

Margaret Laurence's Dark Lovers: Sexual Metaphor, and the Movement Toward Individualization, Hierogamy and Mythic Narrative in Four Manawaka Books

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"Sexual behavior in Laurence's women is inseparable from their total experience of themselves" John Moss states in *Sex and Violence in the Canadian Novel*,¹ but after an examination of the Manawaka works he is disappointed and concludes that the sexual relationships of Laurence's artist-figure Morag Gunn do not offer us the "promised insight into artistic motivation and the creative process."² Moss's first statement is correct but his disappointment lies in his insistence on exploring the relationships of the heroines with their men instead of examining the detail of the imagery of the sexual encounters and the mythic prototypes implied therein.

In her essay "Hierogamy versus Wedlock: Types of Marriage Plots and Their Relationship

to Genres of Prose Fiction" Evelyn Hinz posits that marriage, in fiction, is not a single motif but can be divided into two, the wedlock theme, a characteristic of the novel, and the hierogamy theme, a characteristic of "mythic narrative."³ In Laurence's Manawaka novels sex is not one thing either, and an analysis of the imagery of the sexual encounters will not only yield insight into the heroines' "experience of themselves," their drive towards greater wholeness, and greater creativity, but will also show Laurence's increasing interest in the "hierogamous" nature of sexuality and the resultant movement of her work out of the novelistic tradition and into mythic narrative.

Hinz's mythic prototype for hierogamous union is that of Zeus and Semele as representing the conjunction between elements, the alchemical union of earth and sky that the sacred intercourse of hierogamy implies.⁴ But she also notes the phenomenon occurring in modern fiction of sex partnerships where the hierogamy happens not between "the sons of god and the daughters of men" as Genesis would have it, but where the hierogamous disparity is reversed and the female unites with a "base" partner, a man that is her "inferior" usually in a social sense. Hinz's explanation of this is that "these modern Psyches are not perverted in their attraction to men who are 'beneath them' for the men are not really beneath them. It is simply that as a result of the *gotterdammerung* which the modern world has witnessed, the gods now manifest themselves only in nature and, to use (D.H.) Lawrence's term, have become 'dark'."⁵

Throughout the Manawaka novels of Margaret Laurence, a series of "dark" lovers, men who come from socially disapproved or economically or emotionally disadvantaged backgrounds, manifest a profound influence in the lives of Laurence's heroines. Bram Shipley, Nick Kazlik, Buckle Fennick/Luke Venturi and Jules Tonnerre present a developing motif of what Jungians would call "the Shadow-Brute" or "the animus" or what Rachel Cameron calls the "Shadow Prince."⁶ In every case they touch some unconscious element in the heroine, and the sexual experiences the women share with these lovers are the agency of this "touching". Ideally, such moments should mean a transformation just as in the alchemy of hierogamy some new life is born. In the case of Laurence's heroines the process is not always successful, thus a more suitable mythic prototype in this instance is the union of Aphrodite and Ares. The yearning for hierogamy is still present in the lovers, after all this is the Olympian war-god and the goddess of love that are being considered, but because the love affair is really a triangle, the Hephaestus-Aphrodite-Ares triangle, hierogamy is not

achieved. In a world after the "*gotterdammerung*" the frustrated affair of Ares and Aphrodite is perhaps a suitable model, for the image that one remembers best from the story is the cuckolded husband catching the lovers in his bed, their entangled bodies caught in his golden net.⁷

Hagar Shipley, in *The Stone Angel*, flees the suffocating control of her own Hephaestus figure, her weights and measures, establishment-oriented father who sees her as his most prized possession, and rushes to the arms of Bram Shipley. Their attraction is from the beginning strongly sexual as he forces his leg between hers on the Manawaka dance floor.⁸ Her description of him has the aura of the Ares figure, the dark war god: "I revelled in his fingernails with crescents of ingrown earth that never met a file. I fancied I heard in his laughter the bravery of battalions. I thought he looked a bearded Indian, so brown and beaked a face. The black hair thrusting from his chin was rough as thistles" (p. 45). Two of the contrary characteristics of the Ares figure are his association with battle and his older association with earth and agriculture.⁹ Bram is known to us not just for his belligerent boozing in town but for his tender love for horses and his beekeeping activities. Hagar, to get away from her possessive father who tries to hold her, "as though I were a thing and his" (p. 43), must marry her Ares. Indeed it is very much an act of rebellion, almost an emotional cuckolding of her possessive father, that rushes her into the marriage.

