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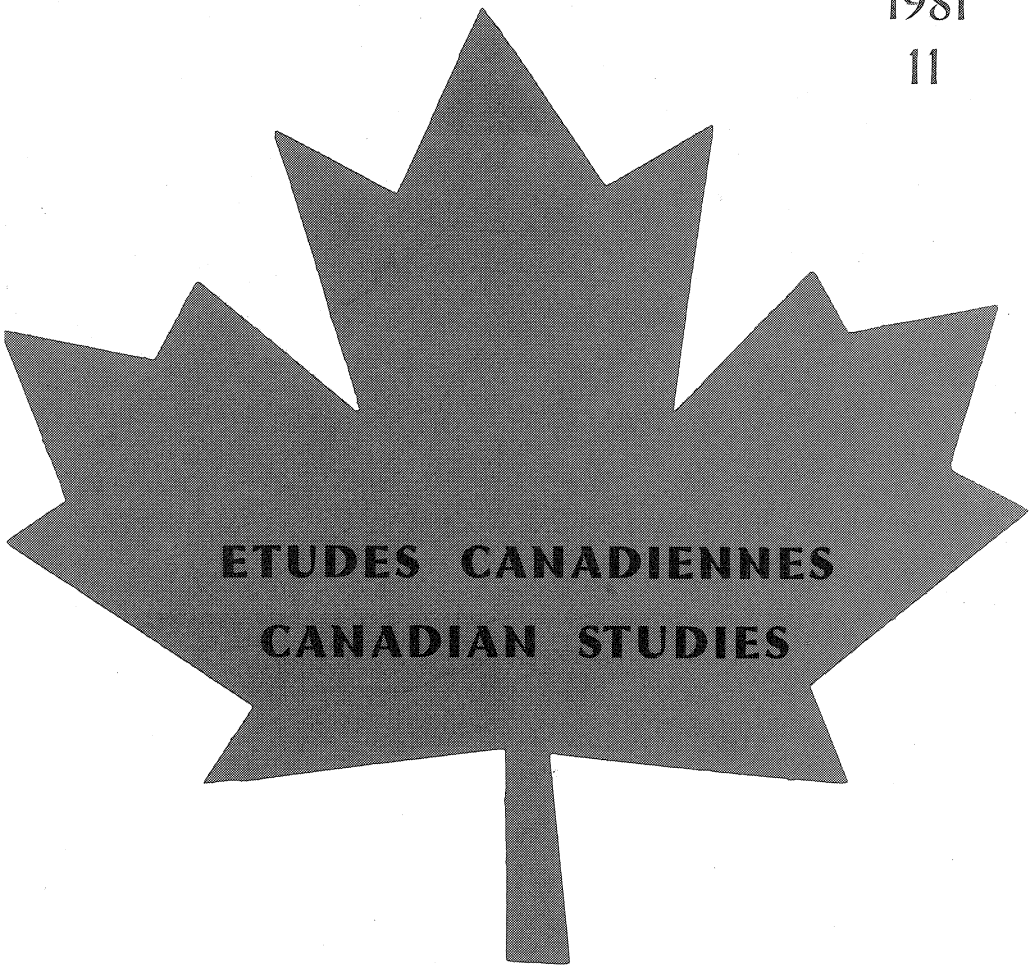

REVUE INTERDISCIPLINAIRE DES ÉTUDES CANADIENNES EN FRANCE

ASSOCIATION FRANÇAISE D'ÉTUDES CANADIENNES

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MAISON DES SCIENCES DE L'HOMME D'AQUITAINE

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THE STONE ANGEL

by Margaret Laurence

A Collection of Critical Essays
edited by
Michel Fabre

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INTRODUCTION

During the last decade, at least, the fiction of Margaret Laurence has consistently received the kind of critical attention it deserves. Collections of essays, like William New's **Margaret Laurence, The Writer and her Critics,** and special issues of literary magazines and scholarly journals, like the Summer 1980 issue of **The Journal of Canadian Fiction,** have been devoted exclusively to her work, and full-scale studies have begun to appear in the wake of Clara Thomas's **The Manawaka World of Margaret Laurence.** One may ask, then, why another collection, and why a collection devoted specifically to **The Stone Angel ?** In answer, it could be argued that, although the first novel of the Manawaka series represents an even more important milestone in the development of Canadian literature than it does in its author's career, it has not yet received, at least in volume, the kind of attention paid to **The Diviners,** whose technical prowess has certainly proved more attractive and challenging to the critics. Although much, and much good, has been written on **The Stone Angel,** certain aspects of the novel still deserve closer consideration or reappraisal.

There are other, more specific reasons for this collection, however. For some time, many members of the French Association for the Study of Commonwealth Literature, the French Société d'Etudes des Pays du Commonwealth (SEPC), has been eager to deal with the work of Margaret Laurence. As a result, a lively workshop devoted to **The Diviners,** chaired by Professor Pierre Spriet of the University of Bordeaux III, was organized by the SEPC at the Spring 1981 conference of the Société des Anglicistes de l'Enseignement Supérieur in Lyons. This workshop proved so successful that its proceeding will soon appear as issue n° 7 of **Echos du Commonwealth,** one of the SEPC's publications. Last but not least, **The Stone Angel** was recently selected as one of the ten works of English literature taught « in-depth » (this means that up to a dozen one - hour lectures may be devoted to the work) all over France as part of the syllabus for the prestigious « agrégation », the nation-wide competitive exam for the recruitment of high school teachers.

In the summer of 1980 when this collection was planned, however, I did not have in mind a converging and comprehensive critical coverage of a given novel by Laurence so much as a sort of French-Canadian critical dialogue apropos of the most significant contemporary Canadian author in English - a dialogue which would convincingly establish that English-language Canadian literature is taken seriously in France, where « Québécois » or French-Canadian literature has long enjoyed a privileged position, for all sorts of reasons. Such a collaboration would also testify to the degree of fruitful exchange which does exist between Canadian

and French or European scholars in the field. I must say at the start that the advice, willingness to contribute and generosity of the few Canadian specialists I first approached, especially Professors William New, Douglas Killam and Clara Thomas, were extremely encouraging, as were the responses, at a later date, to my call for specific papers, not to speak of the willingness of **Etudes Canadiennes** to host such a publication. Thus, with the added preoccupation of meeting the exacting demands of the « agrégation » student by providing a comprehensive examination of the genesis, themes, structure and narrative devices of the novel, this collection has grown into a full-size volume.

Admittedly, the essays gathered here could have followed a different order, yet there seems to be some logic in proceeding from Margaret Laurence's own recent declarations concerning her aims and the writing of the novel to the less autobiographical thematic aspects of the novel and, finally, to matters of linguistic and narrative technique which I personnally consider of major importance. Admittedly also, a number of fine articles have already been devoted to **The Stone Angel,** and most of the present essays implicitly or explicitly take these as starting points in order to pursue further enquiry along already-established critical avenues or to revaluate and restate former perspectives. Yet, I believe there is enough really original material here to deserve attention.

Although the interview she granted me in August 1980 was extensive and to the point, Margaret Laurence herself had already expressed her views on and remembrances of the genesis of **The Stone Angel** upon a few occasions, among them in her important essay, « Ten Years' Sentences ».

What is revealed most distinctly by this interview is both expected and unexpected. Expected is : Laurence's definition of spiritual survival as the ability to give and receive love, to communicate ; her stressing of her right to take a woman as a protagonist ; her recounting of the Scots Presbyterian quality of her, and Hagar's childhood. Unexpected is : the sort of link she established between the first and the last of the Manawaka novels ; her consistent refusal to cast the novel as allegory or parable ; her apparently naïve selection of names for characters and episodes which retrospectively seems to yield more symbolical wealth than she foresaw.

A writer's opinion of his or her works should certainly not be the standard by which a critic ought to measure them : each work stands as a whole and the text speaks for itself. However, I believe that one should also take into consideration here the author's intentions and conception of what she has achieved in order not to subvert her attempts in the name of a grander design imagined by the critic alone. One should not stretch a

point to the extent that it can lead to erroneous conclusions. Margaret Laurence is at the same time extremely warm, open, generous and also very sure of what she has attempted and what she is intent upon achieving. Her wording may appear at times deceptively simple and humble ; yet besides her astounding lack of overt egotism and desire to state precise, accurate definitions in generally simple terms, one also notes a quite sophisticated use of nuance. As a result, rather than as a series of anecdotes concerning the writing of her first Manawaka novel, this interview should be approached as an entry into her spiritual and human quest, whose stages are charted and made concrete by her various novels and stories.

William New's excellent introduction to the New Canadian Library paperback edition of **The Stone Angel** might have been enough to satisfy his interest in discussing the work. But here, he replaces the novel within what has come to be called the Manawaka cycle. He shows how Manawaka has come to embody not only the small prairie town but the Canadian West : « But 'Manawaka', which absorbs and transforms experience, constitutes something more besides : as Laurence's imagination has invented the place and so reinvented the past, it constitutes a habit of mind, a way of thinking about the interconnections between time, place and person, to which we give the name of culture ». Ethnic differences thus constitute an essential element in the social fabric and provide conflicts caused by the class distinctions and cultural biases which nevertheless exist in an ostensibly classless society. Hagar's career is thus evaluated with reference to the Currie and Shipley norms. The social dimension of the Manawaka myth becomes apparent and it serves, according to New, to allow the recognition that « each of these different cultural strains has been part of the shaping of the whole society » - a coming-together which the Currie plaid pin serves to symbolize. The uneasy relationship of order and change, past and present, is explored, the notion of the cycle itself being taken to task because it can be a repetitive rather than progressive pattern. The idea of progress replaces that of fixed order in a form in which « history is, for Laurence, largely synonymous with narrative ». Here, a finely-honed approach to the uses of memory leads New to conclude that the autobiographical tenor of the narrative prompts us to read it not as factual truth but as « wrestling with truth ». That language should become the medium of revelation and expression of social change therefore makes it inevitable that, later, a writer should become the central character of **The Diviners.**

As a result, he continues, **The Stone Angel** opened Laurence up to the shifting forces of her own culture, « enabling her to probe how myth and history are interrelated. It allowed her, too, through an imagined act of memory, to record the remarkably sudden growth that began to turn a regional idiom into a locally-rooted literary language ».

Leslie Monkman's « Ancestral and Contemporary Communities » focuses upon the same opposition between « civilized » and « natural » which is to be found in the opening pages and which Hutcheon also explores. Yet, he makes it clear that Laurence ultimately retreats into a romantic vision of the « natives », as the Indians of an era pre-dating the white man's arrival. In the same fashion, Hagar nourishes the romantic vision of the heroic Highlanders bequeathed to her by her father. If « Jason plays the role of an imperialistic Prospero in the context defined by O. Mannoni, Hagar is a definite but blind Miranda in her apprehension of the 'brave new world' around her ».

Monkman interestingly stresses Hagar's dreams of playing princess and her « czarina-like » daintiness, while her images of Bram as « a bearded Indian, so brown and beaked a face », introduce again a romantic vision of her white lover. She cannot sympathize fully with Galicians and half-breeds, nor with the poor, though, and she utterly rejects John's later association with the métis Tonnerres. Her associations with horses, symbolic as they also are, suggests her fear of not being able to handle male sexuality. As a result, Hagar's failures in personal judgment are accompanied by the limits of her acceptance of « strangers », and they reveal the social isolation of her life. It is only with **The Diviners** that Laurence allows her characters to move significantly beyond this isolation in order to recognize other groups while withdrawing from easy sentimental primitivism.

Although she has already thoroughly explored the relationship between the novelist and her characters in **The Manawaka World of Margaret Laurence,** Clara Thomas manages to provide more fresh insights in « Pilgrim's Progress ; Margaret Laurence and Hagar Shipley ». After a discussion of pride as a factor of Laurence's historical, psychological and religious background, she not unjustifiably makes the claim that **The Stone Angel,** published in 1964, has a place in Canadian literature comparable to that which Hawthorne's **The Scarlet Letter,** published in 1850, occupies in American fiction. She refers back to Laurence's African writings, notably **This Side Jordan,** in order to gauge the beginnings of her achievements as « the Recorder... rampant with memory ». A careful and revealing comparison is made with the themes of Joyce Cary, by whom the novelist has avowed to have been influenced. Freedom, faith, the belief that the meaning of life is revealed only through grace are shared in the quests of both novelists. An analysis of Cary's first trilogy and the character of Sara enables Thomas to define, often by opposition, Laurence's attempt and achievement in **The Stone Angel** and her struggle with Calvinism. The link between religious pride and pride in material success is reverted to, and the novel judged an epitome of the literature about the settling of the Canadian West. From pride to love, Thomas argues, the protagonist makes her pilgrimage,

blessed with the will to endure and struggle onward : « She wins through to self-acceptance and peace - and she is finally blessed by the knowledge of love ». Hagar is thus seen as Laurence's central tragic figure, finally redeemed at the last moment.

« Pride and the Puritan Passion », by Linda Hutcheon starts out by stating the paradigmatic opposition between nature and culture, the instinctual and the social, which conflict structures the plot of **The Stone Angel.** Very soon, however, Hagar's trials as wife and mother are linked with the Biblical reference, passion with bondage, while the overt symbolism of the stone statue and Egyptian imagery « overtly directs our attention to the reversal of the passion/bondage relationship in the Biblical intertext which Laurence wishes to effect ». Hagar's inheritance comes largely from her father, and she denies her emotions in her inability to express her true feelings. She also denies her physical passion for Bram, who attracted her because he was forbidden, but whom she quickly attempted to reform. The paradox of secret pleasure and overt denial of the flesh ironically reappears in old Hagar's « wallowing in her disintegrating flesh », although she still does not connect her sensuality and sexuality. Her repression of passion results in destructiveness and it ends only in the cannery sequence when she accepts the role this denial played in John's death. Hutcheon believes that a final reconciliation occurs, even though it is a last-minute one, and she illuminatingly points to « that other obvious intertext », D.H. Lawrence's **Sons and Lovers.** She concludes by reinserting this treatment of the theme of the conflict between repression and passion into the mainstream of Canadian literature, from Susanna Moodie's **Roughing It in the Bush** to the present, the « here and now » which often seems to « force a rejection of imported old values as inappropriate in the new setting ».

André Dommergues examines **The Stone Angel** in a socio-cultural perspective and explains that order and chaos are fundamental elements in the novel. He shows what an important part the Scottish-Presbyterian ethic plays in the society of Manawaka where the concept of order is linked with the concept of class. In this manichean world most characters fall into two groups, the conformists and the rebels or law-breakers. Hagar stands apart, she is tossed between conflicting forces ; now she fights against order, now she defends it. When her quest comes to an end, the heroine, after repudiating the bourgeois tradition, seems to accept the higher order of the heart. The tension between order and chaos reflects Margaret Laurence's ambiguous position.

André Dommergues also gives researchers precise, first-hand information he collected in Canada about the Margaret Laurence papers at Mc Master and York Universities.

We do hope that the Scott Library will very soon open its important collection to the specialists of Margaret Laurence.

In « Women and Woman », Marcienne Rocard discusses the fact that the central figure in the novel is a woman who functions as point-of-view and also that of the numerical and dramatic predominance of female characters over males. She stresses Laurence's particular insistence, in the contrasting patterns where Hagar is often opposed to very different types of women, on the relationship between the nonagenarian and very young girls, notably Tina, who seem to embody both what Hagar was when she was young and what she did not even dare to be. Men are fewer and less interesting, while women are cast both as victims and as survivors with correspondingly varied attitudes. The main difficulty for woman is to assert herself in a man's world ; as a result, Hagar's spiritual development is often linked with the successive social and family roles she has to take on as daughter, wife or mother. From the first, however, Hagar's physical sturdiness and moral strength mark her out as a survivor, not only through irony and dignity but also through sympathy and human warmth. Though never a staunch feminist, Laurence thus repeatedly asserts the gradual victory of the acknowledged feminine element in a woman who still suffers from her unhappy but undying love for her men, Bram and John.

Taking as a starting point the commentaries already propounded on this topic, notably in William New's introduction to the New Canadian Library edition of the novel, Douglas Killam's « Notes on Symbolism in **The Stone Angel** » pursues several avenues regarding the overt symbolism of the novel. He begins by an illuminating comparison with Thomas Wolfe's **Look Homeward Angel,** also alluding to the angel in Milton's **Lycidas** to establish a contrast between prospective and retrospective telling and to stress the unfolding of the plot as a « story of buried life », with the additional allusions to the works of Matthew Arnold and William Wordsworth. A second major avenue is provided by the comparison between Hagar and King Lear as great tragic figures who equally suffer from the apparently cynical blindness and cruelty of the jesting gods. Their reactions to the damages inflicted upon mankind by cosmic evil are indeed comparable, even though in Hagar's case the Biblical undertones are quite important. Killam also treats of the imagery, drawn largely from nature, from the animal or the vegetable world, associated with Hagar in the present tense action of the novel. He recalls the disgust and loathing evoked by such imagery and the important role it plays in Hagar's ruminations, although they never approximate the degree of loathing of Lear's world. These images overwhelm others, denoting Hagar's pleasure and rage with life, and they ultimately refer to the character's quest « for what seems to her a motiveless energy - if not malignity - in the universe ».

