(W)rites of Passage: The Typescript of The Diviners as Shadow Text

NORA FOSTER STOVE

WRITES OF PASSAGE IS THE ORIGINAL TITLE that Margaret Laurence gave to the penultimate section of The Diviners in her typescript of the novel. Ultimately, however, she eliminated the initial letter, transforming Writes to Rites. But writing casts a long shadow over the rituals of passage in this novel, for Morag Gunn is a novelist, like Laurence. Like Laurence, she is writing her fifth and final novel. And, like Laurence, the novel she is writing is The Diviners.

The Diviners is full of shadows. Laurence called the novel a “spiritual autobiography” in Dance on the Earth (6). Morag may be a spiritual sister or shadow self, a mirror image reflecting her creator. The Scots moniker Morag suggests Margaret, and Morag even resembles Margaret in appearance, with her straight black hair and heavy glasses, suggesting a wise owl.

The Diviners is a kunstlerroman, chronicling the development of an artist, like A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man by James Joyce. The Diviners might be titled A Portrait of the Artist as a Middle-Aged Mother, for mothering her babies and her books, her two types of offspring, is as important to Morag in The Diviners as it is to Margaret in Dance on the Earth, which she calls “a book about my mothers and about myself as a mother and writer” (8). Laurence calls herself a “Method writer”1 because she identifies so closely
with her protagonists: in *The Diviners* such identification is understandable, because Morag Gunn so closely reflects Margaret Laurence.

*The Diviners* is metafiction, a fiction about fiction, as Ildiko de Papp Carrington makes clear. By dramatizing Morag’s reality as a writer, Laurence gives the reader insight into her own creative processes. Readers are fascinated by the artistic alchemy by which the artist transforms life into fiction, and nowhere is this metamorphosis clearer than in the metafictional *kunstlerroman*. In manuscript *The Diviners* was an even more radically metafictional text, however, but Laurence’s editors persuaded her to eliminate over one hundred passages. Thus, the typescript constitutes a *shadow text*, haunting the published novel.

*The Diviners* was accepted in 1973 by Laurence’s three publishers: Macmillan in London, Knopf in New York, and McClelland and Stewart in Toronto. They all worked from photocopies of the same typescript, copied from Laurence’s original manuscript by her daughter Jocelyn. The original draft, at nearly 700 pages, fulfilled William James’s definition of the novel as a *loose baggy monster*. The second typescript was 578 pages, however, and Laurence intended to reduce it by another hundred pages.

The Canadian and English publishers agreed to allow Knopf editor Judith Jones to be the sole editor for *The Diviners*, and they relayed all suggestions for revisions to her. Laurence addressed their requests for revisions in notes headed “Alterations made in *The Diviners* on the basis of criticism from Knopf, McClelland and Stewart, and Macmillan.” Caroline Hobhouse of Macmillan confined herself to what she called *nitpicks*: for example, she noted that the poem Morag’s Sunday school teacher misquotes is not by G.K. Chesterton but by Hilaire Belloc. Jack McClelland’s reactions were more searching: in a June 12, 1973, letter, he called the manuscript ambitious and Laurence a great writer, but expressed distaste for the “infactuality” section and for the headings “memorybank movie,” “inner film,” and especially “writes of passage.” He approved the plan that Laurence work solely with Jones, and offered to share plant costs with Knopf.

On June 4, 1973, after meeting with Allan Maclean and Hobhouse of Macmillan in London, Jones met with Laurence at
Elm Cottage in Penn, Buckinghamshire, where Laurence wrote most of her Manawaka novels, for a six-hour session on revising *The Diviners*. Laurence called it "probably the best session of my entire life with an editor/friend." In a June letter, in which she called it "a marvellous book," Jones itemized 107 requests for excisions. These excisions were duly implemented by Laurence, who struck out the paragraph or page with a bold diagonal line drawn in black marker. Laurence responded with a list titled "Points of Possible Disagreement with Judith. Explanation of What I've Done or Not Done" to clarify her artistic intentions.

Despite some disagreements, Laurence implemented most of Jones's requests for excisions. Jones had been Laurence's editor for several years, and Laurence had great respect for her ability. In a June 5, 1973, letter to Jack McClelland of McSteele, she called Jones "one of the really great editors of this world, with whom I work in real intensity and harmony and sometimes in battle." They disagreed once, when Laurence passionately resisted Jones's urging to restructure the stories of *A Bird in the House* as a novel (*Dance* 198). Laurence headed her list of alterations with the note: "Approx. 100 pp. cut out." Jones wrote to Jack McClelland on August 28, 1973: "You will see there has been some major surgery performed—all to the good, I'm convinced...And we have agreed, thank heaven, that WRITES OF PASSAGE will be RITES OF PASSAGE."

