag is still forced to be a watcher on the sidelines of Pique's life, but she is now also actively engaged in Pique's present, even if it be only in the wounding challenge of Pique's cry: "Why did you *have* me?" [...] (The Diviners, p. 193). (Thomas 149)

Pique accuses Morag for having given birth to her out of selfish reasons and not having considered how Pique or her father would feel about Pique's existence. Pique claims that Morag is too proud and scared of being rejected by Jules, which is the reason why she does not visit him (D 193). Pique expresses Morag's deep fears openly, which Morag would not admit to herself. As Jules always appeared stronger and superior to Morag, she feels as though she does not have the right to ask him for help or to stay with them longer. Now that Pique is old enough to understand her mother, she resents her not having been able to be around her father for a longer period of time. Pique nearly begins to cry when she mentions how her father's voice is getting weaker and competition is getting harder (D 193). She shows great concern for him and worries that he might get into more trouble now that he is growing older.

When Gord wonders why Pique is no longer content with their relationship, Morag says that she has to find herself first and he has to let her go. Morag thinks later that she probably talked more about herself than about Pique (D 194). Morag becomes aware that Pique has her own reasons why she cannot stay with Gord but also knows that she cannot fully understand what her daughter is going through. Pique may not feel ready for a lasting relationship with a man since her mother also lives without a man. Before she can settle down she must find her own identity, which she believes can be done more easily through travel as she has moved so many times as a child. For now Pique is determined to find a job and is not planning to stay with her mother.

Pique must know the truth about her ancestry before she can find her own identity. Since she was not able to observe her parents live together and see how the different races could create a harmonious give and take with one another, Pique cannot feel as one with herself. Although she has seen how proud her mother is of Christie's tales of her Scottish ancestors, Pique has not experienced enough of her father's attitudes in order to be able to feel fully at peace with her Métis background. Since her mother does not share the same dark skin as Pique, her mother is not able to help her deal with the criticism of society toward the Métis people. By not having grown up around other Métis, she cannot feel as proud of her father's ancestry as her mother feels about her Scottish ancestry. She can only feel whole once she knows the truth about both sides. Since her mother does not even know whether Christie's tales are the truth or not, Pique is bewildered about both of her parents' ancestors and feels lost about where to find the truth about her own identity.

4.4.4. Morag in Conflict with Herself

Now that Pique is safely back home, Morag still is not content with the situation in her house. The fact that Pique's new boyfriend, Dan, has the same name as Morag's former Scottish boyfriend, contributes to her unhappiness, as she constantly is reminded of a man who is willing to stay with his wife despite their great differences in interest. Morag also longs for a simple but loyal husband and therefore is upset every time she thinks of Pique's boyfriend. He reminds her of the ideal man that she will never meet again.

Morag struggles with Pique and Dan since they are so young and do not yet worry about living the rest of their lives alone (D 237). When her jealousy towards her daughter becomes nearly unbearable, she remembers how Catharine Parr Traill would not have taken the time for being upset like she herself is (D 331). In order for Pique and Dan not to feel uncomfortable around Morag, she begins to ignore her own loneliness and acts as the mother she imagines Catharine was. Hence, Morag's fantasies about Catharine "add both humour and a dimension of balance to Morag's present" (Thomas 144).

She begins to wonder what she has done with her life, as if it seems to be running out (D 239). Seeing that Pique will soon move away for good, Morag must learn to live on her own and act according to what is best for herself since nobody will be dependent on her any longer. Now that Morag is again confronted with her own desires, she is afraid to think of

them seriously to avoid the possibility of being disappointed by the choices she made in her life.

4.4.5. Morag Eventually Accepting her Faults and Pique's Independence

Since Pique works in the supermarket all day, feeds the chickens and does the dishes at home, Morag feels guilty for only staying home and writing every day. Through her imaginary conversations with Catharine she constantly reminds herself that she should work rather than sit at home and worry. However, she finally accepts the fact that she will never be as active as she believes Catharine was and accepts her personality for how she is (D 332).