Laurence surrounds Hagar and Bram's sexual life with imagery that implies that the act is greater than its physical parts. Hagar says of his first entry into her: "and when he'd bent enormous and giant, I could not believe there could be within me a room to house such magnitude. When I found there was, I felt as one might feel discovering a second head, an unsuspected area. Pleasure and pain were one to me, meaningless" (p. 52). Such expressions as "enormous and giant" and "magnitude" indicate that Bram

truly does take on the aspects of a god-like Ares figure for Hagar. Laurence's use of such terms as "unsuspected area", "a second head" indicate that through the act of sex Hagar becomes, momentarily at least, in touch with a deep unconscious "second head" of her own, her powerful repressed animus. Jung describes this contrasexual content of the human psyche in terms of anima and animus. In *Boundaries of the Soul* June Singer describes the Jungian concept in her chapter "Anima and Animus: Will One Sex Ever Understand the Other":

There is an archetypal need...for a *conjunction of opposites* in our lives as human beings. This is experienced through the natural biological opposition between men and women, which generates the spring of all creativeness. The opposition between the sexes is also experienced as an opposition within the individual. Every man has a feminine side to his being, and every woman has a masculine side. The contrasexual sides are largely repressed as we develop our conscious adaptation in the process of growing up as a man or as a woman. The feminine aspect within the man remains or becomes largely unconscious and likewise the masculine aspect within the woman.¹⁰

Singer adds, "The yearning for the beloved is a longing for all that one is not, consciously - but may be, unconsciously."¹¹

What is it that Hagar yearns to be that she is not and Bram is? Miriam Packer says of the Manawaka heroines, "Laurence's women are psychologically paralyzed until they release themselves from the prison of rigid control and surrender to the call of their own inner lives, to their fiery and repressed passionate selves."¹² Hagar does not permit that other self, touched by Bram's sexuality, to rise to consciousness. She refuses the alchemy of the sexual experience by setting to work to clean her house as if "driven by a whip" (p. 52) the day after her wedding.

"House" is the term she used to describe her inner self. Now it is as if she wants to scrub out all traces of Bram's entrance there. Even though after some time she finds that her "blood and vitals rise to meet his" like "rising sap ... a heedless and compelled maple after a winter," she prides herself on making sure "that the trembling was all inner" (p. 81). Hagar remains very much defined by the logic and materialism of her father's world. The transformative effect of sex is resisted. Like one of Hephaestus' mechanical women constructed to help him at his forge, Hagar remains the faithful robot of the values of Manawaka's leading merchant. But she admits that Bram had some sense of her wholeness as a human being even if she herself lacked it: "I was Hagar to him, and if he were alive, I'd be Hagar to him yet. And now I think he was the only person close to me who ever thought of me by my name, not daughter, nor sister, nor mother, nor even wife, but Hagar, always" (p. 80).

Rachel Cameron's dark lover in *A Jest of God*, a little less powerful a figure perhaps than Bram Shipley, is nevertheless an outsider in Rachel's world. As the son of a Ukrainian dairyman he may not measure up to the reader's view of an Ares figure, except in his long-lost agricultural connections, but what with Rachel's erotic fantasies of her Shadow Prince and her urgent physical need of Nick he quickly seems very powerful to her. She describes him as having "straight hair, black. Eyes rather Slavic, slightly slanted ... I remember the mockery in them from years ago" (p. 78). Later she sees him as one of the "hawkish and long ago riders of the steppes" (p. 106). Like the Ares figure, Nick certainly sees himself as an outsider. He is full of complaint against his father, always too quick to take the side of his mother, and suffers from a sense of inferiority to his long dead twin brother. Of course it is important that the dark lover be a misunderstood outcast, for the heroine sees her own unconscious animus in him, and that part of herself she is unwilling to admit to is often much misunderstood and cast out.

