



Laurence's Comment On The English Tradition, Treatment Of Gender In Her Novel The Diviners

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Abstract

This Paper Presents the situation of women in male dominate society. The protagonists of the Manawaka novels search for identity in order to realize themselves. The women in these stories are frustrated and dissatisfied with their role in the society. The protagonists undergo a spiritual quest that involves breaking long-standing habits, specifically trying to please their husbands, friends, children, but never themselves. Thus they become isolated and isolated. The search for identity for self-realization is an attempt to understand oneself. This discovery enables the protagonist to understand others. So in search of identity they try to develop invaluable qualities like compassion, love, simplicity and humility. In addition, the heroes go through a lot of suffering before getting a vision. But they consider sadness a positive emotion. This attitude strengthens the individual and also provides selfawareness. Lawrence talks about the past and Metis and the importance she gives to the landscape. Almost all heroes receive their lights amidst natural surroundings. Landscape is used to analyse and examine the landscape of the mind of individuals. Many other authors use landscape in their works. In 300 Patrick White's novels, the landscape is raw and uninhabited. It remains the same, although each person perceives different aspects of it. Many of Hardy's novels deal with landscapes. RK Narayan's use of Malgudi is very similar to Lawrence's Manawaka. It grows and changes.

Introduction

This section will show that in The Diviners, Laurence works against wider and older traditions reworking epic quest and Shakespearean romance in a revision of a central myth of Canadian culture, that of the 'fortunate fall', and proposing an alternative conception of 'paradise' and 'the artist'. Laurence also defines herself against Modernists James Joyce and T.S. Eliot, drawing on The Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man for her portrait of the artist as a young woman, and on The Wasteland for its concern with the uses of the past. The Diviners also has affinities with feminist quest novels published in the early 1970's. These novels follow a pattern: Woman seeks 'freedom' from conventional roles, looks to her past for answers about the present, speculates upon the cultural and literary tradition that has formed her, and seeks a plot different from the marriage or death that are her customary ends. Morag Gunn uses her fiction to make her way in the world and to make sense of the

world: Morag says, 'If I hadn't been a writer I'd have been a first class mess.' (The Diviners, p.4) Morag is also a reader, a reader of Shakespeare, Milton and Donne. Thus we see that unlike most women, Morag reads- and Laurence writes against- works which centre on male figures, concern male experience and are at the heart of a male-defined cannon.

The Tempest with its one bland and conventional female character, and Portrait which registers women only as idealisations or sexual objects seem odd and unlikely models for the development of a strong female protagonist. The epic quest, which concerns a young man's search for his father as part of his search for himself, seems similarly inapplicable; for since women 'must assume their husband's name' as well as their husband's home, and 'identification with the father can only interfere with development.. But Laurence shows Morag engaged in a question for the father and shows her maturing from an identification with 'Prospero's Child' into the power of Prospero himself. In the course of this section, we shall see that, far from accepting the values of these works, Laurence critiques them: her artist as 'diviner' suggests an alternative to Joyce's 'artificer' and her adaptation of epic quest and 'fortunate fall' redefines 'paradise' as a process, 'the doing of the thing' (The Diviners, p.452), rather than something tangibly and finally won. For her portrait of the artist as a young woman, Laurence draws on Joyce's Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man. This section is an attempt to prove that by the re-writing of canonical texts which expose the phallogocentrism of the tradition by displacing the hero, Laurence also makes a statement about the conception of Art, Artist and Life itself that emerges from The Diviners.

The connection to The Tempest is even more glaring in Morag's latest novel Prospero's Child. This fable has implications within the authoritarian structure of the family and also has resonances in the political sphere, nationalist liberation struggles against colonialism. There are similarities between Laurence's Morag of The Diviners and Joyce's Stephen of Portrait of the Artist as A Young Man. Joyce's Stephen, the exemplar of the 'monstrously isolated, monstrously narcissistic, pedestalled paragon' dominates the modernist imagination. Both Laurence and Joyce suggest that selfishness is a necessary part of the development of self which is required of an artist, and the name 'Gunn' suggests Laurence's ambivalence toward these strengths. Both Morag and Stephen are determined to escape the provincial communities that have shaped them. Morag develops defences like his, turns her back on the claims of others, refusing- as he does- to return home except for a funeral (Prin's) and death. (Christie's). But the young woman artist, Morag, faces greater difficulties, though she emerges stronger on account of them. She also experiences a more radical alienation from self, suffering the self-division and self-doubt which are part of growing up female and which leave her more vulnerable. Morag can never be as ruthless as Stephen can because she forms a tie of a sort that Stephen never does, to a child. In her relation to Pique she must reconcile the conflicting claims of the other and self, of being a mother and an artist - the conflict at the heart of the female Kunstlelroman.

The earliest memories of Morag and Stephen show young minds acquiring knowledge through sense impressions and language. Both are near-sighted children who develop interest in language to compensate for their visual handicaps. But whereas near-sightedness is a little more than a physical inconvenience for Stephen, it strikes to the heart of Morag's self-esteem. Though she is not particularly vain Morag knows that 'wearing glasses' means a girl's life is over'. (The Diviners, p 123) Stephen and Morag learn similar ways of defending themselves against the authority of elders and the pressure of peers: they learn ways of concealing their intelligence and never to 'apologize'. Whereas Stephen turns his sense of difference into a conviction of his own superiority, Morag remains more dependent on the opinions of others: 'work like hell... Although not letting on to the kids... (they) would be dead set against you'(The Diviners, p.120). Though for both education is the means of escaping stifling circumstances, Morag remains divided between impulses to conform and to rebel and is less certain of her course. And whereas girls exist for Stephen only as objects to be idealized or lusted after, boys are to Morag a constant presence and threat. Boys are generally mean. Those girls who have a hope of pleasing them, try.

Those who haven't a hope, either stay out of their way or else act very tough and try to make fun of them first' (The Diviners. p.68). Although both Stephen and Morag find their ways out of town, Morag, like Laurence, realises the value of what she has left behind. She leaves only to realise that she has taken the town with her, that 'the town inhabits you' (The Diviners. p.227); 'the whole town was inside my head, for as long as I live'.(The Diviners, p.353) However, it is *The Diviners* more than *The Portrait* that gives a clear and generous rendering of the community (Manawaka) that the protagonist flees and takes with him. The difference in their conception of artist is suggested by the figure each writer uses to symbolise the artist. Stephen's conception of the artist is Daedalus, the 'artificer' who escaped the labyrinth of the Minotaur and constructed a means of flight, a symbol of the art he aspires to in order to escape the Ireland he despises, Morag develops the skills of a diviner - insight or intuition or 'some other kind of sight' (The Diviners. p.4) - in order to 'fathom' what goes on in people's mind. Since water is a traditional symbol for consciousness, 'divining' is an apt symbol for what Morag tries to do in writing: to fathom people and the processes that make them what they are. Whereas Stephen is concerned with developing escape arts that will allow him to flee Dublin and become a 'creator' with power like God's, Morag is concerned with developing qualities of insight and understanding that will enable her to understand Manawaka and to make its people live.

The Diviners is thus —besides other things- an attempt to overthrow the English tradition. It is also one way of ridding Canadians of their English colonial past.

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