



QUEST FOR SPIRITUAL VISION IN MARGARET LAURENCE'S "THE DIVINERS"

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ABSTRACT

The article entitled Quest for spiritual vision in Margaret Laurence's *The Diviners* has set out to analyse the fictional work of the Canadian novelist Margaret Laurence. It pays particular attention to spiritual vision attained by the protagonist of the novel. It answers the question how an individual comes to term with his or her social environment and his or her Self. Isolation and quest for spiritual vision are the central themes of Manawaka novels of Margaret Laurence. Laurence says alienation and spiritual fragmentation afflicting society and she feels that the attaining of spiritual vision is the only remedy for it. The protagonist of the novel struggle to overcome alienation and achieve spiritual vision at a certain stage in her life. The novel taken for analysis is Laurence's one of the Manawakan Novels *The Diviners*.

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Laurence presents quest for spiritual vision in her novels. Like Laurence, Morag Gunn, the heroine of *The Diviners*, uses her pen as a vehicle to travel into the past and divine truths lying hidden from view. Her pilgrimage into the past at the age of forty-seven is a spiritual quest for the meaning of heritage or identity. It is symbolically manifested in the search by an adopted child for her dead parents the loss of whom grieves her more in her forty-seven year than ever before. She says "perhaps I only want their forgiveness for having forgotten them" (p.27)

In the novel's time-present sequence, Morag is hoping to mitigate the gloom and confusion she feels over her daughter pique's growth into womanhood and corresponding demands for independence and identity. Like Hagar, the protagonist of the *Stone Angel*, Morag is a professional worrier and the spiritual pilgrimage she takes into her past is subconscious effort to discover

some partial solution to her present emotional problems. She remains her past in minute and painful detail, recalling it creatively, never knowing what memories are and what fabricated memories of memories are.

Her Life history is an attempt to run away from her past, and for years after leaving Manawaka, she refuses to look back it. When Jules, her prairie lover, acts as her shaman, freeing her from her marriage with Brooke Skelton, she believes that she has paid some debt or answer to the past. In reality, to learn from Jules that one must struggle, painful, that one has to go home again in one way or another. Instead of doing this she continues to create an island after that she should be tending to Christie's needs. In England Dan MacRaith divines a Presbyterian in Morag and nicknames her Morag Dhu or the Black Celt.

By observing Dan's own furtive and futile attempts to escape from the past, Morag comes to

realize that an acknowledgment rather than rejection of one's heritage may be the true road to self awareness. What she learns is the Scotland not the true land of her own ancestors, instead of learning her own past land "Christie's real country"(p.135)- the land of her birth is.

Morag feels lonely in Vancouver or in England. She feels that where she belongs "she will never she belongs"(p.359). And that her spiritual home is her birth place. When she returns Canada and lives in a small town called McConnell's landing similar to Manawaka. She acknowledges the value of her birthplace and on her roots she writes the novel "Shadow of Eden". She realizes that she lost her childhood garden, so she feels different and she is craving for her father's land. Finally she accepts the value of her father's land and realizes where she belongs.

In McConnell's Landing. Morag suspects that the local water diviner Royland who looks as "Old As Jehovah" is soon to become her new Shaman. She feels about to learn "something of great significance from him something which would explain everything", the mystery of "his work, her own the generation, the river". This spiritual quest persuade in the novel's time present is its main forward thrust.

Morag is aware that she must prepare her mind for what Royland may have to teach her, and can observe her religious growth as she writes each section of her autobiographical novel and learns both form what she is writing and the events taking place around her.

Morag is a fully realized woman, self-critical, painfully groping her way through her ancestral myth of spiritual and mental vision. Morag is ashamed of the lowly position of her foster parents in Manawaka society and that of her Metis lover, Jules Tonnerre, as she determines to ascend the social ladder by writing herself out of the garbage and she hopes to find peace and happiness in the new places. But she feels lonely and frustrated.

Her move from Manawaka makes her happy in the beginning. But later only she realizes that she misses her native. Her inner growth is an evident from the manner in which she engages

herself with creative writing. She writes five novels and all within the time span covered by "The Diviners". All the novels of Morag have important internal relationship to "The Diviners" is Spear of Innocence. It is followed by Prospero's child, Jonah, Shadows of Eden and her fifth novel, which she finishes in the last sentence of the book and which is obviously The Diviners. All these five novels show the inner progression of Morag. They reveal the Spiritual growth with sequence.