The consummation of their affair takes place in a pasture near the river not far from the graveyard. Nick describes it as a “neutral place” (p. 107), neither farm nor town. In Hinz’s descriptions of the kinds of places couples seek for their hierogamous unions she emphasizes the importance of natural settings, places that are not domestic.¹³ The pasture may not have the quality of “ultimateness” or “extremity” that the true hierogamy involves, but its quality of being outside Rachel and Nick’s two worlds of town and farm, places where they both feel imprisoned by convention, indicates their implicit yearning for hierogamy. Rachel’s view of Nick as some hidden shameful part of herself is indicated by her simile for the way he undresses “like a snake shrugging off its last year’s skin” (p. 112).¹⁴ But she immediately represses this thought: “No not a snake, of course.” The fear that is so characteristic of Rachel’s conscious life suddenly is lost at the moment that sexual union comes close: “Now nothing matters and I am not afraid of anything and nothing is around us, only the dark blue of the night, and I will never again be afraid of anything and he does want me after all” (p. 112). But we should note that it is Nick’s wanting *her*, not her wanting him, that she credits for her loss of fear. Unfortunately, the moment is lost to her as the fear returns and she remembers contraception. Thus what should be at least orgasm is experienced as “this shuddering that is not desire, that’s something I don’t understand. I don’t want to be this way. It’s only my muscles, my skin, my nerves severed from myself, nothing to do with what I want to be. Forgive me. Forgive me” (p. 113).

Rachel is indeed separated from herself, and despite the desire for completion, neither she nor Nick can commit themselves completely to their union, he on a deep emotional level, she on the physical plane. Perhaps the problem of incompleteness, for Rachel at least, centers around the fact that she demands the wrong things from the relationship. She wants to “belong” to Nick rather than meet him as an equal. To meet the

man as an equal, as neither the exploiter nor protector, demands great risk of self. Rachel does not want to risk. This is shown in her desire to make love indoors. She tells Nick that she feels “safer” indoors and he responds that “women” always seem to (p. 126). The characteristic of hierogamy occurring in settings away from society’s control is symbolic of the man and woman’s desire to meet on what Nick would call “neutral” ground, on a condition of equality, ready to risk their totalities, both conscious and unconscious elements, in the moment of encounter. Only with this “total” risk can the communion with the unconscious part of the self be achieved and the sacred quality of sex be affirmed. Rachel’s problem is her own divided self. She has what June Singer describes as a need for an “inner marriage”. “Without this inner marriage, each person feels enslaved in his singular sexual role. With it, the potentialities of the other, the lesser-known but deeply felt unconscious needs and desires, may surface and become visible. The truth seems to be that unless we are partners with that contrasexual side of our natures, the soul that leads us to our own depths, we cannot become full and independent partners with a beloved person in the world outside.”¹⁵

The last time Rachel and Nick make love is in “the summer house” (p. 175), the riverside hideaway where Nick has always found refuge. This time, Rachel tells us, “It was better, I was better.” Rachel has, just previous to this encounter, come to terms with some of her feelings about her father, the Hephaestus figure in her own life. His mannequins were the corpses of the Manawaka dead. Rachel has always blamed her mother for her parents’ bad marriage. In her talk with Hector Jones she realizes her father “got the life he wanted most” (p. 153). Rachel is beginning to release herself from some of her bondage to that paternal figure, but the release is still only partial as it is dependent on unresolved issues between herself and her mother.¹⁶ Thus, in her union with Nick, she still feels “exposed” by

being out of doors. "If only we could be inside a house again, a proper house" (p. 176). At this point Rachel still desires sexuality to be somehow "proper" and safe. Such attitudes are a barrier to hierogamy; just as one can never touch the unconscious if one insists upon being safe.

With both Hagar and Rachel we see that the degree to which each woman can open herself to sex, take the risk of total encounter that the union implies, is an index to how well each permits integration of her unconscious into her conscious life. Her choice of lover, the Ares figure, is an indication of the character of her animus, her repressed self. The male character she seeks to break with, the Hephaestus figure, is in both cases a father. Jason Currie dominated Hagar's life through overtly patriarchal power devices. Rachel was in unconscious emotional bondage to her father, Niall Cameron, because of his mysterious power over his bodies in the funeral world.

With Stacey, in *The Fire Dwellers*, some important changes are seen. The Hephaestus character becomes a husband, as in the Greek story, and the figure related to him, Thor, is like father Zeus, not particularly fond of his prodigy. The lover figure becomes split between Buckle Fennick and Luke Venturi. The Hephaestus figure comes closer to the mythological configuration of the cuckolded husband who devotes his whole intelligence to living out materialistic values. In Mac's case this is illustrated by his working for a man who will cure the world's ills by quizzes on mental health and artificial vitamin compounds. Mac's sexual practices bear out his Hephaestus character for he pretends to strangle Stacey while demanding that she say it doesn't hurt, a stilling of her eros into mechanical submission. Stacey's relationships with her lovers hardly seem erotic; rather they seem almost perverse. Both men's phallic fears and preoccupations tend to cloud the fact that Stacey is the first Laurence heroine capable of an open sexual response.