Pierre Spriet's « Narrative and Thematic Patterns » is an attempt at exploring the novel as « a construction made of words », i.e., at shattering the illusion of mimetic fiction and the mistaken conception that Hagar is a « real » being in order to restore the protagonists as construct. He is concerned with discovering « the forms which organize the fictional discourse and constitutes the... artful disordering of the narrative and discursive sequences ». Starting from narrative modes he stresses that opposition between Hagar and the world is not psychological, but a direct effect of the linguistic form of the novel, where the speaking voice excludes all others. Disorder is carefully built in to represent the complexity of stream of consciousness, emphasizing the incessant interruption of the orderly outflow of memory. The regularities themselves are due to a patterning by opposition or exclusion, which duplicates recurrences which structure the novel. Spriet sees the notion of opposition or contest and the war cry « Gainsay who dare » as the matrix of the novel, in which opposition is diversely and richly exploited. This is transcribed narratively as aggressiveness and stylistically expressed by means of verbal violence, cruel metaphors and general hostility in the speaking voice.

Binary oppositions (strong man/weak woman) or the rich symbol of the angel are blatantly, or ironically, formulated. A close analysis of the opening locale and symbolical sequence reinforces Spriet's argument, which he pursues with a development of the opposition between two sets of characters, the three strong men (the father, Bram, John) being related to natural growth, for instance. More important, the central binary opposition is internalized within the heroine, lending her the contradictions of real life. Finally rejected and defeated, she is part of a pattern of isolation leading to tragedy through the recurrent theme of her refusal to conform to social norms, allied to authority and the family. Laurence mixes her rebellion with enough ambivalence to make the victim both innocent and guilty « because she partially shares the values she fights to death ». Here again, the form of the novel privileges her struggle by making it unique, giving it the undertones of a cry of defiance against a divine absence or fate.

Reingard Nischik very methodically describes the essential components of multiple plotting in the novel in order to assess the artistic advantages which the device offers. She distinguishes character, place, time and theme as the four variables of a theoretical model whose variations will systematically display the novel's structure. The resulting two character groups corresponding to the two time-levels are generally set apart except for the significant overlapping of John, whose death is retold to Murray Lees. The variable of time allows the impression of parallel development of two relatively independent lines of action in fairly regular alternation and generally chronological order. While the narrative

present takes place in Vancouver, the locals of the past also lead to Vancouver, and the two lines of action converge at the end of the novel. There is an apparent lack of variation in character but Hagar's constant characteristics are presented in a new context which makes her more dependent and also more aware of her responsibilities and readier to accept them, although the very end shows a relapse into pride.

Thus, in each thematic line of action, which definitely could stand on its own, the time variable makes variations apparent and the resonance technique aims to show « not only **what** kind of person Hagar is but also **how** she has developed into what she is ». The integrative element, like the transitions between the present and the past, are not too conspicuous. The use of multiple plotting provides Laurence not only with a neatly dovetailing aesthetic arrangement, but especially with a way of using repetition at different narrative time levels as a shorthand form of « telling » or « showing ». The alternations between the two plots also invites seeing one in the light of the other, the singling out of an aspect of the past giving it particular weight. The method of presentation thus has thematic implications. « The relative autonomy of the past, the important role it plays in the present, the necessity to live with it and to accept it for a genuine understanding of oneself... ». - all these concern Laurence who takes this principle one step further in **The Diviners.**

Simone Vauthier's « Notes on the Narrative Voice (s) in **The Stone Angel** » studies in detail the narrative voices in the novel, the functions of locutor and narrator, and finally their relationship to the reader. Her purpose is « to have a look at the first-person narration and especially at the various delegations of power which the novelist entrusts to the narrating instance, the various layers which are thereby created ». Retrospective first-person narration is opposed to the remembered **I.** The novel is no pseudo-autobiographical narrative, however, since a sort of metadiscourse splits the present tense further into narrated and narrating times ; in fact, the opening sequence appears to be a flashback, and two time sequences are involved, of unequal length. Yet, to say there is no narrator, or a double one, obscures the difference between the narrative stances : in the primary frame, the enunciation is delegated to the character but instead of telling her story, she is presented as living what the reader apprehends as her story. A **locutor** thus would better refer to the character during the activity of the enunciating instance ; yet another transferral of narrating power occurs, this time mediately from character-as-locutor to character-as-narrator. An analysis of the interweaving of the two narrative voices follows, focusing on the type and function of transition and noting that the two narratives merge only at the crucial moment when Hagar remembers and recounts John's death. The functions of narrator and locutor are the same to a large extent, since both their discourses construct the fictional world, yet the gap between them energizes the narrative : while the narrator can organize her experience

and structure her remembrances, the former cannot. However, there is no confusion in her mind between herself as perceiver and herself as perceived. Such lucidity is hardly realistic if we consider how confused the locutor is, but the montage of contrasting voices creates a « double exposure ». Also, the argument runs, the narrator's discourse is oriented towards the locutor, and the locutor's towards an **I** - which tends to exclude an exterior narratee. This attempt to achieve communication between successive and discontinuous **I**'s thus structures the narrative as a self-message. Communication, turning outward, Vauthier continues, is achieved in the story only because it involves the reader, who is asked to link textually separated things and also to judge Hagar on the basis of what she tells us : « our role as readers involves us in a series of involvements/disinvolvements in which our capacity for knowing Hagar finally tests our capacity for knowing ourselves ».

Finally, a « Selected Bibliography on Margaret Laurence » by Jean-Michel Lacroix will easily enable the student and the scholar to consult the different studies, mostly articles, which have been devoted to the novel in particular and to Laurence in general. Being essentially chronological and ending with the latest publications, it reveals at first glance how quickly criticism of Laurence's work has grown during the last decade and also how little of this criticism has been devoted to narrative techniques and linguistic strategies in her novels, whereas thematic criticism abounds. The French reader will probably be surprised to learn that three of Laurence's novels, including **The Stone Angel,** have been translated into French. Although they certainly received favorable reviews (not listed here), they have made little impression upon the general public when compared with works of French-language Canadian writers of lesser caliber. In the case of Laurence's reception in France one is indeed reminded of the case of Patrick White, who enjoyed only a minor reputation outside a circle of devotees until the Nobel Prize suddenly placed him in the limelight.

The major aim of this collection of essays consists in providing French « agrégation » students with the high-quality, in-depth criticism of individual works to which they are accustomed. It is hoped, however, that it will also provide more specialized scholars with new perspectives, notably on the approach to the narrative and enunciative processes.

Michel FABRE

MARGARET LAURENCE ON THE STONE ANGEL

A long interview on her Manawaka novels was granted me by Margaret Laurence when I visited her at her home in Lakefield, near Peterborough (Ontario) on August 5, 1980. Only the passages dealing more specifically with *The Stone Angel* have been gathered here. Their order and wording have been slightly altered at times but the final text has received the novelist's approval.

Michel Fabre
Université de Paris III

What would you say is the major theme in The Stone Angel ? I would say that it is, in some ways, that of survival. I am not thinking of physical survival. I mean survival of the spirit , with some ability to give and receive love. In what happens to Hagar at the very end of the novel there is to me some sense of redemption. Close to the end of her life when she, for the first time, really can admit to herself, when she says "Pride is my wilderness", that the tragedy of her life has been that, because of her spiritual pride, she has been so unable to give and receive the kind of love she was capable of. She never really did express her love mystically or emotionally toward her husband. She was capable of those things but her own wilful pride, her round-headeness has always held her back. It has always been a kind of socially restrictive thing, the sense that she always wondered what the neighbours thought. So I would say that the main theme is survival with the ability to give and receive love. But fitting into that theme and perhaps more important there is the sense of a possibility of a kind of redemption.

What about the presence of death ? I spoke of survival as the ability to continue experiencing relationships with others, to continue reaching out and giving and returning love. In that sense, a part of Hagar had been dead for years through pride and her strict sense of dignity even before she was old and sick. But in the hospital, she has to come to grips with the reality of dying both physically and spiritually. Hagar's story is an attempt to survive as wholly as possible, emotionally, and mentally until the moment of death.

Is this not a pessimistic or gloomy perspective upon life ? In The Diviners, Morag often refers to the "black Celt" in her, "Morag Dhu". Of course, this has a historical, nearly genealogical significance in the novel but I can't help feeling that this is also a reflection upon her mood, and, in a sense, upon you as a writer. Would you equate that quality of "blackness" with a sense of gloom ?

I feel that life and the world can be pretty gloomy and that people can certainly be hard and cruel to each other but I am convinced that gloom is not doom. There is hope and in most people there is a faith, a belief in the possibility of change that will come out.

You have alluded somewhere to Stacey, in The Fire-Dwellers, being a king of "spiritual grand-daughter" to Hagar Shipley in The Stone Angel. What did you mean by that ? Stacey is not particularly admirable but she has courage, and she has a saving sense of humour. Her humour enables her to partly free herself of the illusion, as she grows into a middle-aged woman, that she was more innocent when she was a child.

Does this make her any closer to you than Hagar is ? No more than Hagar, Stacey is no one except herself. Yet she is closer to me than Hagar in terms of historical experience since her story takes place in my own time ; she is of my generation and her phrases and idiom are closer to mine than to my grandmother's, which was the case for Hagar. Although it may not seem to be so, because Hagar is a rather stern figure at times, my view of Stacey's life may be less optimistic than that of Hagar's. Or I think that my initial optimism was somewhat supported by self-deceit or the belief in one's worth, in the eyes of God, which one could find in Hagar.

Would you say that her pride comes from some psychological trait in her or from her upbringing in the Scots-Presbyterian tradition ? I'd say it was spiritual pride, using it in the Christian sense of the seven deadly sins. We can also use pride in the sense of the kind of pride that makes people worry about whether they are dressed as well as their neighbours, social pride, keeping a sense of one's dignity. But the wrong kind of pride that Hagar had was both her upbringing and something she had inherited from her father who was an authoritarian, proud, stiff-necked man. And even though she detested her father there was a great deal of his kind of character in her.

Yet he was an admirable pioneer ... Like pioneers, Hagar is admirable but she is too rigid. Also she is an old woman and people are rather naive about what old persons are. Old people are often thought to be kind and wise and mellow. But few old people really grow wiser or more tolerant with age. People can enslave one another as individuals as often as nations. One person can gain control over another's life. Then, neither is free. And Hagar does only begin to become free when she releases her willful control over her dead family and her living son and daughter-in-law.

Her social behaviour would thus correspond to that of the "better part" of the Manawaka society which tends to ostracize Morag in The Diviners ? Absolutely. Going for a moment to *The Diviners,* I'd say that this was something which took Morag quite a long time to learn – the fact that Christie who had brought her up and virtually been a father to her, how great was his real worth, how much he had given her in terms of her past and ancestry in the tales he told her and how he created a sort of "mythic ancestor" for her. Her social prejudices had become a kind of inner truth for her and it took her a long time to get away from that wrong sort of social pride when she felt ashamed of him because he was the town garbage man.

In her case, her sin of pride might be her feeling of intellectual superiority over the people as noted by the manager of the Manawaka Banner... Yes, the newspaper editor gives her the excellent piece of advice that she should never look down upon the people of that town who may not be very verbal and write well but who are morally her equals.

Would you say that Hagar is also very much the product of her own environment, then ? Indeed. I think she was not only the product of her environment which was, of course, the small prairie town, but also of her ancestry because much of the rather rigid Scots Presbyterian quality was really instilled into her in childhood, and it is both a kind of environmental thing and cultural thing that goes a long way back. A thing which we all experience in this country and which you don't experience so much in Europe is that all our ancestors, with the exception of the native, came as immigrants. They brought with them a whole set of cultural values, of built-in prejudices, built-in strengths too. Parenthetically, the thing in this country which has been very interesting and extremely good, I think, in our literature is that anglophone Canadian writers at least have brought to our literature a great number of cultural backgrounds. My people happen to be Scots-Irish, Celtic ; then in my province alone we have writers like A. Wiseman and Jack Roderick who are of Jewish background, we have the Ukranian background with Andy Sublanski, we've got Icelandic writers... All these people were born in Canada but they definitely brought with them those kinds of outlook and I think this creates a rich variety of background. You must add to that the thing that binds us together, which is geography. Because whatever ethnic and cultural background our prairie writers come from, they are very much prairie writers. Even though I have not lived in Manitoba for many years I still consider myself a prairie writer because it is in that background that I lived for the first 23 years of my life. That is what forms you and it is out of that background that much of my Canadian writing has come.

Do you consider The Stone Angel as a typical rendering of the Canadian experience ? In certain ways, it is. Canadian writing now is still very local, and local writing does not require that you depict or construct some homogeneous national identity. On one hand, the particular thus lends itself to universality, and a Canadian experience in Neepawa is not more provincial than one recorded in Toronto or Vancouver. However, I am not aiming at a specifically Canadian identity in the Manawaka novels, except maybe in *The Diviners* which is more historical and social, in terms of conflicts or the Canadians' dealing with the métis, than the former novels.

The character of Hagar had been in mind for quite a while before I started writing the novel which took place with surprising ease. I did not really think of making a protagonist into a sort of mythical figure or an archetype of the Canadian West. She certainly isn't. I wrote about Hagar as an individual old woman, not reflecting whether she would be called universal or typical. She did come from my own Manitoba and family background but I felt she was an individual. And then, of course, many readers wrote to me and said that she was exactly like their grandmother or aunt, or someone in their family. Of course when you talk about your grandmother you may end up talking about someone else's, but this is not at all what you had started with.

Your writing has often been represented as an attempt to escape from the Calvinist background of your Scottish ancestors, from what your grandfather represented, a mixture of guilt feeling and sense of duty. Would you agree that it was a quest for personal freedom that compelled you to write the Manawaka novels in order to master your past and environment by recording it in a work of art ? I suppose I was lucky I did not start my career with autobiographical writing, because I was so close to it until the middle of my mature life that I would not have managed it artistically. In a sense we could say we have little identity until our story is told. Although I did not start with autobiographical writing but with African stories, I may have needed some sort of identity then. And I could not achieve it until my own story was told, the story of a small-town Manitoba girl. Fiction was what made it real and settled. At the same time in the prairies life was very stable. So stable that it was nearly impossible to break loose from the closely-knit community without leaving it, without moving to the city or elsewhere. It was like an African clan, where individuality is somewhat repressed for the benefit of the group. Conversely, in the small prairie town, a child had a clear sense of belonging, or never being lost because he had a definite place inside the local hierarchy ; in a sense, this created a warm feeling of protection.

Did you see the Bible as a place where you could find symbols and metaphors when writing, or was your use of it a more largely intuitive process ? I was brought up very much in the Presbyterian tradition—however, seven years after I was born the Methodist and some of the Presbyterian churches in Canada joined so that I was brought up in what is called the United Church of Canada. After I grew up, for many years I didn't attend church at all but I always read the Bible quite a lot. I would say I have always been a fairly religious person in a fairly unorthodox way. One thing that endears much of the Bible to me is that, for so many parts of the Old Testament, it is magnificent poetry, as of course I read the King James version... But I did not necessarily search for Biblical symbols when I wrote *The Stone Angel.* When I was trying to think of the name for the protagonist, the name Hagar did definitely come to me because of the Biblical history and there are certain parallels between the story of my Hagar and that of the Bible. She is cast out into the wilderness—in the case of my Hagar, the wilderness is within—and certainly certain things that she says about death are similar to certain parts of the Biblical story such as when Hagar's son John is in an accident and she thinks something very similar to what the Biblical Hagar says, which is "Let me not see the child's death"... But, although I looked up and read again the Biblical story many times when I was writing the book, I did not want the parallel to be too exact. Because that was really destined to cause a few ripples in the readers' responses.

You did not want to create an allegory, then... Absolutely not. And also, I'd say somewhat idiomatically that I did not want to hitch my little wagon to that mighty star which is the Bible. Generally speaking when these references and parallels come in, it is certainly because they occurred that way naturally when I was writing. I did not actually superimpose them in a deliberate sense.

So it would be wrong to see the book as a sort of parable. Absolutely.