The requests for excisions focussed on two primary areas: the metafictional framework and the embedded *kunstlerroman*. Laurence titled the opening section of the novel *River of Now and Then*, suggesting the two levels of narrative that she outlined in her preparatory notes: "Now—done in Past tense. Then—done in Present tense," in order to convey the simultaneity of past and present. Laurence addressed these two levels in her list of alterations: "MORAG AS WRITER—both in Present and Past sequences, this has been cut a lot."  

**THE METAFIGTIONAL FRAMEWORK**

Laurence frames *The Diviners* with images of Morag, the writer, seated at her kitchen table in front of the window
overlooking the river, trying to write, in the Now of the novel. These images dominate the frame sections—the first section, River of Now and Then, and the final of the five sections, The Diviners—but they also provide a frame of reference for introducing the central sections: Halls of Sion begins, "Morag sat at the table in the kitchen, with a notebook in front of her and a ballpoint pen in her hand. Not writing" (137). Such images are self-reflexive, reflecting Laurence writing The Diviners in The Shack (Heart 187), her cabin on the Otonabee River.

But Jones directs Laurence to omit many of Morag’s reflections on writing, noting, “too much in here about this novel and its problems,” although Laurence responds, “Morag constantly relates fiction to life.” The first passage Jones cuts out is a paragraph on the opening page revealing that Morag has been suffering for two years from a painful case of writer’s block. Jones has Laurence omit several passages where Morag agonizes about being unable to write. Knowing Morag is shut out of her wellspring of creativity makes sense of her neuroses throughout the entire narrative.

Pique’s sudden overnight departure for Manawa is the catalyst that shocks Morag out of her literary paralysis. The note comparing herself to Ophelia that Pique inserts in Morag’s type-writer provides the inspiration and the beginning for Morag’s novel on the first page of The Diviners. The shock of her daughter’s departure for her mother’s home town impels Morag to review her collection of photographs, which, in turn, provides the rationale for her retrospective narrative. Putting the photographs in order suggests putting her life in order in preparation for death—as Laurence did in writing The Diviners, a rich tapestry interweaving strands of her life and art.

Jones directs Laurence to omit several passages where Morag broods about mutability and mortality, contemplating the Grim Reaper. The Cassandra of McConnell’s Landing, Morag, like Stacey in The Fire-Dwellers, prophesies gloom and doom. Like Stacey, Morag contemplates her middle-aged self in the mirror, reflecting on age and death, indulging in Pre-Mourning (Fire 278). Jones directs, “Cut introspection re imagined death.” Laurence argues, “The Black Celt side of her is there, for life, but she has to come to terms (in a Jungian sense) with the shadow [my italics] in herself.”
Although these reflective passages are related to her creative block, because Morag writes to live and lives to write, Laurence cuts them out, despite her protests, as Jones directs.

Morag's meditations on mortality suggest *The Diviners* may be as much a *vollendungsroman*, to employ Constance Rooke's term meaning a novel of completion or winding up, as *The Stone Angel*, for Morag bids farewell to creativity and passes the creative torch to her daughter, Pique, who combines her parents' Scots and Métis heritage and their gifts of words and music in songs. Like Royland, the Old Man of the River, Morag loses her gift for divining. And like Laurence, she prophesies that *The Diviners* will be her last novel. On February 3, 1973, Laurence wrote to Al Purdy: "this is the end of a 12-year involvement with Manawaka and its inhabitants, and as the wheel comes full circle in this novel, it will be the last of those...I don't know where to go now—this is why I've always said this would likely be my last novel." Mourning becomes Morag, just as it does Margaret, and the loss of these passages damages the metafictional level.

In the metafictional framework of *The Diviners* Laurence recreates the reality of a writer, both internal and external. The externals include Morag's correspondence with agent Milward Crispin, her telephone conversations with ruthlessly honest editor Constance (who may reflect Jones), and her conversations with aspiring writers. Jones has Laurence omit this verisimilar vehicle. In the typescript, Crispin tells Morag he has sent "Piper Gunn and the Bitch Duchess" to every journal on the continent, and one editor would consider it if she cut it by two-thirds and changed the title to "The Ghostly Ranting Pipes of McBain" in Laurence's own satire on the publishing process. Morag writes critical articles for subsistence during her creative block, but Laurence states in her list of revisions, "articles cut entirely." Avoiding writing the articles involves compulsive cleaning to ward off the internal chaos, and the third passage cut from the typescript shows Morag getting out her photographs as an evasion technique. Ironically, this evasion initiates the narrative of the novel.