Buckle Fennick, the king of the truck drivers, plays "chicken" with lesser braves. His physical appearance fits the description of the lover in other Laurence works: "He has a face like an Iroquois, angular, and faintly slanted dark eyes. His hair is night-black and straight. He never loses the tan on his face and arms, not even in the winter."¹⁷ Luke, who would seem to be more instrumental in liberating Stacey's sense of her own sexual power, is a rather nonbelligerent young writer who in appearance at least, hardly measures up as a "dark lover". Both men have what might be called a phallic insecurity.

Stacey watches horror-struck while Buckle carries out his strange sexual rite, and realizes, "What he is doing now concerns only himself, his sex open and erect in his hands. But although he retreats from her presence, he watches her, needing to see some image in her eyes, some witness to the agony of his pleasure. 'You won't get it Julie didn't like it when I did it this way all she ever wanted was to take it you're not getting it see'." (p. 159). Buckle's fear of woman as the taker of his life-fluids is matched by Luke's less perverse but equally preoccupied fascination with male potency:

'What you want is this.'

Then she takes his sex in her hands and guides it into her. She comes before he does, but she is still there when he reaches it. She feels him shudder, return to himself. Then he rests on her, and she explores his skin. His voice is barely audible.

'Stacey. That was'

'Yes'

'You really loved it, didn't you? You wanted it for a long time, didn't you?'

'Yes'

— But that's not true, either. It makes me sound like I was deprived for lo these many years. It wasn't like that at all. It was something else. It's too complicated to explain, and anyway, he doesn't want to know. Maybe it gives him something, to imagine he's like the rain in a dry year?" (p. 203).

Stacey and her lovers are too preoccupied with the "itness" of sex, the mechanical, the technique, the "skin" of sex. There is no indication of touching the deeper unconscious, sacred elements. For Stacey there is "something else", but it is "too complicated to explain".

It would appear that the treatment of sex in the Laurence canon is undergoing a change. On the one hand the heroine is now sexually liberated. Indeed, she is capable of multiple orgasm! But the liberation seems only physical. Despite the fact that there is none of the dependent reticence of Rachel or the outright repression of Hagar, Stacey does not reach very deeply into sexuality. Perhaps this is not entirely her own problem, as she meets no partner to equal her unexpressed but felt need for hierogamy. She and her lovers are in the end very much entangled in society's golden net of profane and materialistically-oriented sexuality. Between Mac and Stacey sex becomes only a mutual "consoling one another for everything that neither of them can help nor alter" (p. 307).

The Hephaestus-Aphrodite-Ares paradigm is illustrative of sexuality in Laurence's novels because it seems the myth that is most resonant in Laurence's work. In fact, as we move into *The Diviners*, the triangle of Brooke-Morag-Jules takes on a very close resemblance to the mythic prototype. This myth illustrates the problem of sexuality in a fallen world. In the world of Laurence's heroines, the lovers enter into less than hierogamous unions and are always caught in what Ovid called "bondage and disgrace"¹⁸ in the net of their own societal conditioning and inhibitions. It would seem that part of the solution would be to get out of the husband's bed, or out of the patriarchal world view that so much governs the lives of Hagar, Rachel and Stacey. Laurence's heroines never experience the hierogamies noted by Hinz in the works of D.H. Lawrence and in *Wuthering Heights*. But then, in her first books, Laurence is not writing out of a "mythic narrative" tradition but out of a nov-

elistic tradition. These novels are about women who seek their place *in society*. Thus the lovers are always caught in the golden net. "Mythic narrative" implies that the characters seek their *raison d'être* outside society, as it is constituted in some cosmological unity figured by hierogamy.

Morag Gunn is different from the previous heroines. It has become a truism to say that Canadian literature has no Venus figures, only Maidens and Hags.¹⁹ Hagar and Rachel are at best reluctant Aphrodites and Stacey knows that her days as "love-goddess" are strictly numbered by the growth of her daughter and the girth of her hips. But Laurence has Morag identify herself quite explicitly with the Venus figure. When she sees the print of the Botticelli rendering at an art show she thinks: "How can there be words for that face, for what lies behind those eyes? There have to be words. Maybe there are not. This thought is obscurely frightening. Like knowing that God does not actually see the little sparrow fall."²⁰ Morag does not know the word Venus, let alone Aphrodite, and must be shown the picture in a book by her male employer before she is convinced that the picture was not the recent production of a Winnipeg artist. She may not know the words, she may be ignorant of the connotations for herself behind those words, but she studies the picture a long time.