Now, you had chosen "Hagar" as a title... I did indeed. I did not particularly like the title "Hagar". I feel that titles are very important, and they should in some way express the theme of the book in a rather peotic way. My publishers in the United States and in England did not like the title and both of them kept suggesting terrible titles. And I kept searching too, I kept reading and re-reading for the right-sounding title. In vain. And then I opened the manuscript which I had not seen for some time and there it was, the first words of the first line made a perfect title.

Did a stone angel actually stand in the churchyard of your native town ? Neepawa, my own town in Manitoba is certainly the basis for the fictional town of Manawaka but I felt perfectly free to fictionalize too. When I wrote

The Stone Angel I was not thinking of any particular stone in the cemetary of my home town, I did not even know whether there was a statue of an angel in it. I simply needed it for that passage. But the interesting thing is that in my home town there is a stone of which the local people now say : "Oh, that's the one she was thinking of". It's the old Davidson stone, they say... Although the stone angel in the novel is not the biblical angel of the myth, it does dominate the book like an imposing symbol. One can say that the blind angel symbolizes the blindness of pride. I had had the character in my mind for quite a long time and I was not thinking of any precise opening... Generally I have to rewrite initial paragraphs a number of times but, in this case, there happened something that does not happen that often with me, at least not at the beginning of a novel : the first paragraphs I just wrote right off and never had to rewrite a word in them. I normally have to rewrite a lot, at the beginning especially. I tend really to overwrite. I write too much. I write in longhand the first time, which is not important except for the fact that I find I can be more fluent in longhand because it seems less official somehow. So I do write far too much and when I put it in the first typescript I cut down and edit a lot. And then I start on the real rewriting. I don't know where my characters come from, nor why I have to deal with these particular characters. I sometimes feel I do not have the power to change my characters, that I cannot really control them or what happens to them. They are acting out their own destinies according to their own motivations, as in the case of Hagar whose destiny is, to a large degree, bitter even to the end. Beforehand, before I start writing, it is true that I think about the novel and story and characters I am going to write about in great detail and rather consciously. But when the writing takes place, mostly of the first draft, I cannot stop and take time to reflect whether this or that detail fits with others. Characters even keep doing things they were not expected to. They are not puppets to be manipulated but, rather, quite free to surprize me.

I felt that Hagar was an old lady telling me her own story. I attempted to put it down without manipulating it. And I kept marvelling at the gifts of memory. I would find again and again the speech of my grandmother, of the Manitoba people, I would remember phrases from my childhood which I believed could never be rediscovered.

Did you plan the Manawaka cycle as a whole ? I am thinking of the episode of the plaid pin. Did you use it as a hint in The Stone Angel in order to weave it in again into The Diviners in order to close the Manawaka cycle ? When I wrote *The Stone Angel* I did not have any idea that I would write *The Diviners,* not even that I would write another book out of the fictional town of Manawaka, I absolutely did not know... I had started writing *The Diviners* when one day it suddenly came to me that the exchange is what would

have happened to Hagar's plaid-pin and Lazarus' knife. And it felt like a revelation. And I thought to myself "So that's what had happened to it !" just as though it really had happened. But when I wrote *The Stone Angel* I had no idea of writing a cycle of novels. I then proceeded to write another four books, including the volume of short stories, but it took me quite a time. When I had finished writing *The Jest of God,* which was published in 1966, I thought this was all I'd get out of that town. And it went on and on, and now I feel there is indeed a kind of cycle. I don't think I'll write anything else on that town but, on the other hand, I have said that before, so I can't even tell. You write what is there to write, whatever is given you to write, you know. I do have a novel in my mind now which is partly out of a similar kind of background but I have not found the way to do it. I don't think it will be in the same way, though. I feel that those five books of fiction are really very much tied together, not simply because of their common geographical setting but also because of some of the characters that appear in several of them.

I was struck by the fact that, in all these books, the relationship between man and woman is a complex and difficult one... Oh, of course, a complex one. And I feel that sometimes you have to define things by the lack of them, in a way. Because I believe profoundly that the emotional communication between individuals is potentially very great. I think that people have to work at it very hard but I don't think that too many people actually do reach their potential in that way. I think that communications *are* difficult but we must keep on trying. And this is one reason why I feel so much in common with a writer like Chinua Achebe who also, at the deepest level, is talking about the possibilities of communication among and between people, frequently of totally different cultures, in his case. He records the tragedy that happens when people have so totally different sets of concepts that they are not capable of communicating as happened in the colonial era in Africa.

Yet real communication, even in books, often seems to take place beyond words. The important things are often wordless... This is true. Between human individuals much of our deepest communication is at a non-verbal level but, at the same time, when we are trying to understand how we feel we find that words are very imperfect yet we are stuck with them. This is the only way we have to exchange views ; we can exchange emotions without words but we cannot exchange views. People can make love, people can hold and comfort their children but in terms of exchanging our views of life and our responses to it we have to use words. The irony there too is, in all my novels, in some of the scenes that I think are most emotional the characters involved are really saying very little. But, of course, I am describing with words.

You give quite enough historical background in The Stone Angel, as when you recreate the impression of how hard the times were during the crisis of the Thirties. You are interested in an important way in recreating history. But would you say you are interested in social change ? I think that everything that I have written is, in some way or other, political. I don't mean political party or anything like that. Perhaps social would be a better word because although I am not doing this with any sense of writing polemics, or propaganda, which is a wholly different field from fiction, I do think that I am very much aware of the social conditions in a particular place. When I am writing out of the fictional town of Manawaka, I am very much aware, as I was even when I was a young person in my hometown, that there are people who lead difficult, impoverished lives, people who were and still are oppressed... Particularly perhaps in *The Diviners* does it come out. I do have a sense of social outrage even in *The Stone Angel.* The interesting thing about the métis family which comes in my writing in *The Stone Angel* is that Lazarus Tonnerre becomes John Shipley's friend and the latter's mother disapproves because she had a basically snobbish outlook. There is some sense of the Tonnerre family being the outcasts and, of course, I did not think at all of it coming into all my Canadian novels, but it does. Apparently I felt quite haunted. I never really knew any family exactly like that, but I apparently was not satisfied until I wrote a more complete story about them in *The Diviners.* You don't know in advance that these things are going to happen. I did not know when I wrote *The Stone Angel* that Lazarus Tonnerre would come into other writings, but if I had known I couldn't have picked a better name for him than Lazarus, risen from the dead.

But why did you pick it, then ? Simply because I liked the name, it seemed suitable. In *The Stone Angel* Lazarus is a young man and I had no idea of using him as an older man in *The Diviners.* It is a pretty common name, you see. Also, Tonnerre : I did not know there was a métis name Tonnerre— but it is very similar to some of the names the prairie métis had. I now like the symbolic dimension about it, its connection with thunder... When I choose names I am not looking into all the possible meanings of them, but I am usually aware of reverberations. The name Manawaka had been in my mind since I was about eighteen, when I first began to think of writing about a small prairie town. Although the hill, the river, even the cemetery did exist, it is not my home town of Neepawa. It is more a private place of the mind.

Don't you think the character in the book is largely constructed from the name itself ? The name holds many potentialities of the character. Tonnerre, I later discovered, is a fairly common métis name although I did not know when I picked it.

Nature symbolism plays a tremendous part in all your books. But to go beyond this, in The Stone Angel, for instance, you use water, whether brooks, or rivers, as a vehicle or instrument of rejuvenation. There is a coherent theme of water. Water comes into, perhaps, a lot of my writing in those same kinds of symbols and references. It is probably because it is one of the basic elemental symbols of life. Of course, at the very end of the book when Hagar has changed to some extent because there is a sense of redemption, I use the episode of the glass of water very deliberately. She still has a lot of pride and does not want the nurse to hold the glass of water for her. This, even as she dies, is an example of a kind of spiritual pride. At the same time her offering water also suggests a sense of redemption in her life.

There is a sense of redemption but you leave it inconclusive. Is it that you don't want her to be redeemed, or saved, so clearly ? She is still in character. She does not change abruptly. I do believe in people being able to change their lives, though. But there are certain parts of ourselves that are there. This woman could not change overnight but she came to certain perceptions of herself that she had not had before, and to certain expectations.

How come you picked an old person as a protagonist ? It is a long story. For many years I had written not about Canada but Africa where I had been living. And then in some way I had come back to my roots, spiritually, I mean. Even though this return took place at about the same time I returned from Africa, actual geography was less important than this spiritual return out of which, in part, *The Stone Angel* grew. I had started writing on Africa and then I returned to Vancouver and I knew I could not go on writing about Africa. I did not want to. I felt that what I had to do from then on was to write about my own people and culture and geography. Somehow, I did not make a conscious decision but I felt that I would have to start with my grand-parents' generation, and Hagar historically belongs to that generation. We generally mostly grow up in a fairly stable, settled community ; people know their grand-parents, parents, their own generation and their children's. Our knowledge is usually limited to four generations. So I thought this was the kind of ancestors I had to begin with, not earlier in history. What was funny with that book is that while I was writing it quite a number of idiomatic expressions came to mind, like the way my grandmother would speak, and I didn't even know I had remembered those things. They came out of the filing-cabinet of the mind ; this is one thing I felt quite strongly in my case that I had to go back and write about my own people and country. Again Achebe made a remark similar to this : when you write about your own people and place you write about things you did not know you knew whereas if you are writing about another country you have not got all that background—things that are stored in your mind with-

out your knowing they are there, yet which rise up when you need them. And, of course, only with your own culture can you know these things.

Why did you select a woman as a major character ? Was it simply because you find it easier to project yourself into a woman ? Even though a protagonist such as Hagar is very different from myself, she is of course another woman. She is, however, very different from me in her attitude towards life. I do not have this problem of relating and being unable to reach out. But I just feel, and I have felt for a long time, that I can probably understand a character who was a woman better than a man. I also feel that if you are a woman writer it is perfectly natural to have a woman protagonist. I do not feel I write just for and about women. But I feel there are certain things I can get at only through women. People often ask me why my protagonists are women. I would say, I wonder how many people asked Hemingway : "Mr. Hemingway, why are your protagonists men ?" It is a perfectly natural thing. Also there are a great many male novelists and it is about time that more women wrote about women.

I asked the question because I believe that your male protagonists are quite successfully seen from the inside and I felt it would not have been more difficult for you to have a man as a protagonist. I am very glad you think so. I do care a lot about my male characters but I have not consistently tried to show them from the inside, but rather as they are perceived by women.

Also, somewhere in The Diviners, *Morag's professor husband exclaims "Don't you think that all the things you write about have already been said ?" And she answers "Well, it is important that I, a woman, say them". Was this your aim ?* Definitely. In fact there are very few themes, if any, that are original themes. Some themes are being used over and over again simply because they are basic to human life, but there is room for all these different points of view because they are all, in some way or another, unique.

Coming to the narrative technique you adopt in The Stone Angel, *one is struck by your special use of present and past. Although present and past merge easily in our consciousness, what were your reasons for mixing them up ? Mostly technical ones or an attempt at rendering the life of the mind ?* I had a great problem of narrative technique. It is one I did not solve and it is a structural flaw of the book. But I think the alternative would have been worse. The way I have it in *The Stone Angel,* Hagar's memories are chronological. She starts remembering what she was when a child and goes on. Well, people don't remember in that order, as we all know. In *The Fire Dwellers* I have the protagonist Stacey remembering quite distortedly. That is the way

people remember. But Stacey's memories are far less important to the narration of the novel than Hagar's are to *The Stone Angel.* The thing is I was trying to reconstruct Hagar's very long life and did not want to start at the beginning and write a straight chronological narrative because the main thing was that in time present she had to be an old woman. If I had had her experiencing her memories the way people really do experience their memories, it would have made it really impossible because it would have been far too disjointed, largely because her memories span such a large stretch of time. So I chose what had seemed to me to be the only possible course which is to have the time past recreated chronologically. But the way I tried to do it in order to have it work reasonably well was to have each of her long memory sequences triggered off by some occurence in her present story, so that there would be a plausible transition each time.

I think it is quite easy to follow... This is it. If I had done it the other way, the reader would have been totally confused because Hagar's life is so long. Of course, you still have a flaw in structure and form and you can't really separate the form from the contents and the character. These are things that have to be worked out as you go along. Yet these are things I give a great deal of attention before I start writing. I frequently have to make changes as I am writing but I am also concerned with form beforehand .

Did you change it in The Stone Angel ? No, this came to be my final choice beforehand, and it is a pretty simple form. You cannot find the perfect form, you try and find the one that is better suited to your purposes. We are not God !

You do it again in The Diviners but there you comment upon it or at least you point at it at the very time you do it ... Some critics reproached me with using the different headings, like "Memorybank movie" or "Snapshots" ; they thought it was gimmicky. I thought it worked. But unlike Hagar, Morag is a writer and she is deliberately setting out to construct her life and of course the novel she is writing is *The Diviners.*

Is it very much a writer's novel ? In that sense, yes. I seriously considered making Morag an artist, a painter and then, since I knew absolutely nothing about how a painter works I had to make her a writer. You do hesitate about making a protagonist a member of your profession, of course. It is a novel but I did not think of it as metafiction. That is not what to me is important. What matters to me is all the themes and, of course, the characters. I think that what matters to me most about anything that I write are really the characters themselves. To try to get them across.

As attitudes towards life ? Well, as people, as human individuals with dilemmas that they deal with in various ways. I *care* very much about my characters. Unlike other writers I know, I could not portray protagonists that I disliked or despised. I have to feel a deep connection with them.

Still, you make no concessions concerning Hagar even though you never despise her... I have very ambiguous feelings about her. Because, of course, as a human individual she was extremely difficult and stiff-necked and her poor son and daughter-in-law had a terrible life with her. I love her and, at the same time, I deplore the kind of person she is. Many of her characteristics are extremely unlovable. I mean, she does a lot of damage to the very people she loves—a lot of psychic damage. This also has to do with cultural characteristics. There were a number of strong characters, like my grandfather, who were straight and stern and authoritarian and strict, and yet at the same time they were very brave and determined. My grandfather I hated when I was a kid because he was a very difficult man and only when I grew up, only when I finished the final story in *A Bird in the House* (these stories are fictionalized but based upon my own childhood and my grandparents)—only when I had completed that final story did I find that I had at last come to terms with him. Trying to reconstruct those times I got to understand that he was a very difficult man but he had a very difficult life. He was a pioneer and a hard man, a courageous one who walked all the way from Winnipeg to Portage La Prairie. But pioneers are not easy to get along with.

In the opening section of The Stone Angel and in many places in your writings you seem to have a very original sense of, and feeling for nature, especially trees and flowers. Would you comment on this ? Many people have pointed out something which I had not realized myself, which is just how much the imagery from nature comes into all my work : water, the river or the sea, all those things... Natural imagery comes to me easily whereas urban imagery does not, largely because I am a small town person, not a city person. I really don't feel at ease in cities at all. Also, I believe that when the symbols are organic, they are also in your mind when you write and you sense them. But it only is when people point out certain things, or meanings in your work that you discover that they had been latent, even in your imagination, as reverberations, at the time you were writing. It is something mysterious and magical, something *The Diviners* is about : the creative process and the power of the word.

THE STONE ANGEL AND THE MANAWAKA CYCLE

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If one accepts at face value a letter Margaret Laurence wrote to Ethel Wilson in January 1964 (1), just before *The Stone Angel* appeared, the subjects that were occupying her mind appear to have little to do with the Africa of her earlier work or the Manitoba myth she was in the process of composing. She wrote of her new house near High Wycombe, in Buckinghamshire, of her children and a puppy and the noise they made in the new house, of her trip to Pakistan the previous November, of her anger towards the exclusiveness of the European communities there, of John F. Kennedy's death, and of her admiration for Mrs. Wilson's novel *The Innocent Traveller.* Yet indirectly these say a good deal about Margaret Laurence's work, for they declare in the relaxed language of a personal letter her constant concern for the welfare of her immediate family and the welfare in general of the family of humankind. As the "Manawaka" stories came into print over the subsequent decade, her regard for the intricacies of family relationships was to become apparent ; more obviously but less precisely, the preceding African stories had concentrated on her idealistic aspirations for international understanding and cooperation. She was aware of the impact of imperial cultures upon the Third World and struggled to articulate her own connection with the new societies. Though she later came to appreciate how much of an outsider she always remained in Africa, and how unrealistic some of her aspirations were, Africa nonetheless taught her much about the potency of myth and the value of the ancestral connection. The *Stone Angel* was therefore to be her transition novel, the work that was to take her from the exotic Otherness of her itinerant adult life to the particularities of a Canadian past ; it was also to make her (as later commentary averred) the "first lady of Manawaka" (2).