Morag reads herself into the *Snapshots* the way a critic reads meaning into a text, interpreting her unseen presence hidden behind the body of her dead mother, where she is "buried alive, the
first burial” (6), prophesying the final burial that Morag broods about, and also suggesting the tomb-to-womb comic life cycle that the novel celebrates. Two of the six Snapshots are omitted and then reinstated in the typescript. These shadows (15) from her past haunt Morag’s present.

In a sudden compulsive action, Morag burns her photographs of these people from her past—Christie and Prin, Brooke and Ella—all except Pique’s father, who was superstitious about having his picture taken. Appalled, she fears that she has destroyed her past, but realizes that she carries her past like unclaimed baggage forever circling the carousel in her skull. Similarly, Laurence herself writes, “I couldn’t wait to get out of that town [Neeapwa], away from the prairies. I did not know then that I would carry the land and town all my life within my skull, that they would form the mainspring and source of the writing I was to do, wherever and however far away I might live” (Heart 217). But Jones objects, “the burning of the photographs hard to believe.” Perhaps Jones did not realize what a latter-day Hedda Gabler Laurence was, for she incinerated many a manuscript (Gadgetry 60). After burning her draft of The Fire-Dwellers, she confessed to a friend, “I am a firebug.” Ironically, burning the pictures initiates Morag’s narrative by providing a motive for memory. She must re-member her past, now that the tangible evidence has gone up in smoke. The six Snapshots in River of Now and Then take Morag to the traumatic turning point in her life, the death of her parents. Next, The Nuisance Grounds recreates her past. In a passage excised from the novel, Morag reflects on memory, realizing that we fabricate our past. Although Laurence omits the passage, she notes, “People fictionalize their lives, not only in ‘fiction’ but also in memories.”

THE EMBEDDED KUNSTLERROMAN

In her kunstlerroman, Laurence uses three methods to dramatize Morag’s creative development. First, she employs a tripartite educational model of reading, critiquing, and writing. Moreover, she includes mentors—Christie Logan, Miss Melrose, and Brooke Skelton—who teach Morag to read and write. Most
important, she embeds Morag's fictions in the narrative to illustrate her literary development. These embedded fictions form Jones's primary target. Excising Morag's fictions may be the easiest way of cutting one hundred pages from the typescript, but it may not be the best way. Granted that *The Diviners* was drowning in detail, the question is, did Laurence's editors miss her metafictional aim? Let us consider the structure of the embedded *kunstlerroman*, noting the excisions, with editor's and author's comments, to determine what is lost or gained thereby.

Morag recalls herself as a child creating characters even before she is able to read and write: "Peony. Rosa Picardy. Cowboy Joke. Blue-Sky Mother. Barnstable Father. Old Forty-Nine" (10), characters taken from songs like "Cowboy Jack' and 'The Wreck of the Old Forty-Nine'" (10). Morag creates this "spruce-house family" to people the darkness after the death of her parents. Creativity is an antidote to death for Morag, as it was for Margaret, who also created a character named "Blue Sky" after her mother's death. Her mother kept a baby book, an "archive of love," where she records how her daughter imagined a "‘funny' house" with a fictional family (*Dance 40*). Morag wonders, "What kind of a character am I?" (11), for she creates shadow selves in the *personae* of Peony and Rosa, *alter egos* prefiguring her novel heroines—Lilac, Mira, and Fiona. In the embedded *kunstlerroman* she answers this question, recreating her creative development.

Christie Logan is Morag's first mentor, who teaches her the power of myth. Morag, as an orphan, is a *nuisance*, and so it is logical that she is *collected* by the *Scavenger*, who tends the *Nuisance Grounds*, as Manawaka terms its garbage dump, the graveyard where the townsfolk consign their bottles of spirits and aborted babies—the refuse they refuse to acknowledge. Christie, a Celtic Christ or scapegoat figure, as Michel Fabre observes, 10 is a *saver* or *saviour*, and Morag is one of "Christie's *salvage operations*" (15). Manawaka views Morag as *white trash*, but Christie's view is "Bad Riddance to Good Rubbish" (35). Christie and Prin provide Morag with a room of her own where she can write herself to sleep when attacked by a spell of the Hill Street blues, because Christie teaches her how to transform garbage into gold.
Christie gives Morag not just a home but a history. When Morag discovers in *The Clans and Tartans of Scotland* that "The chieftainship of Clan Gunn is undetermined at the present time, and no arms have been matriculated" (40), Christie makes her a myth in his Tales of Piper Gunn, the legendary figure who led the dispossessed Scottish crofters from Sutherland to the Red River Valley: "Piper Gunn, he was a great tall man, a man with the voice of drums and the heart of a child and the gall of a thousand and the strength of conviction" (41). Because Jones notes, "There are too many Piper stories here told successively," Laurence responds, "I have cut out the bizarre and funny ones, as not having the right tone and also not being necessary." Morag tells Christie on his deathbed, "you've been my father to me" (323), because he is her father in myth.