Morag begins her sexual experience young and it becomes one of the major ways in which she defines her identity. The various episodes of love-making with her Ares figure, Jules Tonnerre, lead to increased personal integration, and no sexual experience passes her by without her realizing something more in her own nature. In addition, Morag incorporates an aspect of the Aphrodite figure that is often overlooked in Olympian versions of the goddess. Robert Graves in his *Greek Myths* explains that although the fates gave Aphrodite only one duty, "namely to make love",²¹ one day Athene found the love goddess at the loom. With Athene threatening to strike from her own duties, Aph-

rodite apologetically retires from such domestic work. Retelling the Hesiod story gives Graves his excuse to remind us of an older version of Aphrodite: "As Goddess of Death-in-life, Aphrodite earned many titles which seem inconsistent with her beauty and complaisance. At Athens, she was called the Eldest of the Fates ... and elsewhere Melaenis ('black one'); ... Scotia ('dark one'); Androphonos ('man-slayer'); and even, according to Plutarch, Epitymbria ('of the tombs')." ²² In her most terrifying form, Aphrodite Urania, "she destroyed the sacred king ... as a queen-bee destroys the drone: by tearing out his sexual organs." ²³ We may note that although Morag identifies with the lovely Venus of Botticelli, a representative of female sexuality logos-defined to rid it of its terrible aspect of death, Morag also calls herself "the Black Celt" (p. 227). It is this part of her that she must keep hidden from her husband. Morag is further identified with the dark side of Aphrodite by Laurence who surrounds her sexual life with stories and images of death. As Morag matures she comes to incorporate the older matriarchal features of the goddess as well as the sexually-defined features of the Olympian figure.

Laurence has also created a heroine capable of a much broader and deeper sexual experience than her other women. On one level of relationship, *The Diviners* is the love story of Ares and Aphrodite and the cuckolded Hephaestus. Brooke Skelton becomes the archetypal manipulating man as he even supervises his wife's hair style and clothing. Like Hephaestus he casts his lot with the Olympians, in favour of light, logic and consciousness. As a university teacher of English he feels enough of an authority to judge his wife's creative work (p. 223). In their sexual life Morag is an obedient Aphrodite at first and accepts his definition of a "good wife". She very much wants to "belong" - to be defined by her relationship with him. During their first sexual encounter it is most important to her that "he goes off, inside deep deep inside her ownself and she is inhabited by him at last" (p. 201). Lauren-

ce's use of the words "her ownself" and "inhabited" suggests that Morag thinks of herself in traditional patriarchal terms as the container for the man, empty without him. She describes their continuing sex life: "Nowadays when they make love, they almost always come at the same time, and often sleep the night in each other's arms, still joined. Sometimes in the morning he is still inside her, and they separate slowly, reluctantly, but their inhabitation of one another never really ceases and never will" (p. 219). This attitude to married love is, like Brooke's attitude, "You're mine. My woman. I'll be with you and protect you always" (p. 222), a highly prized one in the tradition of western romantic love, but it is also one that holds high prices, especially for the woman. Soon Brooke is asking Morag if she has been a good girl before he rewards her with sex. After many years of marriage, he still will not allow her to conceive, and Morag feels she must present her pleasantest self at all times and hide "the Black Celt". This claustrophobic existence is far too much like being one of Hephaestus' mechanical dolls for a character like Morag to accept indefinitely. Jules Tonnerre becomes Morag's way out.

From the beginning of their relationship as children in Manawaka, there is a community of interest between Morag and Jules. They are both scorned outsiders - Morag, as the garbage-man's foster child, and Jules because of his Metis inheritance. It is in the creation of Jules that Laurence realizes her most complete version of the dark lover in her fiction. He is the dispossessed, failed Ares, disliked on Olympus. Graves tells us that the original Ares was disliked by all of the Olympians, for he is "always stirring up occasions for war" and known for the "inculcation of jealousy". He cannot be relied on and takes whichever side pleases him in battle. ²⁴ Jules' ancestral past is associated with horses, battle, and the land. He himself, like a modern Ares failing in battle, is part of the Dieppe debacle. His physical description has by now become a familiar one in Laurence's works: "He comes

out of the bushes and steps onto the bridge. Beat-up blue jeans, brass-buckled belt, rolled-up shirtsleeves, brown hawkish face, dark slitted eyes. His straight black hair cut shorter these days than it used to be. Skinner Tonnerre” (pp. 126-127). Morag and Jules have from the beginning a feisty sexual relationship. As a teenager she meets him in the valley beside the Wachakwa River, and as she backs away fearfully he chants,

When apples are ripe they should be plucked,
When a girl is sixteen she should be fucked
(p. 128).