The Stone Angel, in critical commentary, thus becomes a "Manawaka novel". But to say this, though it's accurate, is also misleading. The fictional town of Manawaka, Manitoba, which Laurence largely based on her hometown of Neepawa, clearly figures in *The Stone Angel* in Hagar Currie Shipley's memories. But the novel is set in the present in her son Marvin Shipley's city of Vancouver, some thousand miles and more to the west of Manawaka, on the Pacific Coast. It is clearly enough recognizable, through the Shipleys' country drives to Silverthreads nursing home, and through Hagar's busride to the North Shore and the abandoned fish cannery, whose original used to stand on a winding narrow road halfway between West Vancouver and Horseshoe Bay. Vancouver

recurs in other works in the "Manawaka cycle" as well : as the setting for Stacey MacAindra's peregrinations in *The Fire-Dwellers* (1969) and for Morag Gunn's early life as mother and author in *The Diviners* (1974), and as the destination to which Stacey's sister Rachel Cameron takes her mother at the close of *A Jest of God* (1966), and to which Vanessa MacLeod's mother moves in the stories of *A Bird in the House* (1970), when she finally closes and sells the Connor family home in Manawaka. Rather than shift emphasis away from Manawaka, however, this absorption of the West Coast (and of other locales : Ontario and England and Scotland in *The Diviners,* for example) reiterates the centrality of Manawaka to the travelling characters' minds. Hagar cannot forget it, constantly relives it, repeatedly finds events reminding her of the life she once had and the world she knew. And "That house in Manawaka",writes Vanessa at the opening of *A Bird in the House,* "is the one which, more than any other, I carry with me"(3). Clearly there is much of Margaret Laurence's own experience animating these works : her own childhood in Neepawa, her own sojourn as a housewife in Vancouver's suburban Dunbar district in the 1950's, her own travels to the United Kingdom and residence in smalltown Ontario. But "Manawaka", which absorbs and transforms experience, constitutes something more besides : as Laurence's imagination has invented the place and so reinvented the past, it constitutes a habit of mind, a way of thinking about the interconnections between time, place, and person, to which we give the name of culture.

I have mentioned already the titles in the Manawaka series. As Clara Thomas has pointed out in *The Manawaka World of Margaret Laurence* (4), together these tell the stories of five major interlocking families over four generations : the Curries and Shipleys, the Camerons and Kazliks, the Connors and MacLeods, the Gunns and Logans, and behind all of them, the Tonnerres. There are others besides, some of whom appear first in *The Stone Angel* : newspaper people, doctors, lawyers, funeral parlour operators, and women of no repute-Henry Pearl, Lachlan McLachlan, Luke McVitie, Eva Winkler, Vernon Winkler (who, desperate to change his identity, changes his name to Thor Thorlakson), No-Name Lottie Drieser who marries Telford Simons who later becomes mayor. They are a mixed lot, who collectively describe the town's social dimensions, and they serve as a context against which the main families measure themselves and beyond which they aspire to achieve.

The main families themselves, of course, are also mixed, and the nature of their differences goes far to spelling out the different kinds of conflict each separate fiction unfolds. Some of the differences derive from status in the community, which in turn derives from occupation and ethnic background ; in turn, the cultural mix epitomizes the social fabric of the Canadian West. The Scots and the Irish are on top of the scale, the MacLeods, with their brick

houses and Sunday school training, setting the town's style and standards. The Curries and Camerons are close behind, by virtue of clan status if not of occupation-Cameron, like Simmons, is the undertaker-while Christie Logan, Scots enough but the garbage collector, is far lower on the social ladder. The Protestant Irish Connors compete for recognition by willpower, personality, and material pride. The English Shipleys, neither motivated by the Presbyterian work ethic nor educated to "correct" grammar, follow the Camerons somewhere in social precedence, with the (often Catholic) central European and Ukrainian immigrant families (the Kazliks, the Winklers, the Driesers) farther behind still. Essentially excluded from Manawaka "society" are the Tonnerres–the part French, part-Indian Métis who live outside the town, whom the townspeople dismiss and try to ignore, but who in their turn regard the townspeople as parvenus without culture and who, in the terms of the Manawaka cycle as a whole, constitute an essential element in the social fabric. Hence the conflicts.

For the class distinctions and cultural biases are *inherited* by this ostensibly classless society (hence the irony), and *taught* to succeeding generations (as Jason teaches Hagar and Hagar tries to teach John), and altered only slowly if at all. The tensions burgeon in families, where generational differences themselves manifest change, despite the authority of patriarchal traditions and matriarchal power. Hagar, for example, whom her father feeds with notions of clan honour and clan superiority, can only late in her life begin to value her difference ; in her youth she wants to identify with those who go *against* the Currie norms. She marries Bram because he so obviously in speech and manner operates outside the Currie code–while paradoxically he marries her because she represents to him the order and decorum of the Currie morality. Attracted so perversely to each other, it is scarcely surprising they cannot adequately communicate. Hence when marriage reduces Hagar's status, and she hears herself called "the egg-woman" (5) by No-Name Lottie Drieser Simmons's daughter, and when she realizes at threshing time that she has become "Hagar Currie serving a bunch of breeds and ne'er-do-wells and Galicians" (6), she is mightily offended because the pride her father has educated her to possess inevitably requires that she be so. She separates herself always from the Métis, the Central European, and the poor whom she sees as shiftless. But the social scale has changed through time, and her father's absolute standards never allow for deviation. Her problem then is to find a way of valuing her own independent personality and of accommodating herself at the same time to the new set of more fluid standards that the twentieth century, and universal education, and urban life, have made the new norm.

Other Manawaka characters face comparable family-and-culture-inspired dilemmas. Rachel Cameron, in *A Jest of God,* for example, is ruled by her mother's excess of moral righteousness, until she establishes her fleeting

connection with the Kazliks, faces squarely her illness and her disappointments, and recovers the strength to act independently—becomes at long last, in effect, an adult in her *own* generation. Vanessa MacLeod, in *A Bird in the House,* grows up in a house ruled by grandparental authority, values and fears it at the same time, and sensitively observes how her parents' generation, for the sake of its own freedom, has had to resort to secrecy and indirect communication to allow change to enter the domicile. Vanessa herself discovers a connection with the Tonnerre family, but from a distance. Morag Gunn, in *The Diviners,* comes much closer, comes close even to understanding Jules Tonnerre, though not quite ; and she has a child by him. The social dimension of the Manawaka myth thus begins to come clear. Hagar's need to connect with the Shipleys and the Driesers, Rachel's to connect with the Kazliks, Morag's to connect with the Tonnerres all reiterate a pattern of social change. It does not exactly constitute an integration of the different levels (though on Hagar's last trip back to Manawaka, she realizes that to the new generation there, there was no difference any more between the Curries and the Shipleys (7) — they were both just two old pioneering families) ; rather, it attempts to articulate the process through time which has allowed the *recognition* that each of these different cultural strains has been part of the shaping of the whole society. George Woodcock has called Margaret Laurence the "Tolstoy" (8) of Canadian literature ; to the degree the term applies, it clearly does so not by elevating Laurence's skill at political analysis, but in this sense of appreciating how there emerges from the body of Laurence's fiction a kind of core of understanding about the shaping elements within a culture. Laurence's world is Western Canada, with its roots in Ontario more than in England or Scotland, despite the Eurocentric stories the pionner characters tell. One periphery is Vancouver, or more accurately "the Coast", which represents all that is possible in the future (except that as Stacey MacAindra finds out, moving there, in actuality it often just reiterates the past) ; the other is Scotland, which Morag goes back to, only to discover how much it has become an alien land ; in between are the myths of place and time, the changing hierarchies of personal connection, the processes of rooting ancestors in a new land.

This is a process in which the Currie clan plaid pin serves a symbolic role. In *The Stone Angel,* the earliest work in the Manawaka cycle, the pin goes missing : Currie gives it to his daughter, who gives it to her favourite son John, who says first of all that he has lost it, hiding the truth, which he knows would be perceived as a more disreputable fate still, for in fact he has traded it to Lazarus Tonnerre for a jackknife. The knife and the pin do not surface again until the most recent Manawaka work, *The Diviners.* Through time the pin has passed to Jules Tonnerre, and the knife to Christie Logan, who gives it to Morag Gunn ; Morag returns the knife to the Tonnerre family ; Jules, dying of

throat cancer, uses it to choose his own death ; and finally both the pin and the knife are given to Morag's and Jules' daughter Pique, who unites several of the differing strains of Manawaka heritage. One admires the way such a symbolic act celebrates the cultural plurality of the new society—just as one admires the liberal idealism that closes Laurence's early African work, *This Side Jordan.* But they have something of the same literary weakness. However appropriate it might be to have Pique inherit both talismans, she is too sketchily realized *as a character* for her to sustain the symbolic weight she is asked to bear. At the conclusion to *This Side Jordan,* a white girl and a black boy are born, and the uncertain future is promised them both ; admittedly Pique is not promised anything beyond her own independence, but even that might be hard to sustain. What she only dimly yet realizes—and perhaps what Laurence is trying to use the clan pin and jackknife to say—is that inheritances can be as inhibiting as they are enlivening, that ancestral connections are meaningless unless they enrich the present and free it into the future. Merely to impose the past upon the present would be to deny the possibility of any change at all, to enact the role of Jason Currie in large, to prevent in effect the future from happening. What Laurence's major female characters all discover is that they must live to ensure possibility, not to deny it—with implications for the structure of the society in which they live.

Such implications, moreover, bear upon our judgment of the Manawaka cycle as a whole as well as upon the success or the artifice of individual characters : that is, they bear upon the structure of the cycle, or more generally still upon cyclic form. For given Laurence's insistence on the notion of change—despite the importance she attaches to the ancestral past and the clan mottoes of all kinds that echo through her pages—even the term "cycle" itself comes under some suspicion. Clara Thomas as a preface to *The Manawaka World* makes reference to the Yoruba snake symbol, an abstract figure eating its own tail, like one-and-a-half figure eights ; she goes on to quote from Gerald Moore's *The Chosen Tongue,* to the effect that the tropics inspire a different notion of recurrence from the so-called Temperate climes : there we are no longer dealing with a Seasonal Death/Interval/Seasonal Resurrection cycle, but with "a continuous, unbroken process of decay and renewal", life drawing sustenance from death, as in the Nigerian forest itself (9). While Laurence obviously absorbed much about African myth and African literature (and sensitively wrote of it in *Long Drums and Cannons*), she clearly did not wholly abandon European notions of mythic cycle (*Götterdämerung,* for example) ; her Manawaka works—narrative literary enactments of confrontations between moral tradition and rebellious individuality—make use of their familiar moral archetypes and a conscious body of imagery involving the four elements. At the same time, Laurence appears to reject the fixed European form, and to have spent much

of her creative energy in the Manawaka books struggling to find a form perhaps closer to the African, certainly one more appropriate to the process she is trying to articulate. To the degree that a "cycle" goes back upon itself and repeats itself, Laurence attempts to break away from the pattern, seeking something that will render recurrence as a progressive rather than a repetitive phenomenon instead. This has its own dangers, not the least of which is the implicit romanticizing of the character Pique, the youngest and most recent of the Manawaka women, who enjoys the most complex cultural heritage of all of them and for that reason alone is less likely to face easier choices than more difficult ones. But the way in which the idea of progress replaces the idea of a fixed order is itself an intrinsic part of the Manawaka world ; it constitutes the climate, at once materialist and Christian, in which the generational and social changes take place. To probe the form takes us at once into history and into language.

History, for Laurence, appears to be largely synonymous with *narrative* ; the progress of story and the advancement of time essentially coincide, so that when Hagar or Rachel or Vanessa or Morag tells her story, we hear of stages of growth from childhood to young adulthood to some kind of maturity (unlike a number of her contemporaries, Laurence has not paid much attention to adolescence). But to talk of "stages" is already to beg the generalization about "historical" narrative sequence. Clearly the stories which are told about Manawaka are made up of events which *happen* (hence the apparent authenticity of the chronological patterns), but the Manawaka *World* is something else, not simply an accumulation of events which the reader watches concurrently, but an active set of communal values which the mind retrieves from the past. Hagar and Morag and the others are characters *in the present,* carrying their Manawaka with them in their heads, experiencing the present and associationally gathering back the world that has helped to shape them. The stages or events they remember are thus both progressive and emblematic—an indication of the kinds of change that are taking place in the character and the community and an evocation of the particularities of personality and experience that lead to the present tension. For it is the *present tension* always upon which each novel chiefly focuses : Hagar facing her age and infirmity, not Hagar combatting Bram and Jason ; Morag writing her book and worrying about her daughter, not Morag embarrassed by Christie and outfacing the town. This means that what we are watching—or experiencing—in each novel is the process by which change occurs and through which each character achieves a new "stage" of development. The close of *The Stone Angel* overtly declares the process. Hagar has won her way through tension to a new stage of equilibrium, but because time never stops (*The Diviners* speaks of the "alchemy" of time), she still keeps changing. As she dies, her mind is racing on in the language that records history, the language

that records narrative sequence : "And then—" (10) ; and the incompleteness is itself part of the communication. While we cannot know what follows—whether it will turn out to be yet another "stage" or just nothingness—we accept by definition that change does not stop ; in fact the new stage may not be in Hagar's life at all, but in that of other characters, who will remember her and for whom she will become a talismanic figure of some sort, or perhaps in that of readers, who by participating in the act of memory might themselves take on as experience the mythic dimensions of the Manawaka world.

At the same time as we acknowledge the emblematic force of the stages in Hagar's life, however, we are acutely aware of the artifice that gives the effect of structuring her memory. While it is clear that she remembers associationally, spurred by a chance statement of Mr. Troy or a glimpse of a picture in Dr. Corby's office into reliving the past in the present, it is also obvious that her associations come sequentially, so that the ultimate effect is of a linear development, probably overly neat to be entirely credible. That is to say, it is too self-conscious ; the chronological pattern is intellectually and authorially imposed rather than an adequate means for realizing the psychological trauma Hagar must face by finally admitting her involvement in the death of John. Indeed, with *The Fire-Dwellers* Laurence attempted a form much closer to stream-of-consciousness, in an attempt to work out an associational form more freely ; *A Jest of God* uses irony to distance the central character's experience ; *A Bird in the House* deliberately fragments the separate "stages" or "events" or "experiences" into separate (separable) stories, which the reader, rather than the narrator, must put together ; and with *The Diviners* Laurence attempted something more complex still : to use a prose style supple enough to distinguish between the fixed "snapshot" of a remembered and uninterpreted event and the fluid or cinematic process of memory which constantly associates and interprets and judges. *The Stone Angel* has this formal connection with the Manawaka cycle, then, in that it provides an initial chart of the workings of memory—which, more than "Manawaka", of course, is the true subject of the book—yet we are aware with *The Stone Angel,* too, more than with any other Manawaka book, of the degree to which the author is involved in the structuring.

I am not saying it is Laurence's *memory* at work in the novel ; it is *Hagar's* memory (she is sufficiently realized as a character to insist upon that) and Laurence's imagination, no doubt itself fired by memory. Such a distinction perhaps does little more than specify the obvious : that Hagar is the narrator—but it is useful to keep in mind with a first-person narrative like this one an observation that Roy Pascal makes about the nature of autobiography : "Every historian knows how critically he must use autobiographies, not only because

of conscious polemical intention in the autobiographer, but also because of the unconscious polemics of memory"(11) . What Hagar remembers, and how she remembers it, carry an implicit as well as an explicit argument. This argument is couched in words, lodged in the social biases, borne along by the tone, and raised into myth. For all her irascibility, we sympathize with Hagar because she remembers things in a way that justifies her person if not always her actions, and despite her pride and her assertions of her own quality (traits which in the name of egalitarianism are frequently dismissed as pretensions), we celebrate her nature because Laurence structures the book so that we will recognize her kind of independence as a generating force in the "Manawaka" or Western Canadian cultural milieu.

When Pascal adds that we read autobiographies "not as factual truth but as a wrestling with truth" (12), he might almost have been commenting on Hagar's story.Something Hugh MacLennan has said, quoting André Malraux, seems another unusually apt observation in the context of this novel, one which further extends the implications of the title symbol by making us realize the extent of an author's involvement in a character's life and a character's lies : "Jacob's struggle with the angels is what, really, I think writing a novel is ... Writing the writer, rather than writing the book" (13). Just as the characters John and Marvin Shipley wrestle variously with their mother and the cemetery angel, and just as Hagar wrestles with her memories and her age and her failure either to make John into Jason or to release him to himself, so Laurence is wrestling in the Manawaka cycle with the problem of making words convey both the fact and the process of change—both recorded history, that is, and time. Language itself becomes both the medium of expression and the revelation of social change, and it seems inevitable that by the time of writing *The Diviners,* Laurence should choose a writer as her central character.