Here also she accepts Pique's restlessness and the necessity for her--as for all of the young--to find her own way [...] (Thomas 164)

Pique feels ready to travel to the Métis reserve at Galloping Mountain, where her uncle Jacques lives together with his wife, Mary, their four children, Valentine's three children and other Métis children whose parents have passed away or disappeared. Pique wants to help Mary with her work and the children (D 358-9). While Morag is in great distress when Pique leaves for Vancouver at the beginning of the novel, Morag now can accept Pique's leaving for Galloping Mountain since she has reflected on the events in her childhood which she was not able to control and on her actions as Pique's mother. She now accepts the fact that she does not have the right to control Pique's life and therefore is able to let her leave for a new episode in her life with her uncle at the Métis reserve (Thomas 165-6).

4.4.6. Morag's and Pique's Final Liberation

Since Jules is dying of throat cancer, Morag finds the courage to visit him for the first and last time (D 362). Morag has overcome her fears of rejection, knowing that Jules would not want to be alone in his suffering. Similar to his father and sister before him, he refuses to go to the hospital, aware that his sickness is terminal. Knowing that this is her last time seeing Pique's father, Morag not only visits him for her own sake but because Pique would want to know how her father suffered and what he said shortly before he died (D 365).

Although Pique had previously accused her mother of being too proud to visit Jules, Jules is also too proud to be seen by his daughter in his dying state. Morag realizes that it was not only her reluctance to visit Jules but it also was Jules's pride as he feared that he would not

appear good enough for her. Morag feels a sense of peace when she recognizes that Pique will also eventually understand why her parents acted the way they did.

Morag fears, in short, to look on the face of death. She not only overcomes that fear but is able to comfort, and to be comforted by, her dying lover. [...] Whereas the five-year-old feels both locked out and locked in, frighteningly alone [when her parents die], the forty-seven-year-old lives in the knowledge not only of death but of comfort given and received. She lives, too, with the knowledge that she has kept Jules' dying from Pique.³⁰

The day Pique is ready to leave for Galloping Mountain, Billy Joe arrives in Jules's truck and tells Morag that Jules has killed himself. (D366). Morag tells Pique that her father has died and gives her Lazarus's knife (D 367). The plaid pin and the knife both symbolically join Morag to the Métis family, which will further be inherited by Pique (Morley 129). As now both Morag and Pique long to have a substantial connection with Jules by keeping the plaid pin, Morag still needs it herself before it can be passed on to her daughter (D 367). Now that Billy has given Pique Jules's knife, Pique can find some comfort in her separation from him. She has inherited a substantial item from her ancestors.

During the final episode of *The Diviners* Royland tells Morag that he has lost his gift of divining. He says that he does not understand how anyone can learn how to divine but only a few people actually know how to do it. Morag realizes that things learned must be passed on to the next generation. The importance lies in the fact that he remained preoccupied with meaningful actions and not whether he was very successful in his activities (D 369).

With Royland's help, Morag realizes how people may be disconnected from their talents, but that they can later be passed on and inherited by the next generation. This is the final step to freedom, as Morag realizes that one can become whoever one wants to be when accepting one's past and looking ahead to the future. She cannot change what happened but must learn to enjoy what she has during the time she has. As Royland says "it's not a matter for mourning" (D 369), Morag does not feel a sense of loss. She learns that everything she establishes for herself may not remain for her to enjoy forever, but that the achievements in her life will be remembered by future generations (Thomas 131).

³⁰ Hjartarson, Paul. "'Christie's Real Country. Where I was Born': Story-Telling, Loss and Subjectivity in *The Diviners*," *Crossing the River: Essays in Honour of Margaret Laurence*. Ed. Kristjana Gunnars. Winnipeg: Turnstone, 1988. 43-63, here 60

“The gift or portion of grace” is translated into words of deeds by an act that is essentially an act of love, indistinguishable from worshipping, whether it issue in a book or a newly divined well. The individual may lose the gift, but grace itself is not exhaustible. (Thomas 168)

“Morag’s past feeds into, complicates, explains, and finally is part of the resolution of her present” (Thomas 137). When observing how the river flows both ways she realizes how she will always be torn by both her past and present until she accepts who she is and that she will constantly personally develop. Thus, both Morag and Pique move on to the next step in their “religious pilgrimages: ‘the affirmation of faith and the finding of grace,’ as Clara Thomas describes *The Diviners*” (Morley 138). Morag is reassured that she has passed down something positive about her life to her daughter, which provides Morag with the freedom she ultimately desires.³¹

³¹ C.f.: Franks 115

5. Conclusion

Rachel and Morag are women desperately craving for happiness in life. Both protagonists struggle with themselves and with society in general.