Morag is both afraid of and fascinated by Jules. Two years later when he comes dressed in his army khaki, he is more *saucy* and is able to court her with pussy willows and offer her the privacy of his own shack. Laurence surrounds the incident with the imagery of equals meeting. Morag is proud of her own body and is self-possessed: “She feels no shyness at all. Only the need to feel him all over her to feel all of his skin. Her own body, her breasts and long legs and flat stomach, all these seem suddenly in her own eyes beautiful to her, and she wants him to see her” (p. 138). This is the first Laurence heroine who has had the self-possession of the love-goddess concerning her own body.

Because of her beauty and quick passion, Jules ejaculates before he is inside her. He helps her to climax, thus recognizing her sexuality as separate from his. Afterwards, “they smile, then, at each other. Like strangers who have now met. Like conspirators” (p. 138). The word “conspirators” sets the necessary tone of the love affair of Jules and Morag, for throughout their lives their relationship is outside the conventional societal bonds of wedlock. From the beginning their sexual experience is associated with Morag’s growth as a writer. Morag hears Jules’ tales of his ancestors and recounts them for the reader (pp. 144-149), incorporating them into her own growing inheritance of battles lost. This scene of

youthful sex by the Wachakwa River is immediately followed by the list of the dead at Dieppe. Morag’s sexual encounters with Jules are always to be accompanied by images of death.

Many years later Morag and Jules have a brief love affair during which, like Ares and Aphrodite creating Harmonia, they create Pique, who like the mythic child, is to effect the union of their two inheritances. In the first sexual encounter of this period Jules sees himself in a shaman role: “Magic. You were doing magic, to get away. He was the only man in you before, eh?” (p. 273). But Morag sees the magic a little differently. “In her present state of mind, she doesn’t expect to be aroused, and does not even care if she isn’t, as though this joining is being done for other reasons, some debt or answer to the past, some severing of inner chains which have kept her bound and separated from part of herself ... Then they both reach the place they have been travelling towards, and she lies beside him, spent and renewed” (p. 271). The “severing of inner chains,” what Jules calls the “magic” of the sexual act, places a weight of importance on their intercourse that is consistent with the Jungian theory of the need to connect with the unconscious, contrasexual self and is also consistent with the hierogamous or sacred nature of sexuality. The exchange that happens between them as a result of this indicates the importance of the sex. This occasion liberates Morag into her full creative life as a writer and as a mother. She goes bravely off to Vancouver with a one-way ticket, \$500 and the future child. In exchange for this release she has given Jules the story of his sister’s death, the woman whose name her child will carry. Once again stories of death follow their lovemaking. After she tells him the horror of Piquette’s death they “make love or whatever it is, throughout the deep and terrifying night” (p. 275). The phrase “whatever it is” gives the sense of lovemaking as an ambivalent act, being more than it seems, that it takes place “someplace beyond language” (p. 138), that it gives life and takes it at the same time, inspires and des-

troys. These images continue to surround Morag's sexual life.

In her violent encounter with Chas, Morag learns that her "flesh and her self are two separate entities," that her sexual drive released from her own control is a powerful force that could destroy her. She imagines herself bearing a child by this man (p. 328) and then decides, "It may not be fair - in fact, it seems damned unfair to me - but I'll never again have sex with a man whose child I couldn't bear to bear" (p. 329). Morag has faced the darkest part of her own sexual nature, realized its power, taken possession of it, and erected a personal ethic that connects sexuality intimately with creativity. The decision shows that for Morag the sexual drive must be used in the service of her own psyche, as the creative underpinning of her own urge towards wholeness.

Sexual metaphor begins to become, in Laurence's novel, the "promised insight into artistic motivation and the creative process" that John Moss speaks of in his essay on Laurence. Laurence's artistic theory, implicit in the sexual metaphor, is reminiscent of what Otto Rank in *Art and Artist* calls "the masterful use of the sexual impulse in the service of (the) individual will."²⁵ Laurence's view of creativity becomes more explicit in the passage that describes Morag and Jules' lovemaking when they meet again in Vancouver. To realize its full implications it is necessary to quote the passage in its entirety:

They make love urgently, both equal to each other's body in this urgent meeting and grappling, this brief death of consciousness, this conscious defiance of death. Only at the final moment does Morag cry out, and he stops her cry with his mouth. They are left drenched with sweat in the summer night, their bodies slippery as spawning fish together.