In *The Diviners,* when Morag Gunn is first learning to write professionally, her discerning newspaper editor calls her up short for ridiculing Manawaka people's smalltown speech and smalltown concerns :

> If you think your prose style is so much better than theirs, girl, remember one thing. Those people know things it will take you the better part of your lifetime to learn, if ever. They are not very verbal people, but if you ever in your life presume to look down on them because you have the knack of words and they do not, then you do so at your eternal risk and peril.

He adds, perhaps more pointedly still, "Do you understand what I am saying ?"(14) . She does, but only partly, for in metaphorical if not literal terms

she is still, as Lachlan says, a child : *"girl"*. Laurence thus establishes a contrast between Lachlan, the smalltown editor in touch with the living language, and Morag's professor-husband Brooke, who appreciates only a formal linguistic tradition, who mistakes condescension for affection, who calls her "little one" and treats her as a child rather than a wife, who is unable to accept sensuality and unable to admit to the shaping traumas of his own childhood. Morag must learn to grow beyond Brooke's notions of linguistic and psychosocial propriety, learn to accept Manawaka, and thereby become as faithfully and forcefully as she can a novelist of the people.

Hagar's challenge, of course, is not to become a novelist. But she is deeply in touch with language, and torn by language in two directions ; to propriety and to the vernacular, to her inheritance and to her environment, both of them alive with shaping power. Her inheritance expresses itself in the Old Testament cadences beloved of her Presbyterianism, in her allusions to Keats and Browning and the English literary tradition, in her grammatical accuracy, and in the clan mottoes and the Selkirk grace. Around her the language is different : colloquial and idiomatic, often ungrammatical, often making use of another cadence entirely—like Mrs. Steiner's Jewish English in Silverthreads or Mrs. Dobereiner's German in the hospital at the end. These elements signify the social change that Manawaka embodies, just as Hagar's speech signifies the social structure that Manawaka once was. The down-to-earth similes that also characterize Hagar's speech, however, mark her own involvement in history and her region, revealing her need to root herself locally and to identify reality by comparative rather than absolute means. She is attracted to the new world and at the same time repelled by it ; she wants a connection with Bram as well as one with her father, tries to shape John into the past and must learn to bless Marvin in the present. She must accomodate herself to the changing social idiom without sacrificing herself in the process, and as the world appears to diminish around her—from the past to the prairie to the Coast house to the cannery to the semi-private hospital room, paralleling her narrowing need to articulate her losses and her love—she paradoxically discovers that to admit to mistakes increases her emotional breadth. The capacity to love does not diminish the lover. And she recovers a connection with her family that was always hers to claim.

The family is more, naturally, than Marvin and his tired wife Doris and their amiable if ineffectual children ; and it is more than the line of Curries and Shipleys that precede and follow her. It is represented by Manawaka and by what Manawaka represents : a declaration of belief in the human community and a recognition that the human community is only understandable in its

living, local forms. Laurence can scarcely have known, when she began *The Stone Angel,* where it would lead. In retrospect we can see how the novel, after her representations of life abroad, opened up to her the shifting forces of her own culture. It allowed her to probe how myth turns into history and history into myth, how the past permeates the present, how the shedding of one tradition can mean the shaping of another. It allowed her, too, through an imagined act of memory, to record the remarkably sudden growth that began to turn a regional idiom into a locally-rooted literary language.

NOTES

1. *Ethel Wilson papers, Univ. of British Columbia Library, box 3, folder 11.*

2. **Margaret Laurence, First Lady of Manawaka,** *documentary film, National Film Board of Canada.*

3. *"The Sound of the Singing",* **A Bird in the House** *(1970 ; rpt. Toronto : McClelland & Stewart, 1974), p. 3.*

4. *(Toronto : McClelland & Stewart, 1975), pp. 173-87.*

5. **The Stone Angel** *(1964 ; rpt. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1968), p. 132.*

6. **Stone Angel,** *p. 114.*

7. **Stone Angel,** *p. 306.*

8. **The World of Canadian Writing** *(Vancouver : Douglas & McIntyre, 1980), p. 40.*

9. **Manawaka World,** *n. p.*

10. **Stone Angel,** *p. 308.*

11. **Design and Truth in Autobiography** *(Cambridge, Mass. : Harvard Univ. Press, 1960), p. 19.*

12. *Pascal, p. 75.*

13. *Quoted in Elspeth Cameron,* **Hugh MacLennan : A Writer's Life** *(Toronto : Univ. of Toronto Press, 1981), p. 371.*

14. **The Diviners** *(1974 ; rpt. Toronto : Bantam, 1975), p. 155.*

ANCESTRAL AND CONTEMPORARY COMMUNITIES IN THE STONE ANGEL

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> I saw that the problem for human beings,
> however much they differed from one another,
> was to acquire, not the ability but the *will*
> to understand eachother. It is as difficult to
> see something of oneself in all men as it is to
> accept oneself completely as one is.
>
> O. Mannoni, *Prospero and Caliban :*
> *The Psychology of Colonization*

Although the role of the Tonnerre family in *The Stone Angel* may at first seem rather peripheral, this first novel in the Manawaka cycle introduces images, attitudes and values associated with the Mêtis family which are central to Margaret Laurence's vision. Hagar Shipley is the only figure of her generation to be developed as a protagonist in Laurence's fiction, but she shares with contemporaries such as Grandfather Connor and Grandmother McLeod in *A Bird in the House* a relationship to landscape and to other individuals that places her in sharp opposition to the values associated with the Tonnerres. When Laurence's exploration of what Clara Thomas identifies as "the Manawaka world" ends with *The Diviners,* the tragic inability of Hagar and others of her generation to accomodate the positive values associated with the Tonnerres is balanced by the tentative affirmation embodied in the eventual re-uniting of two of *The Stone Angel's* central symbols, the Tonnerre knife and the Currie tartan pin.

In the novel's opening paragraphs, Hagar succinctly defines the values of the society established in Manawaka by her father's generation. Unlike the French hunters and traders whose marriages with Indian natives of this landscape imaged the harmonious reconciliation of differing racial and cultural traditions, the Scottish predecessors and contemporaries of Jason Currie brought to the Manawaka landscape imposed principles of Calvinistic order, control and propriety. As the greatest threat to those principles, death is ordered in the neatly patterned cemetery created by these "fledgling pharaohs in an uncouth land" (1), but the surrounding landscape provides constant reminders of the illusory nature of such attempts to order time and mortality :

> Sometimes through the hot rush of disrespectful wind that shook the scrub oak and the coarse couchgrass encroaching upon the dutifully cared-for habitations of the dead, the scent of the cowslips would rise momentarily. They were tough-rooted, these wild and gaudy flowers, and although they were held back at the cemetery's edge, torn out by loving relatives determined to keep the plots clear and clearly civilized, for a second or two a person walking there could catch the faint, musky, dust-tinged smell of things that grew untended and had grown always, before the portly peonies and the angels with rigid wings, when the prairie bluffs were walked through only by Cree with enigmatic faces and greasy hair (p. 5).

Although Hagar clearly identifies the opposition between "civilized" and "natural" worlds in this passage, she ultimately retreats into a romantic vision of the Indians of an era pre-dating the arrival of the white man.

Just as Hagar locates the Cree in a manageably remote past, she recalls a similarly romantic vision of the Highland Scots which she inherits from her father :

> It seemed to me, from his tales, the Highlanders must be the most fortunate of all men on earth, spending their days in flailing about them with claymores, and their nights in eightsome reels. They lived in castles, too, every man jack of them and all were gentlemen (p. 15).

She mourns the immigration of the heroic Highlander to a landscape dominated by gophers and couchgrass where castles were replaced by "no more than half a dozen brick houses... the rest being shacks and shanties, shaky frame and tarpaper" (p. 15). Commenting on such visions, Margaret Laurence suggests that :

> the Highlander of today is in somewhat the same position as the North American Indian. What he really was, in the past, is not comprehended by anyone outside his own tribe, but he has been taken up and glamourized and is expected to act a part... The tourist trade wants everything to be settled and nice. Nothing must ever make reference to reality, to real sores, to now (2).

To an extent realized "forcefully" and "shatteringly" only at the end of her life, Hagar has remained a tourist in her own world. She has been reluctant to acknowledge the inhabitants of the shacks and the shanties and unable to see that the disordered vision of time and death presented to her by the chicks in the

garbage dump must be confronted directly. Instead she escapes into dreams and illusions which are her father's crippling legacy to her. If, as several commentators have noted, Jason Currie plays the role of an imperialistic Prospero in the context defined by O. Mannoni, Hagar is a defiant but blind Miranda in her apprehension of the "brave new world" around her.

Jason Currie responds to the natural world identified with the Indian and Métis by creating a home perceived by Hagar as a "square brick palace so oddly antimacassared in the wilderness" (p. 43) and a store which, along with his four farms, makes up a two hundred thousand dollar estate. His assumption that human relationships can be managed on similar principles of materialistic domination controls not only his attempt to "possess" Lottie Drieser's mother but also his responses to his own children. Thus, Hagar's excursion to finishing school is "worth every penny for the two years" (p. 43), and he assumes that she will be "a credit" to him. Conversely, when Matt asks for a rifle and "leave to go with Jules Tonnerre to set winter traplines up at Galloping Mountain" (p. 19), Jason refuses, "saying Matt would likely blow a foot off and a pretty penny it would set him back to have an artificial one made, and anyway he wasn't having any son of his gallivanting around the country with a half-breed" (pp. 19-20). After Matt spends his childhood savings on a fighting cock doomed to defeat when matched with one of Jules Tonnerre's, Dolly Stonehouse's comment on the bird also serves as a commentary on Matt's response to his father's oppressive power : "Too tough to be eaten, but not tough enough to fight" (p. 21).

In contrast to her brothers whom she perceives as "graceful unspirited boys" (p. 7), Hagar is tough enough to resist her father. Having been sent to Toronto as a "dark-maned colt off to the training ring" (p. 42), she returns with the acquired skills honoured by the ladies' academy. Yet rather than assuming the role envisaged by Jason Currie as the doyenne of Manawaka social life, Hagar rebels by marrying a man who has "been seen with half-breed girls" and who is "crazy about horses" (p. 83). If this defiance at first suggests the possibility of Hagar's entry into a world of greater spontaneity and freedom, such a possibility is quickly denied by the realization that she marries Bram in blind innocence.

Jason's dream of Hagar playing princess to his pharaoh has found support in her own self-image and she is unprepared for the radical adaptation of that image to the Shipley world. As a young girl she responded as a "dainty-nosed czarina" (p. 27) to the town dump, and after her return from Toronto she romanticizes the realities of life in Manawaka using similar images :

> seeing the plainboard town and the shack dwellings beyond our pale as though they'd been the beckoning illustrations in the book of Slavic fairy tales given me by an aunt, the enchanted houses with eyes, walking on their own splayed hen's feet, the czar's sons playing at peasants in coarse embroidered tunics, bloused and belted, the ashen girls drowning attractively in mires, crowned always with lilies, never with pig-weed or slime (p. 46).

Recalling that period of her life, Hagar asks : "I wonder who I imagined would do the work ? I thought of Polacks and Galicians from the mountain, half-breeds from the river valley of the Wachakwa, or the daughters and spinster aunts of the poor" (p. 51). Isolated by the attitudes inherited from her father, Hagar can never acknowledge a human community in which she participates fully with Galicians, half-breeds and the poor, even as she becomes increasingly estranged from the Currie world of Manawaka.

Hagar's initial impression of Bram as "a bearded Indian, so brown and beaked a face" (p. 45), introduces an identification of white lovers with the Indian which pervades Laurence's Manawaka fiction. In *A Jest of God,* Nick Kazlik with his "prominent cheekbones, slightly slanted eyes, his black straight hair" (3) is the son of a man with "a wide hard bony face, high-cheekboned as a Cree's" (4). *The Fire-Dwellers* specifies the Indian sweater worn by Luke Venturi in each description of him, and Stacey notes that Buckle Fennick "has a face like an Iroquois, angular, and faintly slanted dark eyes. His hair is night-black and straight" (5). The culmination of this identification occurs, of course, in *The Diviners* when Morag's union with Jules draws together the two communities so insistently polarized by Hagar.

Frustrated by Bram's disdain for the social conventions of Manawaka, Hagar cannot understand his concern for appearances when he is with the threshing gang :

> They'd be half-breeds from the mountain, mostly, or drifters, and why he should have cared what they thought of him, I can't imagine, but he did... I'd pass the plates to them, serve them all before I ate myself, watch them wolf down fried potatoes and apple pie for breakfast, never letting on how I felt about it, Hagar Currie serving a bunch of breeds and ne'er-do-wells and Galicians (pp. 113-14).

For Hagar *Currie,* the possibility of Bram discovering a more genuine human community in the threshing gang and in the companionship of Charlie Bean, "the half-breed hired man who worked at Doherty's Livery Stable" (p. 100) is inconceivable.

Charlie's association as a "half-breed" with the horses of the livery stable links the earlier association of Hagar and Bram to horses within a symbolic pattern that finds fullest development in *The Diviners.* There Morag reflects on Jules' stories of his mythical ancestor, Rider Tonnerre, and the mysterious appearance of his horse, Roi du Lac. Through Jules' tales, she recalls the era when the Métis were indeed "prairie horselords" (p. 409) but extends the reference to time present when Jules describes the death of a townsman at the Battle of Dieppe :

> "That's how he was. Like a shot gopher. His guts. Not his eyes, though".
> "How —"
> "Like a horse's eyes in a barn fire", Jules says flatly. Always the horses. For the prairie men, always the horses. The comparison. The god, living, dying (6).

Pondering the values associated with the horse as a "mythical beast", Morag suggests : "Many would say potency, male ego, but it seemed that a kind of freedom might be a better guess" (7). In *The Stone Angel,* these associations are developed not in direct relation to Charlie or the Tonnerres but rather as a focus for Hagar's relation with Bram, her own "prairie man".

Hagar's reproduction of Rosa Bonheur's *The Horse Fair* suggests her attraction to the energy and power association with horses, but as she acknowledges at the end of her life, fear and pride prevent her from ever fully entering that world. Recalling Bram's attack on her preference for "bloody paper horses", she acknowledges the accuracy of his assessment :

> I have to laugh now, although I was livid then. He was quite right that I never cared for horses. I was frightened of them, so high and heavy they seemed, so muscular, so much their own masters - I never felt I could handle them. I didn't let Bram see I was afraid, preferring to let him think I merely objected to them because they were smelly (p. 83).

Just as Jason Currie can only respond in fear to the recognition that "men have terrible thoughts" (p. 44), Hagar can never acknowledge to Bram the real sources of her inability to join with him fully in their marriage. Instead, she acknowledges too late the extent to which she has acted on the same principles that directed her father's life. Recalling his litany of Presbyterian aphorisms, she says : "I tried to shut my ears to it, and thought I had, yet years later, when I was rearing my two boys, I found myself saying the same words to them" (p. 13).

This acknowledgement anticipates the crucial scene in which Hagar discovers John playing on the trestle bridge with the Tonnerres :

> They were French half-breeds, the sons of Jules, who'd once been Matt's friend, and I wouldn't have trusted any of them as far as I could spit. They lived all in a swarm in a shack somewhere - John always said their house was passably clean, but I gravely doubted it (p. 137).

As with horses, Hagar's ostensible concern for cleanliness scarcely masks her fear of these unknown elements existing outside her own limited world, these "tall boys with strange accents and hard laughter" (p. 127).

Although, on this occasion, Hagar successfully isolates John from the threatening challenge of the Tonnerres, only later does she learn that he subsequently joined them in more dangerous games, rejecting the personal and social values that she has tried to instill in him. Most painfully, she discovers that John traded the plaid pin bearing her family's crest for Lazarus Tonnerre's knife. Imbued with dynastic dreams inherited from her father, Hagar has seen in John the Currie son dreamt of by her father ; she remarks wistfully : "Jason Currie never saw my second son or knew at all that the sort of boy he'd wanted had waited a generation to appear" (p. 64). What Hagar is unable to see is that she is acting on the principles that she rejected in her father when she collaborates with Lottie to prevent the marriage of John and Arlene. John's death on the bridge, after a dare from Lazarus Tonnerre, painfully confirms the failure of Hagar's attempts to order a contingent world. Not until her unintended confession to Murray Lees does she fully acknowledge the impact of John's death. Yet she remains defiant, even as she will in the final lines of the novel :

> "It was senseless", I slowly say. "That was the thing. Pointless. Done for a bet".
>
> "These things happen", the man says.
>
> "I know it. I don't need anyone to tell me that. But I don't accept it."
>
> I can feel him shrugging, in the darkness. "What else can you do ?".
>
> I'm trembling now, and can scarcely speak for the choler that fills my throat. "It angers me, and will until I die. Not at anyone, just that it happened that way" (p. 245).

