

Abstract

This thesis is a study of two novels by Canadian authors: *Lives of Girls and Women* by Alice Munro and *The Diviners* by Margaret Laurence. The analysis of these novels is focused on the main protagonists' development into mature women. Despite the fact that the growth of the characters is somewhat parallel, it concludes in significant differences in their personality traits and their life views. Margaret Laurence and Alice Munro have both proved that women can have it all; nevertheless, only Laurence has given this confidence and her opinions to her heroine. I argue that this puts Del Jordan and Morag Gunn under two different labels concerning the doctrines of the different waves of late twentieth century feminism. My claim is supported by an analysis of the characters that influence the protagonists through the course of the novels.

The introductory chapter provides a brief context for my analysis. First I present relevant definitions of the tradition of the *Bildungsroman*, and its subcategory, the *Künstlerroman*. Then I proceed to outline basic differences in the history of feminism. The chapter concludes with a cameo view of the two writers, given for a better understanding of the novels, as they relate to their creators. The following chapters examine the two novels in detail. The focus is specifically on the development of both heroines into women and writers and how their growth is influenced by other characters in the stories: the different characters either accommodate or frustrate the protagonists' pursuits of their complex goals.

My conclusion is that community is very important for both Munro and Laurence and this is why they surround their protagonists with all those characters. Only Morag is able to learn from them and still follow her dreams. Laurence depicts positive examples, showing Morag's encounters with characters who are supportive of her as a woman, challenging her to become successful in both spheres of her life private and public, shapes her into the woman she is at the end of her story. Del Jordan, due to lack of such positive influences, is on the other hand deprived of hope for a life as both a writer and a loved wife and mother. My claim is that dissimilarities in the way that Morag and Del perceive the world result in Del Jordan being the representative of liberal feminism, whereas Morag Gunn is ahead of her times, showing the outlook of post-feminists.