The first of Morag's novel The Spear of Innocence is about Lilac, its heroine aborts herself an Eva Winkler's, a childhood friend of her did. After the success of the novel she leaves her husband Brooke. She writes this novel to Brooke who had not agreed to have a child of their own. She feels that staying with Brooke will mean "Chained forever to that image" (p.63) of herself, which he must have and which must forever be distorted because, fourteen years older than she and insists that she has no past.

Her second novel, *Prospero's Child* is clearly the story of her dissolves marriage and as such an act of literary exorcism. Morag's third novel, symbolically called Jonah, is about her relationship with Logan, her garbage- collector, foster father. She feels shame of her foster-father because she is a garbage collector. The Same Christie is the indirect inspiration for Morag's fourth novel, *Shadows of Eden*. In her early life Morag does not want to live in her father's land. She feels shame to live in her own town. At last she longs to go to her home town. When she is in Scotland, she hates to go back to her Manawaka, her childhood prairie town. Finally she feels that Christie and Manawaka are essential for her life. She realizes that Christie lives forever because "Christie knew things about inner truth that I am only just beginning to understand"(p.261).

She realizes Christie's and Prin's love on her. Only several years later she realizes that "Prin has actively loves her" and then she has mothered her without smothering her personality. In her early life she does not let herself to be swamped by any kind of social or religious pressures. After Christie's death, she wonders "would there be a special corner of heaven, then for scavengers and diviners? Which

was Morag, if either or were they the same things?"(p.461).

Morag's fifth novel is about her life after discovering is the one she finishes at the end of "The Diviners" the affirmation of faith and the finding of grace". Morag finds grace from the Almighty at the eleventh hour probably in her forty-seven. As a child, she feels rejected by and lives in fear, a god who tolerates injustice like Hagar she feels that god neither cares nor understands. When she is eighteen she decides the "God does not actually see the little sparrow fall". By the time Christie's death Morag has come to know the symbolic power of religious rituals in spite of her disbelief.

Morag feels shame to reveal her past ancestors to her husband Brooke. But later she learns that what she has wanted is a past ancestors. Her writing has taught her years ago that "fiction was more true than fact or that fact fiction". She has learned to apply the knowledge to Christie's tales of their ancestors and by divining the truths in his lies, she has to realize that he had "left a place to stand on" (p.137).

At the age of forty-seven she has recently learned to accept humbly life's many gifts or God's grace. Her final lesson is to learn as Jules does at his death bed to relinquish them willingly. When Jules dies blaming no one for his fate she realizes how difficult it would be for him to have Pique see his pain. This realization closes a gap in Calvinist fear of Rejection as Hagar attains her spiritual vision at the age of ninety. Morag's accepting of her religion Christianity came by contact with Jules. A consistence pattern in the Manawaka cycle is that each female-hero acquires a move distance, objective and revelatory perspective on her religious heritage by coming in contact with someone from a different cultural and religious background. Jules played the part of a shaman.

Morag loves Jesus Christ. But she has some fear on him, on God, the Almighty. As the narrator says "Morag loves Jesus. And how he is friendly and not stuck up is why. She does not love God. God is the one who decides which people have got to die, and when... and Morag wouldn't trust him as far as she can spit. Also at the same time she is scared of God" (p.81).

In her early life she lives in awe of her religion and God. At last her true religion teaches her what any religion worthy of the name teaches its adherents to accept death, to see it as part of the continuum of life.

Then at last, she regrets that she could only see too late the beauty of Christie and his love for her. And she grieves at her lack of response. "I told my child tales about you, but never took her to see you. I made a legend out of you while the living you was there alone in that mouldering house" (p.27). Finally she realizes that myth-making cannot equal the giving of love. When her parents were living she didn't look after them. But at the age of forty-seven she had realized that she had missed her parents a lot.

Though she goes to many places from her home town Manawaka, she always wants to live there. So she allowed Pique to go to her uncle's place Galloping Mountain, when she wanted to go there.

At the eleventh hour alone she realizes the love of her foster parents Christie and Prin. Even she asks forgiveness from them. She apologizes for leaving them lonely at their old age.

An important event takes place in Morag's life changes her attitude towards her fantasy figure. One evening when she goes out with her water diviner neighbour, Royland, in his boat, they see a Great Blue Heron and both are filled with awe and inner peace. The bird sees the board and takes flight.