Christie gives Morag not just a history but a *herstory*, a term Laurence uses in her memoir, by creating a namesake, a matriarch or madonna figure, in Piper Gunn's wife: "Now Piper Gunn had a woman, and a strapping strong woman she was, with the courage of a falcon and the beauty of a deer and the warmth of a home and the faith of saints, and you may know her name. Her name, it was Morag" (41). Laurence portrays Morag weaving her own fictions around her namesake in "Morag's Tale of Piper Gunn's Woman," who has "the power and the second sight and the good eye and the strength of conviction" (42). Morag weaves Christie into her saga as Clowny Macpherson, an apt pseudonym for Christie, that archetypal jester or wise fool who wears a loony mask to protect his true self from scorn. In the typescript, Morag gives Clowny an axe named for Bonnie Prince Charlie, incorporating history and myth. Laurence argues, "Morag's early story about Clowny Macpherson...this has to remain, because it is her way of dealing with Christie at that point, trying to make him (although she does not realize it) into a kind of acceptable figure in her mythology, the scrawny funny guy who at the same time is a great axeman and chops down the trees for making houses, at the time of Piper Gunn." The mature Morag reflects Christie's influence when she declares, "The myths are my reality" (319).11

Christie also gives Morag her factual history by weaving stories of her father, Colin Gunn, into his tales of Piper Gunn. The
typescript shows Morag composing a story about her father as a war hero saving his mate's life in a bloody battle and being decorated with a medal for courage. Jones directs Laurence to "Cut Morag's tale of Gunner Gunn." Laurence responds, "Morag's childhood stories of Piper Gunn's wife and the chariot (influence Ossian) and Clowny Macpherson (a re-imagining of Christie) and her father Colin are, I think, necessary," yet she cuts them anyway. This story shows Morag incorporating fact and fiction; as she says subsequently, "I like the thought of history and fiction interweaving" (341).

Jules Tonnerre reinforces Christie's model of the oral tradition of folklore and myth later in his "Tale of Rider Tonnerre" celebrating the Chevalier, "Prince of the Braves," leader of the Métis or Bois-Brulés, who had a rifle called La Petite and a magical horse named Roi du Lac that arose from a lake in a dream, like King Arthur's sword Excalibur in Malory's Morte d'Arthur (117-118). Jules appears to Morag as a Shadow on her first, secret visit to the Nuisance Grounds, for he too is a scavenger who shares Christie's gift of turning garbage into gold. Jules saves Morag sexually and helps make her a writer by liberating her true voice from "someplace beyond language" (112). But Jones directs, "Cut story. Summary good." Laurence responds, "I've cut a little, but left them pretty much as they were, with a few later references to them by Morag. The conjunction of Jules's and Christie's tales demonstrates to Morag the deficiencies of history as taught in school."

School continues Morag's training as a writer by introducing her to print culture. Morag anticipates the first day of school: "when she goes home today she will know how to read" (26). But Eva "Weakguts" Winkler, the alter ego who commits the acts that Morag fears doing, teaches Morag the importance of retention. Morag learns to contain her emotions, like her precious bodily fluids, spilling them onto the orderly lines of a scribbler. She has not learned to read: "But she has learned one thing for sure. Hang onto your shit and never let them know you are ascared" (28).

When Morag is introduced to print culture in school, Christie's critique of the canon is concise: "What in hell is this crap? I wandered lonely as a cloud. This Wordsworth, now, he was a
pansy, girl, or no, maybe a daffodil? Clouds don't wander lonely, for the good Christ's sake. Any man daft enough to write a line like that, he wanted his head looked at, if you ask me. Look here, I'll show you a poem, now, then" (51). And he reads her a poem about the Celtic warrior Cuchullin by the Gaelic poet Ossian from two of his favourite tomes, introducing her to the oral tradition.

Morag's attempt to follow Ossian into poetry proves abortive, for Mrs. McKee, the Sunday school teacher, is not impressed with Morag's verse version of "The Wise Men." When she reads aloud a poem by Hilaire Belloc—"He made Him small fowl out of clay,/And blessed them till they flew away" (66)—Morag is so deflated that she burns her poem. Mrs. McKee is a failed mentor, then, although she does teach Morag that poetry is not her métier.

Morag's true mentor is Miss Melrose, her high school teacher perhaps modelled on Mildred Musgrove, who taught Laurence English at Neepawa Collegiate (Dance 77). Miss Melrose gives Morag literary models, like Wordsworth, but more important, she encourages her to write stories. Musgrove encouraged Laurence to write and publish poems like "Pagan Point" and stories like "Goodwill Towards Men," a possible response to Kipling's chilling war story "Mary Postgate," in the Annals of the Black and Gold, which Laurence edited and Musgrove mimeographed. Miss Melrose helps Morag realize that writing will be her life's work: "Now it is as though a strong hand has been laid on her shoulders. Strong and friendly. But merciless" (99–100). Laurence records a similar epiphany in her memoir when she realized, "I have to be a writer" (Dance 74).