When, in *The Diviners,* Morag Gunn receives the Currie pin traded by John, she acknowledges it as a link to an ancestral past :

> Clan Gunn, according to this book, as she recalls from years back, did not have a crest or a coat-of-arms. But adoption, as who should know better than Morag is possible.
>
> *My Hope is Constant In Thee.* It sounds like a voice from the past. Whose voice though ? Does it matter ? It does not matter. What matters is that the voice is there, and that she has heard these words which have been given to her. And will not deny what has been given. *Gainsay who dare* (8).

Two generations removed from Hagar, Morag understands the words of the war cry in a sense never suspected by her spiritual ancestor. Morag not only finds a symbol that will always link her to a personal past in Manawaka which she has denied to her peril, but also sees the necessity of acknowledging her place in a larger world composed of nature and all humanity. To deny this larger world of both timeless cycles and ineffable mystery is to deny her own humanity.

Clinging to a world of genealogical order, Hagar's development is more limited. Her failure to acknowledge a human community that includes the Tonnerres - along with the Galicians and other outcasts of Manawaka, finds a parallel in Mr. Oatley's tales of illegally transporting women from the Orient :

> He'd been in shipping and said they used to bring Oriental wives here, when the celestials were forbidden to bring their women, and charge huge sums for passage, and pack the females like tinned shrimp in the lower hold, and if the Immigration men scented the hoax, the false bottom was levered open, and the women plummeted. They knew the chance they took when they began, he assured me. The husbands were always angry, both women and passage money lost, but who could help it ? And Mr. Oatley would shrug and smile, begging my laughter and my approbation. And I'd oblige, for who could help it ? Whatever he left me in his will, I earned it, I'll tell the world (p. 156).

Hagar's grim bitterness in the concluding lines of this passage confirms her recognition that the inhumanity that becomes the source of anecdotes for Mr. Oatley involves a profound spiritual failure. When she enumerates her "truly free" acts on the penultimate page of the novel, her charity in attempting

to obtain a bedpan for Sandra Wong assumes important proportions, in part, because in a simple human gesture she crosses racial lines which separated her from the "slit-eyed" Tonnerres.

When she meets Mrs. Steiner at Silverthreads, Hagar analyzes her own powers of observation and judgement :

> I've always been definite about people. Right from the start, I either like a person or I don't. The only people I've ever been uncertain about were those closest to me. Maybe one looks at them too much. Strangers are easier to assess (p. 102).

Yet as the novel traces her failures in personal judgment, it also reveals the limits of her judgement of "strangers" and the social isolation of her life. Recalling her creation of Hagar, Margaret Laurence notes that "she incorporates many of the qualities of my grandparents' generation. Her speech is their speech, and her gods their gods" (9). Hagar's rejection of the Tonnerres is never so dramatic as Grandmother McLeod's refusal to join her family on their summer holiday because a "half-breed youngster" (10), the daughter of Lazarus Tonnerre is to accompany them. Yet Hagar obeys the same gods of Presbyterian propriety dictating social isolation. The Tonnerres remain outsiders to her and to others of her generation, and not until Laurence introduces Morag and Pique in *The Diviners* does her fiction suggest significant movement beyond this isolation.

If Laurence insists on the necessary acknowledgement of the Tonnerres and the values associated with them, she withdraws from easy sentimental primitivism. Both *The Fire-Dwellers* and *The Diviners* explicitly delineate the horrors of material poverty and spiritual escape into alcoholism characterizing the lives of the Tonnerres. Similarly, in *The Stone Angel,* Bram does not simply emerge as a natural ideal rejected by Hagar. Selling lemon extract to the Indians in order to buy more satisfying alcoholic substitutes for himself and Charlie Bean, Bram becomes an increasingly pathetic and helpless figure as he waits for his death. Rather than presenting primitivistic alternatives, Laurence suggests that the mediation needed to reconcile conflicting systems of values is as complex as the characters involved in the process.

Such mediation must stem, however, from a recognition of a common humanity in which "the ancestors in the end, become everyone's ancestors" (11). This bond is suggested in physical terms by the black glossy hair shared by Hagar, her father, Bram, John, the Tonnerre boys and Sandra Wong. Yet the physical link is finally of as little consequence in the novel as the

unmentioned land bridge across Bering Strait that made possible the common ancestry of Sandra and the Tonnerres. As Laurence notes, "the history that one can feel personally encompasses only a few generations",(12), but dominating her fiction from the earliest African writing to the essays of *Heart of a Stranger* is an insistence on the need for acknowledgement of a common human community in an unequally shared world : "Will we ever reach a point when it is no longer necessary to say Them and Us ? I believe we must reach that point, or perish" (13).

NOTES

1. *Margaret Laurence,* **The Stone Angel,** *New Canadian Library (Toronto, 1968), p. 3. Further citations from the novel have been taken from this edition ; page numbers have been enclosed in parantheses and inserted in the text.*

2. *Laurence,* **Heart of a Stranger,** *Seal Books (Toronto, 1980), p. 169.*

3. *Laurence,* **A Jest of God,** *New Canadian Library (Toronto, 1974), pp. 85-6.*

4. *Laurence,* **A Jest of God,** *p. 187.*

5. *Laurence,* **The Fire-Dwellers,** *New Canadian Library (Toronto, 1973), p. 49.*

6. *Laurence,* **The Diviners,** *New Canadian Library (Toronto, 1978), p. 165.*

7. *Laurence,* **The Diviners,** *p. 409.*

8. *Laurence,* **The Diviners,** *p. 432-3.*

9. *Laurence,* **Heart of a Stranger,** *p. 4.*

10. *Laurence,* **A Bird in the House,** *New Canadian Library (Toronto, 1974), p. 116.*

11. *Laurence,* **Heart of a Stranger,** *p. 172.*

12. *Laurence,* **Heart of a Stranger,** *p. 172.*

13. *Laurence,* **Heart of a Stranger,** *p. 235.*

PILGRIMS' PROGRESS: MARGARET LAURENCE AND HAGAR SHIPLEY

by Clara THOMAS
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Who would true valor see,
Let him come hither.
All here will constant be
Come wind, come weather.
There's no discouragement
Shall make him once repent
His first avowed intent,
To be a pilgrim.
No foes shall stay his might,
Though he with giants fight ;
He will make good his right
To be a pilgrim.

"Hymn", from Joyce Cary's *To Be a Pilgrim*

Hagar Shipley is sustained by her pride and she is made monstrous by her pride. She is ninety years old when we first hear her voice, and she bitterly describes herself as grossly fat, ugly and clumsy, a "perambulating pup-tent". Her body has grown as grotesque as her unforgiving spirit ; she is by turns agonizingly constipated and suddenly incontinent, snarling and sarcastic or weak and weeping. Her son and daughter-in-law, Marvin and Doris, themselves in their sixties, have to bear with her hour by hour and day by day, with her stubborn, intractable temper and her massive, unmanageable body. She is humiliated hourly and daily by being so vulnerable, and yet she is implacably unyielding, to them in their unhappy, honest efforts on her behalf and to herself in her age and weakness and in her life's failures. Yet in the unbending pride of her spirit there is also enormous strength : she journeys through memory to recall her life, face its failures and admit her betrayals ; and she makes one last, brief and desperate bid for escape from the chains of age and illness. She comes to her final hospital bed, but she also comes to her moment of truth and liberation, the recognition of the force that warped her own life and her love for others : "Pride was my wilderness, and the demon that led me there was fear. I was alone, never anything else, and never free, for I carried my chains within me, and they spread out and shackled all I touched". (*The Stone Angel*, p. 292).

Hagar's pride is a factor of her background, both ancestral and historical : Jason Currie, her father, was a relentlessly proud and "God-fearing" man, and

the battle-cry of the Currie clan, which Hagar took as her own, was "Gainsay Who Dare" ; the social fabric of Manawaka, the little western Canadian town built by Jason Currie and other Scottish immigrants like him, was made secure by the pride of its builders, but it was also potentially a prison for its people who were ruthlessly restricted by its "brake of proper appearances". Hagar is herself a "stone angel" ; she is also a "holy terror" in the full, literal meaning of those words, and hearing Marvin call her that is her gift of grace at the end of her long life of conflict : "Listening I feel like it is more than I could now reasonably have expected out of life, for he has spoken with such anger and such tenderness" (*The Stone Angel,* p. 305).

In the history of American fiction the publication in 1850 of *The Scarlet Letter* has a landmark place : *The Stone Angel,* published in 1964, holds a comparable place in the lineage of Canadian fiction. Both are not only impeccably crafted works of literary art, but they are also studies of the enclosed "garrison culture" of North American settlements and of the religion that supported and often distorted the spirit of their people. In both, the religion in question is a form of Calvinism — the Puritanism of Arthur Dimmesdale and Salem, the Presbyterianism of Jason Currie and Manawaka. And the overwhelming question at the heart of both these works is one of many-prismed conflict , between the individual's needs and demands and society's, between God's law and man's understanding and interpretation of that law, between the rule of the community and the rule of the heart, between pride and love.

Margaret Laurence is a Canadian novelist and she often calls herself a prairie novelist, but the stress must be placed on the noun in those phrases, and not on the adjective. She is a *novelist,* writing out of her Canadian background and experience — but her first novel, *This Side Jordan* and her *Tomorrow-Tamer* stories, as well as the autobiographical-travel work, *The Prophet's Camel Bell,* were written out of seven years' African experience. I do not believe that there are direct influences from Canadian authors to her work at all, though, back in Vancouver after her African years and already perceiving that the themes she had abstracted from those experiences were the major themes of her own people as well, she read Sinclair Ross' *As For Me and My House* and realized with joy that first-class fiction could be written out of their common prairie background ; she also read and admired the work of Ethel Wilson and was deeply grateful for Mrs. Wilson's friendship and encouragement ; but the passion for a sustaining faith and wholeness that infuses and unifies all her works is Margaret Laurence's alone among our novelists. On the deepest, dynamic level she is a religious novelist and all of her works are facets of one whole, a pilgrim's progress towards the complementary and intertwining knowledge of self and knowledge of God.

As she describes it, she wrote *This Side Jordan* in episodes as they came to her and then struggled with the problem of assembling the parts into a coherent whole. To date, it is the only one of her novels written in the third person and, in retrospect, the parallel structure containing the stories of Miranda and Johnny Kestoe and Aya and Nathaniel Amegbe has always seemed too rigid to her. Certainly the ease and seeming inevitability of *The Stone Angel's* telling is a remarkable advance over the earlier work. As Margaret Laurence recollects it, Hagar's voice simply came to her without experimental effort, as a gift. Hagar herself had been developing in her mind and imagination for a period of years ; she was always connected for Laurence with the troublesome bondswoman of Abraham and not with the Hagar of Galatians whom William New mentioned in his introduction to the New Canadian Library edition. It is certainly possible that her genesis is connected with the Laurences' experience of the desert people of Somaliland and their nomadic lives, unchanged since Biblical times. The only possible parallel to Hagar's harsh, unyielding spirit in her author's experience, however, was her grandfather Simpson, who was later to be both celebrated and exorcised as Grandfather Connor in *A Bird in the House.* But to Margaret Laurence's conscious knowledge and in her memory there was and is no one model.

When the appointed time came Hagar spoke, in her own voice. At that point Laurence, the creator, became Laurence, the recorder. I once asked her, for instance, if the introductory pages which establish so immediately and unforgettably Hagar's tone, her bitterness, her far-ranging imagination and her energy, required much revision and re-writing. I was especially curious about the line, "Now I am rampant with memory", which establishes such a magnificent bridge between the voice of the old Hagar and the beginning of her journey through her past. The answer was, "None. It all came just like that, as it is now on the page".

There was one novelist at this time, however, whose themes were totally congenial to Margaret Laurence and whose techniques certainly demonstrated to her the possibilities inherent in first person narrative. Back in Vancouver from Africa she had discovered the novels of Joyce Cary. When in 1969, I first asked her about other novelists' influence on her work, his was the only name she gave me ; she has recently confirmed this once again. Cary had spent years of his life as a British Colonial administrator in Nigeria, and his *The African Witch,* the first of his novels she read, had an obvious appeal in shared experience. But it was his first trilogy, *Herself Surprised, To Be a Pilgrim,* and *The Horse's Mouth,* whose themes confirmed her own deepest concerns and whose dazzling variations on the first person narrative voice must have expanded her sense of her own options in narrative techniques.

Cary too was a religious novelist and the over-arching themes of all his works are freedom, faith and the revelations of life's meaning and purpose that come as gifts of grace. Writing an introduction to a new edition of his first trilogy in 1957, shortly before his death, he described his purpose thus :

> What I set out to do was to show these people, living each in his own world by his own ideas, and relating his life and struggles, his triumphs and miseries in that world ... Their situation, in short, was to be that of everyone who is doomed or blessed to be a free soul in the free world and solve his problems as he goes through it...

Each of us is obliged to construct his own idea, his own map of things by which he is going to find his way, as far as he can, through life. He must decide what he wants and how he shall achieve himself (1).

Faith, to Cary, is an absolutely necessary concomitant to living : "A man without faith in some value beyond his own advantage sooner or later finds life meaningless and impossible... It is just because faith is vital to the happiness of every single human being that religious conflict is so bitter and perplexed. Men dare not lose their faith, however fantastic" (2).

Margaret Laurence has written and spoken of freedom as a major theme in her work, notably in the article "Ten Years' Sentences" (3), but she has publicly explored the foundations of her writing much less than Cary did and she has shown the workings of faith and grace in her characters' live rather than writing theoretically about these things. She certainly concurs with Cary, however, in the centrality she places on them and his discourse on the meaning of conversion, written in his introduction to *The African Witch* and adopted from William James' *Varieties of Religious Experience,* would find her in complete agreement. Barbara Fisher, Cary's recent critic, has explored the links between James and Cary :

> Of Tolstoy's conversion James says : "Tolstoy does well to talk of it as *That which men live* ; for that is exactly what it is, a stimulus, an excitement, a faith that re-infuses the positive willingness to live... To be converted, to be regenerated, to receive grace, to experience religion, to gain an assurance, are so many phrases which denote the process, gradual or sudden, by which a self hitherto divided, and consciously wrong inferior and unhappy, becomes unified and consciously right superior and happy, in consequence of its firmer hold upon religious realities (4).

This also describes, of course, the experience that Hagar undergoes and its effect upon her.

In Cary's first trilogy Sara Monday, Mr. Wilcher and Gulley Jimson tell their own stories of lives that touch, intercept, mingle and then flow alone again in voices that are unique to their tellers. Like Hagar, all three are imprisoned by their circumstances and by their own faulty understanding of themselves. As she writes her story, Sara, the cook, is literally in prison for theft from Mr. Wilcher ; Wilcher begins his at Tolbrook, his old home, where, old and ill, he has been brought to die ; and Gulley, the irrepressible rogue-artist, is just out of prison when he begins his story, but age and illness are overtaking him too, the world he lives in is no nearer to accepting him as the artist he knows himself to be than it ever was, and he is, as always, both stubbornly and self-destructively at odds with that world and enjoying every moment of the struggle. Though there are scenes and situations in all of the three novels that suggest themselves as parallels to Hagar's experience, particularly Gulley's final days in a hospital bed and Wilcher's moving recollection of his sister Lucy's singing to hymn of the hymn, "To Be a Pilgrim", it is to Sara Monday's voice and story that one first turns for links to Hagar Shipley.

Sara is writing out her life story after being tried, convicted and imprisoned as a thief. Far from being rampant with memory, impelled as Hagar is into her autobiographical, confessional and finally liberating journey through time, she has been nudged by the prison chaplain to "Know Thyself", and, as she reveals only on the final page, she has also been offered £100 by a newspaper for an account of her experiences. Her purpose is partly therapeutic, partly confessional and partly shrewdly practical and expedient. Neither is the form of Sara's reminiscences similar to the highly dramatic, tension-and suspense-filled juxtaposition of past and present that Hagar's voice records. In contrast, Sara engages in a low-keyed retrospective narrative ; once having set her scene and situation, she moves into the past and remains there until her story is finished.

Her tone has nothing of the truculent bitterness nor lacerating scorn of Hagar's ; rather Sara's is relatively uncomplaining and only gently self-justifying. She is somewhat bemused by what has happened to her. She has always been used to shifting the responsibility for her actions to circumstances or to other people ; she has always taken the easy way out, except in the astonishing tenacity of her relationship with the physically abusive Gulley Jimson. She is rather amazed than bitter to find that a person of such good will and good heart as she believes herself to be could have come to such a pass. But in the process

of writing her story she is "herself surprised", impelled to admit responsibility for her choices and, more important, to record and recognize the abiding strands of love that have made her life of such value to her as she lived it and of the grace that makes it still dynamic, precious and to be savoured with hope, though all her fortunes seem to lie in ruins around her.