'Let's sleep now,' Jules says, 'and after a while we'll wake up and fuck some more, eh?'

In an hour or so, Morag awakens, and puts her head between his legs, sweeping her hair across his thighs. She takes his limp cock very gently in her mouth and caresses it with her tongue, and it lengthens and grows hard before he is even awake. Then he awakens and says 'deeper.' After a while, she disentangles and he raises her until she is looking into his face in the grey-light of the room.

'Ride my stallion, Morag.'

So she mounts him. He holds her shoulders and her long hair, penetrating up into her until she knows he has reached whatever core of being she has. This time it is he who cries out. Afterwards, they do not speak, but they go to sleep this time in each other's arms and remain so until the morning comes. (p.342)

At this moment in the two lovers' very diverse lives, death is very much present. Not only has Jules come to Vancouver to watch his sister die, but in this act of sex the lovers find the "death of consciousness." Life is always present, not only because on this visit Jules acknowledges his fatherhood to Pique: "Yeh. Want me to say it for you? Your dad. Yeh, I am" (p. 339), but in this act with Morag there is a "conscious defiance of death." The elemental nature of the act is acknowledged in the "spawning fish" simile. Her initiation and shaping of the second intercourse reflects her growing creative self-possession. The ultimateness of the act in terms of its significance for her psyche is acknowledged in "she knows he has reached whatever core of being she has." The fact that this intercourse is two acts, one in which she cries out, the other in which he does, acknowledges that the lovers meet as equals. The image of Morag mounting Jules' "stallion" is a significant one. Traditionally, for the poet-artist, the stallion that is mounted at the moment of creative inspi-

ration is the winged Pegasus, the horse of the muses. This is an interesting reversal of muse figures. The inspiration of the creative artist, when he is a male, is figured as the anima, the female muse that connects him with the collective unconscious, the source of his inspiration. In his essay on "The Psychology of the Transference," Jung tells us that "the image of the conjunction (mystic marriage, hierogamy) always appears at an important point in the history of the human mind."²⁶ In Morag's personal history and in Laurence's work, this image has occurred at a crucial moment. At a later time in the fictional Morag's life, Laurence has her musing on her daughter Pique's lack of knowledge about horses. "Her father's people, the prairie horse-lords, once. She never learned. Well, so what? What was so essential about it? Nothing, except that it was the mythical beast. Signifying what? Many would say potency, male ego, but it seemed that a kind of freedom might be a better guess" (p. 409). For Morag, Jules has become the projection of her own "freedom," her own creative power. He is her male muse figure. It is interesting to see that for Laurence's heroine the muse is not a disembodied spiritual "Sapientia,"²⁷ but a very real Canadian Metis, a drinker, a singer of songs, a figure of abuse and discrimination in the patriarchal world. The female artist has identified her creative contrasexual self with what our society would call a failure. It should also be noted that in this novel Laurence has figured creative inspiration in the language of sex. Morag's awareness of her own creativity is firmly tied to her own increasing awareness of herself as a woman, as Aphrodite.

Laurence's lovers have moved a fair distance from the profane lovers, Ares and Aphrodite, caught in society's net. The configuration is closer to hierogamy in terms of the sacred, self-integrating nature of the sexual intercourse between Jules and Morag. In Laurence's writing style we are closer to "mythic narrative." Other critics have noted the mythic quality of various aspects of *The Diviners*, its garden-island imag-

ery,²⁸ its conflation of Canadian myth,²⁹ its symbol of Pique, the racially mixed child, harmonizing the divisions of the parents.³⁰ The treatment of sexuality in this book also moves it away from the novelistic tradition and into more mythic dimensions. *The Diviners*, in its rambling, tangential, dramatic, many-voiced style, in its seemingly leisurely wandering forward and backward in time, is much like Homer's *Odyssey*, the book in which we first read the story of Aphrodite, her husband and her lover. Like Odysseus, Morag Gunn has a very clear goal despite her wanderings. Odysseus' desire to reunite with Penelope is symbolic of his need to find wholeness by his union with his female self. Morag Gunn's continuing quest for wholeness is figured in her relationship with Jules Tonnerre.