A writer must be a seeer, a see-er. Perceiving Morag's myopia, Miss Melrose urges her to get glasses, a symbol of vision for Laurence. Although they make Morag resemble "a tall skinny owl whose only redeeming feature is a thirty-six-inch bust" (100), she can now see. So elated is she at being able to see leaves on trees that she composes a story that she says "will never see the light of day. 'Wild Roses'" (101). Little did Laurence know how right Morag was, for Jones asks her to omit the story and replace it with this summary: "Sentimental in places? The young teacher not marrying the guy because she couldn't bear to live on a farm—
would that really happen? Maybe all that about the wild roses is overdone?” (101). Perhaps Jones was right, for the story is sentimental and the style adolescent. But that was Laurence’s point—to demonstrate Morag’s crude idiom and literary immaturity. Morag’s fictions dramatize her development, as does the developing idiom of Stephen Dedalus from childish lisp to sophomoric pedantry in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Laurence omits most of Morag’s stories as Jones directs, merely noting, “I have left in one or two of her very early stories because I think these are necessary, and they are also very short.”

Laurence reflects her own literary training in another manner by including Morag’s journalism experience. Morag reports for the *Manawaka Banner*, recalling the *Neepawa Banner*, where Laurence worked before she ultimately graduated to the *Winnipeg Citizen*. Morag’s experience in journalism proves abortive, however, when “a genuine news story” (128)—the death of Piquette Tonnerre and her babies in a fire—makes her realize that she cannot profit from others’ pain. Although fiction, not fact, is Morag’s métier, reporting influences her writing, as it has so many authors, by teaching her the importance of *infactuality*, a term she coins in the typescript of *The Diviners*. Although journalism proves not to be Morag’s métier any more than poetry was, she promises Christie, “T’ll—write” (140). And she does, though not to him.

*Halls of Sion* portrays Morag, an escape artist like the young Laurence, “swiftin’ into life” (141) in Winnipeg. Like Laurence, Morag is out there “dancing on the earth” (*Dance* 108) when she enters the “brave new world” (*Dance* 94) of the university, as Laurence puts it in her memoir, where she is influenced by Donne and Milton, as taught to her by Professor Brooke Skelton in a seventeenth-century course like the one that Malcolm Ross taught Laurence at United College.

Brooke is Morag’s mentor who teaches her the English canon and critiques her compositions, censoring her lack of historical contextualization. But Jones directs, “Condense all these literary essays. Enough to give a sense of what attracted Brooke.” Laurence responds, “the Milton and Donne bits have been cut, and the whole university scene, literature-wise, has been put into one scene which carries on the narrative and includes Brooke’s
first attraction to Morag." Laurence omits this interesting footnote to Morag's literary development—both Morag's essays and her marginalia on *Paradise Lost* that prophesy problems that will plague the Skelton marriage.

Morag writes "Fields of Green and Gold" about Al McBain, a prairie farmer driven to despair during the *dirty thirties* when the "Drought and Depression were like evil deities" (*Heart* 239). When the story is published in the college magazine *Veritas*, meaning truth, with her real name, Morag is appalled: "Why did she submit it under her own name. Imagine writing *Morag Gunn* in cold blue ink" (152). Laurence recalls publishing poems in *The Manitoban* under the pseudonym Steve Lancaster and laments, "How long, how regretfully long, it took me to find my true voice as a woman writer" (*Dance* 5). Morag thinks, "I do not know the sound of my own voice" (210). Discovering her own voice as a woman writer is the process Laurence recreates in *The Diviners*. But Morag's, or Margaret's, voice is silenced in this story, as Jones directs, "Summarize story—its ideas rather than plot." Laurence replaces the story with a skeleton plot outline that lacks the life of the word made flesh in Morag's sentimental style. Morag's reflections on her character's resemblance to herself are suggestive, however, as she realizes, "The child isn't her. Can the story child really exist separately? Can it be both her and not her?" (147), reflecting the way Morag resembles Margaret. Even though the story is omitted, it proves pivotal in Morag's personal life, for it catalyzes her friendship with Ella Gerson, modelled on Adele Wise-man, and it instigates her relationship with Brooke, who finds the story "promising" (153)—so promising that he initiates a romance with her. A Pygmalion, Brooke wants to mould this girl with the "mysterious nonexistent past" (158) in his own image. Pygmalion becomes Frankenstein, however, when Morag becomes a feminist.