Like Hagar, Sara is a survivor. Resilience is common to both of them, but whereas adaptation is Sara's natural mode of being, combat is Hagar's. Both women have strongly sensual natures ; Sara has drifted in and out of her various vicissitudes motivated by love of living in all its manifestations – sexual love, love of colour, of clothes, food, sensations. She has never differentiated between grades of pleasure, her experience of a new hat or a new lover, of bathing in the river, eating a good meal or caring for a sick child. Hagar has retained her love of possessions and sensations into her nineties, of the look and the feel of them, the texture and colour of a silk dress, the taste of roast beef gravy or the smell of lilacs, but her feelings she has repressed since childhood. She could not, or would not, comfort her brother Matt as he lay dying ; she defied her father rather than humbling herself, in spirit when he punished her as a child and in action when she married Bram Shipley. She would never admit or show her sexual pleasure to Bram, much less voice her love and concern for him. The culmination of her tragedy of perversity was the curdling of her love for her son, John, into a meanly possessive pride that connived to deny him Arlene, the girl he loved, and so played its destructive part in their senseless deaths.

Sara's story, like Wilcher's and Jimson's, moves in light compared to the blackness that encircles Hagar – indeed, Cary considered calling his trilogy *The Comedy of Freedom* (5). The difference is one of both nature and nurture, the difference between their temperaments and characters, exacerbated by the gulf between the social worlds they inhabit and the moral universes that these worlds show forth. A powerful, though largely secularized, Calvinism dominates and has poisoned Hagar's perceptions of the world around her ; though in the stories of Cary's characters a strong social criticism is implied, in Hagar's voice that criticism becomes a powerful indictment. Hugh MacLennan, who, like Laurence, carries the Calvinistic heritage into all his work, and who at one time designated John Calvin as "one of the most evil men, if not the most evil man in history", expressed the difference between theologies this way :

> My mortal quarrel with Calvinism was not that it denied realities, but that it inculcated into children the idea that God was each man's personal enemy, and that a man committed a sin merely by existing. Theoretically, the Anglicans also believe this, and so do the Catholics, but the Catholics presume to be able to forgive this sin, and the Anglicans (once they had rid

themselves of the puritans) treated God much as they treated parliament. While parliament possesses the right to boil an Englishman in oil at its pleasure, the individual Englishman seems able to live with confidence that it won't do so (6).

Calvinism, as understood by many of its practitioners, shifted the balance of the Christian gospel from a message of hope, love and redemption, to one of guilt, death and damnation, backwards from the Christ of the New Testament to the Old Testament God of wrath and retribution. It was also particularly compatible with the entrepreneurial spirit of capitalism (7).

When Hagar Shipley was a child in the 1880s, Manawaka was still close to its beginnings, with board sidewalks, oil lamps, a few successful businesses such as Jason Currie's store, institutions such as the well-tended cemetery, the ever-present undertaker and the churches, especially the Presbyterian church :

> I'd be about eight when the new Presbyterian church went up. Its opening service was the first time Father let me go to church with him instead of to Sunday School. It was plain and bare and smelled of paint and new wood, and they hadn't got the stained glass windows yet, but there were silver candlesticks at the front, each bearing a tiny plaque with Father's name, and he and several others had purchased family pews and furnished them with long cushions of brown and beige velour, so our few and favoured bottoms would not be bothered by hard oak and a lengthy service.

"On this great day", the Reverend Dougall MacCulloch said feelingly, "we have to give special thanks to those of our congregation whose generosity and Christian contributions have made our new church possible".

He called them off, the names, like an honour role. Luke McVitie, lawyer, Jason Currie, businessman, Freeman McKendrick, bank manager, Burns MacIntosh, farmer, Rab Fraser, farmer.

Father sat with modestly bowed head, but turned to me and whispered very low : "I and Luke McVitie must've given the most, as he called our names the first". (*The Stone Angel,* p. 15).

Pride in financial success, in "getting ahead" was inextricably linked to religion in Hagar Currie's Manawaka. The isolation of small groups of people in a vast land was one of the factors in the growth of a town's personality ; in English Canada the other factor was the drive to build a progressive, successful and Protestant community. Ideals of godliness and business enterprise were

closely meshed, especially so for those whose religion incorporated the old, passionately-argued Calvinistic doctrines of predestination and of the elect. Though those grim articles of faith were considerably less than ramrod strong in Canadian Presbyterians of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, there still existed a residual, crude but powerful belief that the elect of God, the saved, were shown forth by theirs works, and therefore, that the man who succeeded in the world's terms by his own labours had also succeeded in God's terms, his outward success the sign of his favoured status among the elect. Hence Jason Currie's unremitting drive for success, his pride in it and its link to his religion :

> He was a self-made man. He had started off without a bean, he was fond of telling Matt and Dan, and had pulled himself up by his bootstraps... *The devil finds work for idle hands.* He put his faith in homilies. They were his Pater Noster, his Apostles' Creed. He counted them off like beads on a rosary, or coins in the till. *God helps those who help themselves. Many hands make light work. (The Stone Angel,* pp. 7-8).

Not only Presbyterians came to town like Manawaka. Methodists, Baptists, Congregationalists and all the other sects who established their churches in the small towns of Canada carried with them religions that balanced far more towards fear than love. Furthermore, everything men and women found in pioneer experience would also confirm their belief that their God required hard service, not rejoicing, as the land demanded battle and did not repay love. The God who presided over their bleak lives must have seemed to the pioneers remarkably analogous to the Old Testament Jehovah, God of war and wrath and judgement. Certainly Hagar in her first words goes one step further still in her indictment, linking the founders of Manawaka with the pharaohs themselves, worshippers of power, wealth and death, and the enslavers of God's chosen people.

Before *The Stone Angel* there had been other novels in Canadian literature that charted the human cost of settling the Canadian west, most notably Grove's *Fruits of the Earth* and *Settlers of the Marsh.* No novel has had a comparable impact to *The Stone Angel,* however ; as Margaret Laurence has often said, in the United States readers identified Hagar as the archetypal North American old woman : In Canada they identified her as their grandmother. As she has also often said, she realized while writing the book that she was reclaiming, as if by a gift, the idiom of her grandparents. Hagar's voice and her language have stamped themselves on her readers with a total authenticity to their time and place.

The settlement of the American west had a pattern of violence, the hard-riding, gun-toting cowboy its symbol to this day ; in Canada the law, in the persons of the Northwest Mounted Police, precede the settlers – our one bloody landmark, the suppression of the Métis and Indians under Louis Riel at Batoche, was seen as the suppression of a rebellion against established law and order, not recognized as a desperate last stand by the west's native peoples to hold their land and their way of life. Among contemporary spokesmen for the process of settlement, what we now see as nineteenth-century imperialism was linked to God's will and the missionary enterprise of Protestant Christianity. George Monro Grant (1835-1902), Principal of Queen's University and Head of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, published *Ocean to Ocean* (1873), a classic narrative of western travel : "The land difficulty has been settled by faith being kept with the half-breeds ; a treaty has been made with the Indians that extinguishes their claim to the land... There is no Jewish law preserving to its family its inheritance forever. The French half-breeds do not like farming, and they therefore make but poor farmers ; and as enterprising settlers with a little capital come in, much of the land is sure to change hands" (8).

The Canadian Pacific Railway issued torrents of immigration literature in North America and Europe, painting the west as a new Eden, a "Land of Beginning Again". Writers wrote romances of settlement, especially the Reverend Charles Gordon (1860-1937), a Presbyterian minister. As "Ralph Connor", our first popular novelist, whose first three novels alone sold three million copies, he tirelessly pictured the settling of the west as an enormous adventure into a new Promised Land, its goal and outcome the foundation of a triumphantly Christian society – according to the ideals of white, anglo-saxon Protestantism. These motives and goals, their successes and their failure, are a part of Margaret Laurence's and her Canadian readers' inheritance, a frame of reference that gives depth and density to Hagar's words. Jason Currie and his like were proud, strong men, who performed feats of endurance taming the land in the service of their goals of personal success and social progress. Their pride sustained them, but it was a two-edged sword, its cost reckoned in terms of losses they did not recognize, failures in humanity whose effects were built into the generations after them.

Hagar has inherited their pride and lived by it. It has destroyed her relationships with others, but it also gives her the will to endure and to fight onward. One last time she flings down her challenge to life, "Gainsay Who Dare" ; beleaguered by time and mortality, she makes her pilgrimage and she wins through to self-acceptance and peace – and she is finally blessed by the knowledge of love. In the structure Margaret Laurence has built of all her novels,

according to her own intuition of life as a gift and a pilgrimage, Hagar is the central, tragic figure, finally, at the last moment, redeemed . Coming first in time among Laurence's heroines, she is the key-stone among them.

> But all great artists have a theme, an idea of life profoundly felt and founded in some personal and compelling experience. This theme then finds confirmation and development in new intuition. The development of the great writer is the development of his theme – the theme is part of him and has become the cast of his mind and character (Joyce Cary, *Art and Reality*) (9).

NOTES

1. *Joyce Cary,* **To Be A Pilgrim,** *in* **First Trilogy,** *New York, Harper Brothers, 1958, Introduction by Joyce Cary, p.ix.*

2. **Ibid.** *p. xv .*

3. *Margaret Laurence, "Ten Years' Sentences",* **Canadian Literature,** *41 (1969), p. 10-16.*

4. *Barbara Fisher,* **Joyce Cary : The Writer and His Theme,** *London, Colin Smythe, 1980, pp. 7-8.*

5. **Ibid.,** *Joyce Cary's letter to Mark Schorer, pp. 2-4.*

6. *Elspeth Cameron,* **Hugh MacLennan : A Writer's Life,** *Toronto, U. Of Toronto Press, 1981, pp. 228-9.*

7. *Clara Thomas, "Crusoe and The Precious Kingdom",* **Journal of Canadian Fiction,** *Vol. 1, nº 2, Spring 1972, pp. 58-64.*

8. *George Monro Grant,* **Ocean to Ocean,** *Edmonton, Hurtig, 1967, p. 78.*

9. *Joyce Cary,* **Art and Reality,** *Cambridge, 1958, p. 105. Given as the Clark Lectures at Cambridge, 1956.*

PRIDE AND THE PURITAN PASSION

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Margaret Laurence's popular novel, *The Stone Angel,* can almost stand as a paradigm of a theme common to much Canadian fiction. In it, the battle is waged between the forces of nature and those of culture (1), between the demands of the "here and now" and those of the "there and then". When Hagar Shipley laments the pride that has enslaved her (2), she is really lamenting the repression—both conscious and unconscious—that her Scots Presbyterian heritage has begotten and the power that it wields over the instinctual, natural, passionate side of her. The protestant or puritan ethos that holds sway over the capitalistic Curries of Manawaka prevails in other small towns (and even cities) in Canadian fiction : witness the novelistic worlds of Sinclair Ross's *As For Me and My House,* of Robertson Davies' *Fifth Business* (and indeed of the whole trilogy which this novel inaugurates), of Timothy Findley's *The Wars,* and so many others. Even more interesting, perhaps, is the fact that the same repression, combined with a blind obeisance to past values, also haunts the fiction of both Canadian Jewish (3) and Catholic writers. Whether we consider Leonard Cohen's *Beautiful Losers* or Roch Carrier's *La Guerre, Yes Sir !,* the same split between passion and guilty denial, between the present and the past, can be found. Even more radical Québécois fiction shares this tension or obsession—from Renaud's joual *tour de force, Le Cassé,* to Ducharme's linguistically anarchistic *Le Nez qui voque.*

One could argue, however, that some Canadian novelists are today trying to redress the subsequent imbalance that has led to an overemphasis of the negative or pessimistic pole and to the triumph of puritanism in Canada's fiction. Robert Krœtsch's celebration of the phallic and the fertile, along with Jack Hodgins' jubilant mythic metaphors for creation, stand in opposition to the fiction of the fatal psychic split that *The Stone Angel* illustrates so well. The conflict between instinctive passion and learned repression structures the plot of the novel, as well as providing the major impetus to character development.

This novel is the story of Hagar Shipley and the many men she betrays in the process of her betrayal, through pride, of half of her own nature. From Jason Currie, her Scots Presbyterian father, Hagar inherits a stubbornness and a concern for social appearances and values that are symbolized by the fine stone angel erected in the cemetery to mark the death of the woman who

gave Hagar life. A symbol of both a petrified cultural ideal and a stony death of emotion, this statue provides an overt structural motif, as well as a title, for the novel. In reaction against this familial norm of inhibition, Hagar marries the virile and blatantly, coarsely sexual Brampton Shipley, a man who loves horses, who loves the land but never makes a successful farmer, for to farm is to impose one's own will upon nature, a feat Bram feels no inclination to attempt. Their two sons, Marvin and John, are externalizations, in a sense, of the split within Hagar between the Currie past and the Shipley present. But by not resolving this conflict within herself, Hagar unwittingly destroys both her husband and her favourite son, the two symbolic incarnations of the passion she denies. The idea that she will ultimately come to accept responsibility for her destructive acts is perhaps foreshadowed in her early lament for her "lost men" (p. 6). But many trials—for Hagar as wife and mother both—must come to pass before this revelation and acceptance.

That these trials are necessary and inevitable is clear from the two Biblical intertexts of the story of Hagar. In Genesis we learn of Abraham's (4) passionate marriage to Hagar, and of Ishmael, their son. In Galatians 4 : 22-27, St. Paul's symbolic reading of this story stresses that Hagar was a bondmaid and that her son was born "after the flesh", not "by promise". This association of the theme of passion with that of bondage and of the outcast is inverted in Laurence's novel, for it is Hagar's rejection of passion—a rejection she sees as derived from pride—that denies her freedom and forces her self-imposed exile. Her son, John, is indeed the Ishmael figure here, the wandering outcast, born (and living) "after the flesh". In her wilful blindness, Hagar mistakenly sees John as a Currie, not a Shipley (pp. 123, 127). John, however, knows he is Bram's son in spirit as well as name (pp. 167, 174) and proves it by understanding and caring for his dying father when Hagar does not (pp. 172-73). The reader too sees the obvious similarity to the father in the fighting, swearing, dancing, drinking, womanizing son. John is not the Jacob who will wrestle with the (stone) angel for its blessing (p. 179) and found a dynasty. That role belongs to the maligned but Currie-like Marvin (p. 304).

The stone angel that Jason Currie erected stood for his desire to "proclaim his dynasty"—an appropriately ironic aim for the marker over his wife's grave. Hagar's father is seen as one of the "fledgling pharaohs in an uncouth land" (p. 3), and Hagar herself, after her schooling in the east, is likened to a "Pharaoh's daughter reluctantly returning to his roof" (p. 43). Like the prairie drought and the later wanderings of Hagar and Ishmael/John, this imagery in the novel overtly directs our attention to the Biblical intertext, that is, to the reversal of its passion/bondage relationship Laurence wishes to effect.

Unlike her "graceful unspirited" brothers, who took after their mother, Hagar inherits her father's looks and temperament. A self-made protestant capitalist (by Max Weber's model), Jason Currie prides himself on his industry, his good family background, and the traditions of his Highland heritage. Hagar in turn inherits his snobbery as she does his clichés or homilies (p. 13). Like him, she has no understanding of, or sympathy for, weakness or vulnerability. When her brother Dan is dying she refuses to pretend to be her dead mother to comfort him : "But all I could think of was that meek woman I'd never seen, the woman Dan was said to resemble so much and from whom he'd inherited a frailty I could not help but detest, however much a part of me wanted to sympathize" (p. 25). She admits being hard, "unable to bend enough" ; she weeps neither then nor when her husband and son die.

This denial of emotion is connected with Hagar's inability or unwillingness to express her true feelings in situations which might reveal on her part any vulnerable openness to pain or any acknowledgement of frailty. Even when in terror at her father's anger, she refuses to show her fear : "I'd as lief have died as let him know" (p. 44). Nor can she convey to Matt her apologies that it is she, not he, who will go off to school in the east, though she weeps in private (p. 42). As a wife, she cannot confess her passion for Bram, as we shall see, and as a mother, she dare not voice her concern for Marvin, even though he is going off to war (p. 129). Not surprisingly, on her deathbed Hagar fells "choked with it now, the incommunicable years, everything that happened and was spoken or not spoken" (p. 296).