Although different in character and life experience, they share a common conflict, namely, the inward battle between their desire to find their true selves and the fear of these being rejected by others.

Only after meeting men who open their eyes and let them experience intimate love, they truly get to know emotions previously hidden and locked in their hearts. Through this, they discover the whole scope of their inner selves and what they are capable of doing and feeling. Even though these male characters do not provide them with the joy and stability they longed for, the encounters mark the turning points in their lonesome existences.

What is interesting is that both women gain their long awaited liberation from people who are regarded as outcasts. They share with them this common feeling of inferiority and fear of being abandoned and ignored, or not being good enough to please others. These outcasts do share their pain and anxieties and therefore soothe their sorrow for a while. In Laurence's novels, we meet various people, each of them wounded in their own way and for different kinds of reasons. Each one is trying to find happiness and gratification. Rachel and Morag find their peace of mind, but others do not, because of ignorance or pride.

Our personal history and the history of the culture we live in can be a burden to ourselves, blocking the ways to a free, unprejudiced and fearless communication between people of different backgrounds and experiences. Overcoming/crossing borders sometimes leads to more difficulty and loneliness, but it can also liberate and pave the way for a more beautiful and meaningful life. This is what the novels *A Jest of God* and *The Diviners* tell us.

Laurence shows the stony paths of two women by illustrating the outer development of the characters as well as by giving us an understanding of the immense emotional delicateness of two personalities, who finally manage to accept life's moods and who nevertheless fight for betterment and emancipation. Even though fragile in appearance, our heroines prove perseverance and strength, qualities which their male counterparts fail to have. Laurence's characters are no purely fictional figures; we can truly sympathize with them and see in them the reflections of ourselves. A little spark of hope comes into being within the readers' hearts when seeing Rachel and Morag growing strong and confident.

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7. List of Abbreviations

JG	<i>A Jest of God</i>
D	<i>The Diviners</i>

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9. Abstract

Die vorliegende Diplomarbeit untersucht die persönliche Entwicklung der Romanheldinnen aus *A Jest of God* und *The Diviners*. Beide Werke der kanadischen Autorin Margaret Laurence beschreiben das Leben von Frauen schottischer Abstammung, die sich in der fiktiven Kleinstadt Manawaka gefangen fühlen und nach Befreiung aus dem eintönigen Dasein streben. Dabei bringen die Begegnungen mit Personen unterschiedlicher Ethnien den Protagonistinnen ihren entscheidenden Wendepunkt. Die Romane handeln von den inneren und äußeren Konflikten zweier Frauen, die erst durch die Beziehungen mit dem „Fremden“ zu sich selber finden, indem sie lernen, die eigenen wie kulturellen Grenzen zu überwinden.

Für ein besseres Verständnis der Romanhandlung bzw. -figuren soll zunächst einmal der geschichtliche Aspekt, d.h. die Entstehung der Métis und deren gegenwärtige Situation, sowie die Thematik und Problematik der schottischen bzw. ukrainischen Einwanderer in Kanada, behandelt werden. Danach wird der individuelle Entfaltungsprozess der Hauptfiguren Rachel und Morag genau unter die Lupe genommen und ausführlich analysiert.

10. Lebenslauf

Persönliche Information

Name: Christina Seidl
Geboren am: 09.06.1985
Geburtsort: Belleville, New Jersey, USA
Familienstand: Verheiratet
Staatsbürgerschaft: Österreich

Ausbildung

April 2011: Abschluss des Studiums
Seit 2005: Studium der Anglistik und Amerikanistik an der Universität Wien
2003: Matura an Bundesgymnasium und Bundesrealgymnasium Franklinstraße 21

Berufserfahrung

Seit 2006: Telefonistin in Marktforschungsinstitut GfK Austria
Seit 2009: Regelmäßige private Englisch Nachhilfe und Konversationsstunden mit AHS Schülern
Spielerischer Englischunterricht mit Kleinkindern

Sprachkenntnisse

Muttersprache: Englisch
Fließend: Deutsch
Grundkenntnisse: Französisch
Koreanisch
Latein
Norwegisch
Spanisch