Morag also composes "The Mountain," a tale of an Austrian count who replicates his family's feudal system in Canada. Laurence published in *Vox*, the United College journal, a similar story, "*Tal des Walde,*" in which she employs a framework that prefigures the narrative methods of *The Diviners*. It is unfortunate that she excised this fiction from the novel, for it prophesies
Morag's relationship with Brooke, a Prospero figure, who ironically judges the story "implausible" (156).

Marriage to Brooke means leaving Morag Gunn behind in Manawaka to become Mrs. Skelton in the "Vile Metropolis," as Laurence called Toronto (Dance 180). But marriage promotes her education, as Morag reads through Brooke's library. His condescending critiques of her creative compositions make her realize they are "trivial and superficial" (182). But she continues to write, progressing from stories to novels, as she searches for her own voice through ventriloquism via her heroines. Her outburst about Hopkins during Brooke's honours seminar demonstrates that writing provides the rite of passage that gives her the right to express her own opinions.

Brooke is a hard man to read, but his nightmares in Raj Mataj about Minoo, his Hindu Ayah who initiated him sexually, reveal the "demons and webs" (Jest 189) that help Morag to interpret his sex games. Deprived of a baby by Brooke, who wants to keep Morag as his child, his Little One, Morag gives birth to her first protagonist, Lilac Stonehouse, who abandons her brutal father and her hometown and "lights out for the city. An old story" (184)—Morag's story, in fact.

Morag writes five novels in The Diviners—Spear of Innocence, Prospero's Child, Jonah, Shadow of Eden, and The Diviners itself, plus a collection of stories titled Presences that parallel Laurence's own creative production. Most of Morag's embedded fictions are omitted from the novel at Jones's request, with brief summaries replacing several pages of plot. Laurence notes:

Plots of her novels have been cut entirely. Instead, I have tried to work into the central narrative some idea of what she is writing about, without breaking the narrative flow by telling plots. I've just included, in most cases, enough to (hopefully) give some idea of what her material is; how it connects and also doesn't connect with her own life; and enough comments from her, and also a few bits of reviews of her books, to give credence to the fact that she is a writer.

Morag's embedded novels act as mirrors to reflect her literary development and, by extension, Laurence's artistic alchemy, as she
portrays Morag transforming life into fiction. Laurence argues, "Each novel is a subtle distortion of Morag’s life or expression of it, but in masked terms until the last novel (Diviners)." So "I think just a glimpse of each novel (character and theme) is necessary, plus some reference to the ways it relates and also does not relate to Morag." Laurence embeds summaries of Morag’s novels in memorybank movies, while omitting the actual stories, as Jones directs. The way Morag’s heroines reflect her own situation and self suggests how Morag mirrors Margaret, making The Diviners resemble a hall of mirrors.

In Spear of Innocence, Laurence portrays a writer’s reality, recreating the creative process—from the "half-lunatic sense of possession" (212), through the painful process of revision, to the reviews—but Morag’s marginal responses to the reviews are omitted from the manuscript. While the novel itself is excised from the text, the summary suggests that Lilac Stonehouse is Morag’s shadow self, reflecting her inner reality, as well as facets of other people in a composite character, combining Fan Brady’s vulnerability, Eva Winkler’s abortion, and Morag’s own escapist impulse.

Spear of Innocence proves to be Morag’s Open Sesame, for she escapes from her prison in the Skeltons’ Crestwood Ivory Tower, where she dramatizes herself as Rapunzel, by writing—her (w)rites of passage. Fictions become frictions when she realizes she is living a lie, painting on a smile for Brooke when she prefers to join Lilac in the seedy nightclub Crowe’s Cave (184). A “Method writer,” Morag stops writing hours before Brooke gets home so she can emerge from her fictional character, her shadow self, and get back inside her own skin—as Laurence records doing in her memoir. This first novel proves pivotal when Morag realizes she has outgrown Brooke and his condescending critiques. When she rebels, she does so in Christie’s idiosyncratic idiom, his “loony oratory, salt-beefed with oaths” (209), for she has yet to find her own voice.

When Spear of Innocence is published, Morag is empowered to abandon Brooke, her Prospero. An Ariel figure, she is aided in her escape by Jules, a Caliban perhaps, the shaman who performs the magic (rough magic?) of liberating her by impregnating her, for a mother cannot remain a child. In the manuscript, Morag wonders
whether she did it just to get the plot for a new novel. Publishing *Spear of Innocence* under the name Gunn, not Skelton, signals to Brooke Morag's new independence. Similarly, *The Stone Angel* empowered Laurence to separate from her husband and embark on independence by travelling to England with her children Jocelyn and David in hand and *Hagar* in a handbag (the manuscript of her first Manawaka novel)—her two types of offspring: "Strange reason for breaking up a marriage: a novel. I had to go with the old lady" (*Dance* 158). The parallels between Morag's and Margaret's manuscripts and the relationship between actual and fictional authors and their protagonists suggest that the original text of *Spear of Innocence* would illuminate Laurence's creative process further, but the excised pages have been destroyed.