As an Aphrodite figure Morag also takes on an older matriarchal tradition of Aphrodite, the dark goddess. This is confirmed in Laurence's depiction of the last "sexual" act that the lovers have. Morag goes to Jules when he is dying. The description is brief and compelling: "Then Jules turned to her and put his arms around her, and she put her arms around him. The brief sound in the darkness was the sound of a man crying the knowledge of his death" (pp. 446-47). And so Morag fulfills the other side of her Aphrodite function, the "Black Celt" side. One feels that some source of inspiration, some connection with the unconscious, that Jules represented for Morag, has also died, for she says: "The gift, or portion of grace, or whatever it was, was finally withdrawn, to be given to someone else" (p. 452). At this point the story that Morag is writing, containing the story of Morag and Jules, is finished also.

Sexual imagery thus serves three functions in Laurence's work. First, it images the desire for wholeness in the individual women, their desire to touch their hidden contrasexual selves. Second, the sexual development of Laurence's last female protagonist is reflective of Morag Gunn's creative development as a female artist-figure. Finally,

the development of sexual metaphor from *The Stone Angel* to *The Diviners* shows Laurence's movement from the profane sexuality of the novelistic tradition to the sacred sex of "mythic narrative."

NOTES

1. John Moss, *Sex and Violence in the Canadian Novel: The Ancestral Present* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977), p. 71.
2. Moss, *Sex and Violence*, p. 82.
3. Evelyn J. Hinz, "Hierogamy versus Wedlock: Types of Marriage Plots and Their Relationship to Genres of Prose Fiction" *PMLA*, 91 (1976) 901.
4. Hinz, "Hierogamy," p. 912.
5. Hinz, "Hierogamy," p. 907.
6. Margaret Laurence, *A Jest of God* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977), p. 22. All further references to this book are given parenthetically in the text.
7. The two sources used here for the Hephaestus-Aphrodite-Ares story are: Homer, *The Odyssey*, translated and edited by E. V. Rieu (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1946), pp. 129-32 and Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, translated by Rolfe Humphries (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1955), pp. 86-87.
8. Margaret Laurence, *The Stone Angel* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1964), p. 47. All further references to this book are given parenthetically in the text.
9. Jean Seznec, *The Survival of the Pagan Gods*, translated by Barbara F. Sessions, Bollingen Series XXXVIII (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), pp. 190-91.
10. June Singer, *Boundaries of the Soul* (New York: Doubleday, 1972), p. 203.
11. Singer, *Boundaries*, p. 205.
12. Miriam Packer, "The Dance of Life: *The Fire-Dwellers*" *Journal of Canadian Fiction*, 27 (1980) 124.
13. Hinz, "Hierogamy," p. 909.
14. In "The Psychology of the Child Archetype," Carl G. Jung, *Psyche and Symbol* (New York: Doubleday, 1958), pp. 127-30, Jung designates the snake as one of the signs of the child archetype which occurs in the individual as "an anticipation of future developments."
15. Singer, *Boundaries*, p. 237.
16. For a detailed analysis of Rachel's relationship with her mother see chapter 2 of my *Mother and Daughter Relationships in the Manawaka Works of Margaret Laurence* E.L.S. Monograph Series, (Victoria: University of Victoria Press, 1985).
17. Margaret Laurence, *The Fire-Dwellers* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1969), p. 49. All further references to this book are given parenthetically in the text.
18. Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, p. 87.
19. See, for example, chapter 10 of Margaret Atwood's *Survival* (Toronto: ANANSI, 1972), pp. 195-212 subtitled "The Stone Angel and The Absent Venus."
20. Margaret Laurence, *The Diviners* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1978), p. 156-57. All further references to this book are given parenthetically in the text.
21. Robert Graves, *Greek Myths* (London: Cassel and Company, 1955), p. 70.
22. Graves, *Myths*, p. 72.
23. Graves, *Myths*, p. 71.
24. Graves, *Myths*, p. 73.
25. Otto Rank, *Art and Artist: Creative Urge and Personality Development* (New York: Tudor Publishers, 1932), p. 40.
26. Carl G. Jung, "The Psychology of the Transference," *The Basic Writings of C.G. Jung*, edited by Violet S. deLaszlo (New York: Random House, 1959), p. 400.
27. Jung, "The Psychology of the Transference," p. 404.
28. Clara Thomas, "The Wild Garden and the Manawaka World," *Modern Fiction Studies*, 22, No. 3 (Autumn 1976), p. 401-11.
29. Clara Thomas, "The Chariot of Ossian: Myth and Manitoba in *The Diviners*," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 13, No. 3, (Fall 1978), p. 55-63.
30. David Williams, "The Indian our Ancestor: Three Modes of Vision in Recent Canadian Fiction," *The Dalhousie Review*, 58, No. 2, (Summer 1978), p. 309-28.