A slow unhurried take off, the vast wings speaking, the creature's body. Like a pterodactyl, like an angel, like something out of the world's dawn. The soaring and measured certainly of its flight. Ancient seeming, aware of planets rocketing changes. The mastery of the heron's wings could be heard, a rush of wind, the wind of its, before it mounted high and disappeared into the trees above a by water of the river (p.357).

According to Clara Thomas it is an image of acceptance and affirmation, central to the resolution of *The Diviners*. The sight of the heron parallels "Wholeness, the cycle of life and death".

After viewing the heron, Morag becomes spiritually and psychologically whole for that every

evening she begins to see "that here and now was not, after all, an island. Her quest for islands had ended some time ago, and her need to make pilgrimages had led her back here"(p.357). Finally she experiences the grace of God, and with that she has found the serenity to accept things she cannot change, change the things she can't and has the vision to know the difference.

Spiritual vision comes with personal freedom and inner peace. Morag's life have been restricted by convention and inheritance. The inner journey of Morag lead them to her spiritual vision. It takes a long time for moving from alienation to spiritual vision. Her Spiritual quest genre rarely discovers the God of the Jewish and Christian traditions at the end of their journeys. Morag gains a sense of authentic selfhood while interacting with those around her in the society.

Since Morag is largely dependant on society for their inner vision, their interaction with those around them must be seen as important to an understanding of their movement from alienation to spiritual vision. Here experience is religious in the deepest and truest sense. She has emptied her ego-mind, and allowed themselves to be filled with the divinity arising from her own inner selves.

Morag's spiritual vision is partly a coming to terms with her own strength, she learns early that weakness attracts bullies. Her friend, Sterilized by a bungles abortion, illustrates what happens to a lower-class girl without strong determination.

Morag, pride is her wilderness. Pride overrules Morag and is confined to live in a small town. She has a wonderful self-determination and self-control, but this alone is not enough to understand others.

In the modern world, love and affection are more essential than order and decorum. This is a necessity in personal and social life. Spiritual vision alone grants a benevolent perspective to any human beings, 'Love thy neighbour' and 'Love one another' make the strenuous life free and comfortable.

In '*The Diviners*' Morag suffers as Hagar of The Stone Angel. But Morag's inner vision is partly a coming to terms with her own strength. Though she is strength she has weakness in her daughter pique. Morag fears on her daughter Pique, When Morag in

her teen age she is torn between pride and the longing to be popular.

Morag has the formidable task of discovering her inner vision not on the elect and chosen of the world, but in the feared and shunned. Morag is ashamed to say that Christie Logan, the garbage collector is her father. When Morag can't stand proudly with the outcasts and rebels, with those who see with the good eye and feel with the heart of the child, as do the piper Gunns of Christie's legend. At last only she regrets that she could only see "too late" the beauty of Christie and his love for her.

The female hero of "*The Diviners*" realizes her vision at forty seven. At first she does not like to move with the outcasts and rebels. She literally hates her parents Christie and prin. But at last only she realizes their love and affection. The vision comes to Morag as its own.

Morag thinks yet and belief are reconciled in action; for like divining, writing has to be taken on faith because it sometimes magically works and sometimes does not. Morag is speaking for herself, alluding to the magical island she has to try to fend off harsh reality. And her enemy is her own despair at not coping with her responsibilities as a twentieth century Canadian woman, mother and writer how that she has definitely asserted her own worth in the face of Manawaka and achieved recognition. She still stands in the need of love and grace and security.

However finally she learns from Royland's loss of his divining powers the lesson that she too can be an inheritor and have inheritors "The gift, the portion of grace, or whatever it was, was finally withdrawn to be given to someone else"(p.420). She can experience this at present, at the end of her career and of the narrative, which has been an exploration or incantation leading to such self realization.

Morag receives a motto blessing her with what she lacked, the strength of conviction(or) religion "She says, My Hope Is constant in Thee". Finally, her war cry, "Gainsay who Dare" allows her to assert herself as well as to create a possible meaning and order in a world where she could see no pattern.

Morag finds her roots out after buying a house at McConnell's Landing. "Land, A river, Log house nearly a century old built by great pioneering couple, Simon and Sarah Cooper, Ancestors". She has accepted her ancestry to be, not pre-revolutionary Scottish stock but of post-immigration Canadians here and now. All passion spent, and confidence, however fragile restored, the quester\writer at middle age thus brings to a close, her spiritual pilgrimage, the wise for knowing the limits of her ignorance, the more secure for having experienced the presence of a pattern and meaning in the Book of World. At last she gets a clear vision and deliberate faith on God.

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