Morag's second novel reflects her own marriage explicitly. She describes it in a letter to Ella that replaces the fiction Jones excised from the text: "It's called *Prosperous Child*, she being the young woman who marries His Excellency, the Governor of some island in some ocean very far south, and who virtually worships him and then who has to go to the opposite extreme and reject nearly everything about him, at least for a time, in order to become her own person. It's as much the story of H.E." (270). "H.E." reflects Brooke Skelton, but this skeleton outline does not clarify the artistic alchemy of transforming life into fiction that could illuminate Laurence's own creative processes. Morag notes, "It's done in semi-allegorical form, and also it has certain parallels with *The Tempest*" (270)—parallels *The Diviners* shares, as Gayle Greene notes, although the parallels of Mira's marriage with Morag's and, by extension, with Margaret's may be even more intriguing. Laurence notes, "Morag admits parallels with Shakespeare and with her own life." Morag reflects on the implications of these parallels in a suggestive passage of the manuscript that Jones omits.

Morag's next publication is a collection of short stories entitled *Presences*, which may reflect *A Bird in the House*, a "semi-autobiographical" ([*Heart* 5] kunstlerroman like *The Diviners*. But *Presences* fails to illuminate Laurence's own creativity, for the only reference left in the text is the fact that Mr. Sampson, proprietor of "AGONISTES BOOKSHOP," displays it in the window.
Morag’s third novel, *Jonah*, is also excised and replaced with a skeleton summary that lacks all the life of the word made flesh in fiction. But the brief outline of Coral and her widower father, Jonah the fisherman, reflects Morag’s relationship with Christie, whose tales of Piper Gunn Morag is currently repeating to Pique. *Jonah* may also recall Laurence’s third novel, *A Jest of God*, which employs a verse about the tomb of Jonah, from Carl Sandburg’s poem *Losers*, for its epigraph.

*Rites of Passage*, the penultimate part of *The Diviners*, could indeed have been titled *Rites of Passage*, for Morag lives by her pen, and her confidence grows with each new publication: “*Jonah* has been taken by a book club, *Spear of Innocence* and *Prospero’s Child* are coming out in paperback, and a film option has been taken on *Spear*” (336). Morag has arrived as a writer just as clearly as Laurence, who won the Governor General’s Award for *A Jest of God*, which was optioned by Paul Newman and Joanne Woodward and made into the film *Rachel, Rachel*.

Morag’s fourth novel is titled *Shadow of Eden*, recalling her marginalia on Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, “Exit from Eden,” which was omitted from the published text. The ten-page narrative in the typescript is replaced by Morag’s account in a letter to Ella that clarifies her historical sources:

Odd—the tales Christie used to tell of Piper Gunn and the Sutherlanders, and now this book deals with the same period. The novel follows them on the sea journey to Hudson Bay, through that winter at Churchill and then on the long walk to York Factory in the spring... The man who led them on that march, and on the trip by water to Red River, was young Archie Macdonald, but in my mind the piper who played them on will always be that giant of a man, Piper Gunn, who probably never lived in so-called real life but who lives forever. Christie knew things about inner truths that I am only just beginning to understand. (341)

Laurence notes, “A letter to Ella contains all I am going to use re the novel and all I am going to use of Infactualy, in a few pages.” *Shadow of Eden* is all that is left of the part of *The Diviners* called *Infactualy* that recounts the history of the Highland Clearances that Laurence researched. Perhaps the editors were right to excise the historical material, but Morag’s novel is a great loss, because
Laurence’s notes reveal that *Shadow of Eden* recounts the experience of Fiona MacLeod, who emigrates with the Sutherlanders to the Red River Valley. Her husband, the piper, perishes on the voyage, and she arrives in the new land, perceived as a “Dark Eden,” as a widow with an infant—a single mother like Morag and like Laurence herself at the time of writing *The Diviners*. *Shadow of Eden* reflects Christie’s tales of Piper Gunn, as well as the biography of her ancestor Archie Macdonald that Laurence’s friend Jean Murray Cole was researching while Laurence was researching her historical novel. *Shadow of Eden*, which takes Morag over three years to write, reflects *The Diviners* itself and is mirrored in “The dispossessed” (309), as Morag titles Dan McRaith’s portrait of a Scots woman set against burning crofts. *The Diviners* is indeed a hall of mirrors, and *Shadow of Eden* may be the missing reflection.

Morag’s last novel is not named, although the fifth and final part of *The Diviners* is titled “The Diviners.” At the end of the narrative, Laurence writes, “Morag returned to the house, to write the remaining private and fictional words, and to set down her title” (370). She sets down her title in the dual sense of inscribing it and passing the torch to the younger generation embodied in Pique, who combines the words and music, Celtic and Métis myths, to celebrate her dual heritage in the song that concludes *The Diviners*. Like Royland, whose gift of divining is gone, Morag becomes the Prospero figure who breaks her wand and frees her spirit Ariel when she says to her daughter, “Go with God” (368), as Pique heads west, continuing the eternal cycle. Although she gives Pique the Tonnerre hunting knife that severed the thread of her father’s life, she withholds the plaid pin until she is “gathered to [her] ancestors” (367).

We may assume that the title Morag sets down would be *The Diviners*. And we would be right, because in both her notes and manuscript, Laurence concludes with a final page inscribing the words, “THE DIVINERS, an unpublished novel by Morag Gunn,” surrounded by a black border like an obituary. This separate closing page is also an opening title page, creating a Möbius strip effect, as it brings the novel back to its beginning in a cyclical motion. But Jones objected: “Cut plot—too closely related to the problems of this novel . . . same applies to title.” So we will never
know how Morag's final fiction related to Laurence's last novel. Silence has the last word: "Look ahead into the past, and back into the future, until the silence" (370).

What, then, has been gained and lost in the editorial process? Certainly the excision of over one hundred passages achieved comparative concision and saved the novel from becoming an unwieldy monster, but at what cost? The summaries replacing Morag's stories have none of the vitality of the word made flesh in fiction; Morag's literary development in the maturation of her idiom is lost; connections between Morag's life and fiction, which might reflect parallels between Laurence's life and art, are lost. Such reflections could illuminate Laurence's artistic alchemy, clarifying the way she transformed life into art. These missing links are revealed by the typescript of the novel, however, which consequently constitutes a shadow text, haunting The Diviners.

NOTES

3. The annotated typescript of The Diviners, in box 3, files 1–3, of the Margaret Laurence Archives in the Special Collections of the Mills Memorial Library at McMaster University has been consulted with the permission of Laurence's estate and the assistance of Librarian Charlotte Stewart-Murphy, Carl Spadoni, and staff.
4. Quotations from Laurence's unpaginated preparatory notes for The Diviners and responses to Jones's requests for revisions, all collected in the York University Archives, are prefaced by the phrase "Laurence notes" and are included with the permission of Laurence's estate.
5. Jack McClelland's correspondence at McMaster University is quoted with the permission of Jack McClelland.
6. Judith Jones's requests for revisions to The Diviners, with Laurence's responses, collected in the York University Archives, are quoted with the permission of Laurence's estate. At a meeting with Nora Foster Stovel at her Knopf office in New York City in June 1998, Judith Jones remarked that Laurence, when she was revising The Diviners, was not very well.
119

7. In “Christie’s Real Country. Where I Was Born’: Story-Telling, Loss and Subjectivity in The Diviners,” Paul Hjartarson concludes that “our understanding of The Diviners develops out of our sense of the relation between the two narrative levels, between the NOW and the THEN” (63).


11. In “You Have to Go Home Again: Art and Life in The Diviners,” World Literature Written in English 20 (1981), J.A. Wainwright discusses Morag’s investigation of “the relationship between her art and her life” (293) and “between fact and fiction in her life” (311).

12. Mildred Musgrove, at the Margaret Laurence Memorial Conference held at Brandon in 1988, affirmed in conversation that The Diviners reflected Laurence’s experience at Neepawa Collegiate in English literature and composition and that Melrose may have been modelled on Musgrove.

13. See Embryo Words: Margaret Laurence’s Early Writings, edited by Nora Foster Stovel (Edmonton: Juvenilia Press, 1997) and Colors of Speech: Margaret Laurence’s Early Writings, edited by Nora Foster Stovel (Edmonton: Juvenilia Press, 2000).


15. Cole told Laurence the piper who led the Selkirk settlers was named Gunn (Dance 201).

16. In River of Now and Then: Margaret Laurence’s The Diviners (Toronto: ECW Press, 1995), Susan Warwick writes: “The reader’s recognition of The Diviners as both Morag’s text and Laurence’s text suggests that it may be read as both a fictionalized rendering of Morag’s life and of Laurence’s” (45).

17. Laurence notes, “have deleted THE DIVINERS—but ‘to set down her title’—I hope this does have a double meaning—both Morag putting down the title of the book (her childhood etc. which she’s been writing) and setting down in the sense of giving over her title as novelist to the kids. This really good, not despairing.”