The main thing left "not spoken" in *The Stone Angel* is Hagar's physical passion for her husband, Bram. With perverse irony, in the spirit of the Currie motto "Gainsay who dare", Hagar dares to defy her father and marry Bram without his consent, though her aim even in doing so is to transform Bram into a different man, one who will have "prospered, gentled, learned cravats and grammar" (p. 50). Like her father, she cannot consciously accept the strength or significance of sexuality. Once Hagar overheard her father being rejected in his propositioning of No-Name Lottie Drieser's mother (pp. 18-19). The look on his face that day is mirrored in his look when he accuses Hagar of letting Bram touch her before marriage (p. 48). Even earlier he had spoken against her working, with the argument : "You know nothing... Men have terrible thoughts" (p. 44). Hagar duly notes that he said "thoughts" not "deeds", for her father's sexuality after his wife's death appears to have been sublimated in his work and in his concern for his daughter. That he should react to Bram as a rival is most fitting, in psychological terms.

Hagar, of course, is attracted to Bram precisely because he is forbidden. A questionable lower class farmer, with earth-encrusted nails, looking like a bearded Indian (p. 45), the vital and virile Bram dares to dance with the very proper and respectable Hagar : "quite suddenly he pulled me to him and pressed his outheld groin against my thigh. Not by accident. There was no mistaking it. No one had ever dared in this way before. Outraged, I pushed at his shoulders, and he grinned. I, mortified beyond words, couldn't look at him except darting-ly . But when he asked me for another dance, I danced with him" (p. 47). Despite her total ignorance of the mechanics of sex (p. 52), Hagar's early and primary response to Bram is sexual, but she feels such shame—thanks to her upbringing—that she has to construct idealistic plans to make Bram over in order to mask her true and instinctual response. She admits later however : "His banner over me was only his own skin" (p. 81). But her feelings, both conscious and unconscious, towards sexuality are deeply ambivalent. Not only can she not admit her pleasure, but she also fears Bram's sexual vitality. This is revealed by her symbolic terror before Bram's beloved horses : "so high and heavy they seemed, so muscular, so much their own masters" (p. 83). While she acknowledges inwardly that her "blood and vitals" rise to meet his, she prides herself, as always, in never letting Bram know that she has "sucked (her) secret pleasure from his skin" (p. 100). Just as she can never reach out and open up to others emotionally, so she is passive sexually, lying "silent but waiting" in bed (p. 116). When she leaves Bram, however, she is haunted by sexual memories : "There were times when I'd have returned to him, just for that" (p. 160).

The irony of this paradox of secret pleasure and yet overt denial of the flesh is that the aged obese Hagar we meet at the start of the novel is literally wallowing in her own disintegrating flesh (5), the same flesh whose innocent pleasures she actually seeks to cultivate. Even as an old woman, Hagar loves food, just as she loves the feel and colour of real silk dresses in lilac or flowered patterns (pp. 29, 40) (6). Her childhood love of wild flowers persists, as does her antipathy towards funereal planted ones in cemeteries or in the gardens of old age homes. However, Hagar fails to connect her innate sensuality with her sexuality, either in the past or in the present.

Just as she had denied her own passion, she cannot bear to face the fact that her son John is a sexual being : "I didn't care to dwell on the thought of his manhood. I suppose it reminded me of things I'd sealed away in daytime, the unacknowledged nights I'd lie sleepless even now , until I'd finally accept the necessity of the sedative to blot away the image of Bram's heavy manhood" (pp. 159-60). The reversed Oedipal echoes here point again to Hagar's error in thinking John a Currie, not a Shipley. And, just as Hagar had ironically followed the Currie motto of "Gainsay who dare" in order to marry a Shipley, so John—and Arlene with him—tragically follow the motto and lose their lives in daring.

The destructiveness resulting from Hagar's denial or repression of passion cannot be undone for John and Bram. However, it is John who points the way to the symbolic resolution of Hagar's psychic conflict. The son of a Shipley and a Currie, John is the appropriate one to reveal that Hagar's husband and her father were merely "different sides of the same coin" (p. 184). Since the two families are linked through Hagar by marriage, she can have the back of the Currie stone angel inscribed with the name of the Shipleys. Later, to visiting tourists, the two superficially very different lines are both reduced to "pionneering families" commemorated by the same monument. As Hagar is forced to recognize in the end : "Nothing to pick and choose between them now. That was as it should be" (p. 306).

Hagar's personal redemption—her acceptance of the passion and her overcoming of pride and repression—only occurs when she descends to the abandoned cannery. Here she learns to stop denying nature, to let the rain fall *inside* the ruined building that is her body's analogue. She replaces her hat (with its artificial flowers) with the jewel-like June bugs set in her hair. She allows her emotions to show : "I grow enraged. I curse like Bram" (p. 191). This new nearness to her long-dead husband is reinforced by her progressive and quite uncharacteristic disregard for appearances. Through her encounter with Murray F. Lees, Hagar also learns that tragedy is universal, but that all of us must, in turn, accept responsibility for our acts and the damage they may inflict upon others. When, in a kind of hallucination, Hagar mistakes Lees for her dead son, John, she "abreacts", to use the technical Freudian term. In other words, she finally accepts the significant place that her denial of passion has had in causing the deaths of John and Arlene. Only by so doing, by accepting the true identity of both the son born "after the flesh", and herself, can Hagar free herself from bondage and live in the present by coming to terms with the past (7). In preferring John to Marvin, Hagar had revealed her double allegiance to the passionate flesh and the repressive will. She consciously insisted, contrary to all evidence, that John was the typical Currie. Unconsciously, however, her motherly devotion to her Shipley son was an acceptable social sublimation of her denied passion for Bram. Similarly, her secret despising of the hardworking, prosaic, but Currie-like, Marvin is an unconscious rejection of her father's values—and his inhibitions. The final coming to terms with both of these profoundly disturbing issues only occurs on Hagar's deathbed, but the reconciliation of the split between the natural and the imposed, between the present and the past, does occur , nevertheless.

This ending is perhaps one of the main differences between *The Stone Angel* and that other obvious intertext, D.H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers.* If this latter novel had been told from Mrs. Morel's point of view (or if *The*

Stone Angel) had been presented as a third-person narrative with John Shipley as the centre of consciousness), the parallels between the two novels would be clearer, as would the differences. The virile and vital miner, Morel, is Bram to the cultured Mrs. Morel's Hagar. The most intensely sexual scenes in both novels are often symbolically connected to imagery of the land, imagery of flowers and horses in particular. But in *Sons and Lovers* Paul Morel has a mode of reconciliation of opposites open to him that neither Hagar nor John do : art. Margaret Laurence, on the other hand, can have recourse to aesthetic means of reintegration and instead of focussing on social and emotional roles in her title, Laurence chooses to centre her novel on a narrative symbol—the stone angel—which by the end becomes the "Currie-Shipley stone" (p. 306). Of course, this twin monument to petrified past love stands for Hagar herself, since she informs the reader that when John died , she did not weep, but rather she turned to stone. At the end of her life she finally sees that she too, like the statue, has been blind, that it is Marvin, not John, who is to be the Jacob wrestling with the angel—herself—for her blessing.

Between culture and nature (both within and outside man), between repression and passion, between the dead structures of the past and the vital immediacy of the present, exists a conflict that can only be resolved by a breaking down of restricting conventions—social, moral, and aesthetic (8). Although this theme is quite obviously a universal one, it seems particularly prevalent in Canadian literature, from Susanna Moodie's *Roughing It in the Bush* in the last century to the present. The arrival of cultured immigrants to a new "uncouth land" made for poor (or at least ultimately cynical) pioneers ; it also made for split or schizoid personalities, as Margaret Atwood has explored in her *Journals of Susanna Moodie*. The hard-working Scots Presbyterian pioneers of Laurence's fiction represent the puritan/capitalist ethos in its purest state, supporting the Currie values of ambition, industry, duty, pride, and strength. The Shipleys, however, remain closer to the rhythms of nature, not only to its fertile vitality but also to its droughts and depressions. Unwilling to impose themselves on the land, the Shipleys respect the nature outside them, as an analogue to their acceptance of the nature within—emotions, instincts, and human nature, with all the attendant vulnerability and frailty as well as strenght. In its literature, the Canadian present, the "here and now", often seems to force a rejection of imported old world values as inappropriate in the new setting. The experience of a new land is not to be fathomed by predetermined and long-standing social or ethical systems. Perhaps such a theme is inevitable in the literature of a country as new as Canada, a country where very few inhabitants are more than a generation or two away from immigration (9).

NOTES

1. *This is D.G. Jones' formulation of the dichotomy. See his extended treatment of this theme in* **Butterfly on Rock** *(Toronto : University of Toronto Press, 1970).*

2. **The Stone Angel** *(Toronto : McClelland and Stewart, 1974), p. 292 : "Pride was my wilderness, and the demon that led me there was fear. I was alone, never anything else, and never free, for I carried my chains within me, and they spread out from me and shackled all I touched". All further references will be to this readily available paperback edition of the novel. Page references will appear in parentheses in the text.*

3. *See Clara Thomas, "A Conversation about Literature : An Interview with Margaret Laurence and Irving Layton",* **Journal of Canadian Fiction,** *1, N^{O} 1 (Winter 1972), 65-69.*

4. *Note* **Bram's** *shortened name.*

5. *For a full analysis of this disintegration theme, see Frank Pesando, "In a Nameless Land : The Use of Apocalyptic Mythology in the Writings of Margaret Laurence",* **Journal of Canadian Fiction,** *2, N^{O} 1 (Winter 1973), 53-57.*

6. *This is contrasted to Doris's "dark brown artificial silk" (p. 28).*

7. *This is also a theme in Laurence's African stories. See her interview with D. Cameron in* **Conversations with Canadian Novelists** *(Toronto : Macmillan, 1973), 96-115. For a fuller treatment of this theme, see Clara Thomas,* **The Manawaka World of Margaret Laurence** *(Toronto : McClelland and Stewart, 1976).*

8. *The narrative form of the novel enacts this conflict in its alternation between the present and the past. Laurence herself later felt that she had perhaps overworked this flashback technique. See her "Ten Years' Sentences" in D.G. Stephens, ed.,* **Writers of the Prairies** *(Vancouver : University of British Columbia Press, 1973), pp. 144-46.*

9. *This is a theme Laurence pursued further in her 1974 novel,* **The Diviners,** *where the reality of fact and myth, of history and fiction, are both asserted in Christie Logan's Scots stories and in the strictly Canadian Metis tales.*

ORDER AND CHAOS IN THE STONE ANGEL

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On the hill brow, the Manawaka cemetery is a spectacular metaphor of order. Society proudly asserts its indestructible might. Within an area bounded by walls of black spruce, the graves are lined up in regular rows. Man transcends his fear of death.

This microcosm reflects the order of the city. Jason Currie, the Pharaonic merchant, has erected a statue of pure white marble on a pedestal. It proclaims his wealth and immortalizes his memory and that of his deceased wife.

Yet a trained eye detects the precariousness of human order. The wings of the stone angel are pitted by the snow in winter and by the grit blown by the wind in summer. Insidious nature creeps between the geometrical graves. The carefully-tended plots are infested with swarms of ants. The living fight a losing battle against weeds and wild flowers, the treacherous rivals of portly cultivated peonies. The coarse couchgrass and the perennial dandelion bear witness to the proximity of the threatening prairie. Now and then musky smells are wafted from the untamed neighbourhood. From time immemorial nature has waged war against the pretentious laws imposed by man.

Close by, the refuse which the city of the living excretes - left-overs from tables, peelings, broken jars, crates, cartons, tea-chests, derelict vehicles etc. - is heaped up in the town dump, the barbarous counterpart of the cemetery : rottenness and chaos hold sway over this "sulphurous place" (1).

Through the reminiscences of the narrator the puzzle of Manawaka is reconstructed piece by piece. The houses reflect its social hierarchy. The well-off live in beige houses, decent brick houses, the destitute in shacks or shanties, wooden frames covered up with tar paper. Among the dwellings of the privileged few the Currie house should be mentioned, the second brick house built in Manawaka : six bedrooms, a huge veranda festooned with white wooden lace. The status of the wealthiest man in the town is publicly proclaimed.

The Presbyterian church is one of the strongest pillars of the Establishment. The opening service was marked by special thanks to all those who had contributed money for the building of the church : their names were called one

by one, according to a precise order determined by the amount of their donations.

The influence of the church reaches far and wide. After 1870 hundreds of eager land-seekers settled in Manitoba, attracted by the fertility of the land :

> Everyone in Ontario has heard of the new frontier, with its prairie land which held neither stone nor stump to check the plough... all listened to reports of deep soil to be had cheaply, of a climate where wheat throve free of midge and smut (2).

In Neepawa, the model of fictitious Manawaka, the greater number of settlers came from Ontario and from the Higlands. Most of them were Presbyterians.

These new agricultural communities were united by religion ; the nuclear families were the cells which made up the living tissue. Margaret Laurence describes a typical upper middle-class home. The father never misses a Sunday service ; he wields his authority unchallenged. The wife respectfully serves the patriarch and bears him several children. Mrs Currie was not strong enough to fulfil her mission.

According to tradition, Jason, who was born in Scotland, passes on the Scottish Calvinistic-Presbyterian legacy to his children. His education stresses personal responsibility and a sense of divine calling to work, in other words the Protestant work ethic. God entrusts man with a sacred duty. In his first sermon the new minister emphasizes the importance of toil and fortitude. Jason uses the same kind of language. The precepts which he inculcates in his daughter's mind teach the value of effort and disparage sloth :

> *The devil finds work for idle hands ... God helps those who help themselves. Many hands make light work (3).*

Moral principles are deeply embedded in Jason's personality. The merchant sets himself as an example : is he not a self-made man who pulled himself up to the top of the social ladder ? Jason has never squandered away his time and his money. Material success is the appropriate reward for toil. But man should remember that wealth is granted by God for the benefit of the individual and of the community as well.

Presbyterianism has made men strong to act and do great things in North America. Calvinistic-Presbyterian education, which is founded upon austere moral standards, is strict. In Jason's family every peccadillo is punished with a sound whipping. Luckily the birch flourishes in Manawaka as it did in the land of the forefathers.

Such an education favours class-pride. Language, clothes, manners matter all the more as they stress the differences among people. Hagar yearns for distinction and propriety. Like Browning's "prissy Pippa", she is anxious "to be neat and orderly, imagining life had been created only to celebrate tidiness" (4). The child chooses to walk in the cemetery where no thistles spoil her skirts or her white kid boots.

The sense of hierarchy defines the relationships among the members of the community. Jason closely examines the list of guests invited by his children. Charlotte Tappen, the doctor's daughter is welcome ; Telford Simmons is just allowed. It is better not to invite Henry Pearl : the farmer's son would not have proper clothes. As to Lottie Drieser, the illegitimate child, she is ostracized.

School strengthens prejudices and emphasizes differences. In their turn sooner or later children set themselves up as censors. The infamous label "No-Name" sticks to Lottie ; young Shipley's school-friends nickname his father "Bramble Shitley".

The concept of order is linked to the concept of category. Order divides, compartmentalizes, excludes. Discriminatory rules fashion behaviour and habits of thought. A specific function is assigned to each man and to each place. The rule suffers no infringement. The slightest alteration is a breach of the law. The child does not act out of pity when she catches sight of the bloodied chicks in the dump. She assumes the part of the dispenser of justice, she breaks the little skulls of the revolting creatures which were "an affront to the eyes" (5) and wipes out the shocking anomaly.

As a rule schooling is limited to primary education. Hagar was privileged to attend the young ladies'academy in Toronto. Two years later she was turned into an accomplished housewife :

> ... I knew embroidery, and French, and menu-planning for a five-course meal, and poetry, and how to take a firm hand with servants, and the most becoming way of dressing my hair (6).

Bourgeois order must reign in the Curries' house.

Marriage is a respected institution. Every young woman dreams of the happy day when her wedding will be celebrated in church. She knows that love outside wedlock is an unforgiven sin. Jason has warned his daughter against the fatal temptations of the flesh : "Men have terrible thoughts" (7). He forbids her to teach in the South Wachakwa school. The fate of Lottie's mother is a sinister reminder. The guardians of morality keep watch. Marriage is ruled by strict laws. Woe betide those who marry beneath their station : no bell rang out for Hagar's wedding.

In the manichean world of Calvinistic-Prsbyterian ethic, rewards and punishments are scrupulously meted out. Jason refuses to make peace with his daughter, he bequeathes his fortune to the town. The founding father is hailed as a great benefactor, a public-spirited man.

All means are used to enforce the law, whether it is written or not. It is the basis of order, it maintains the cohesion of the group in a boundless land, surrounded by numberless enemies : the Indians, the metis, the new immigrants, nature itself. The survival of structured society is at stake.

Given the religious context of the fiction, it is tempting to classify the main characters into two categories : the conformists and the nonconformists, that is the defenders of the law and the law-breakers. We have already made Jason Currie's acquaintance. In the first chapters all eyes are focused on this staunch champion of order, who is worth two hundred thousand dollars at least.

Among the people of the second generation the Simmons couple is atypical in so far as the banker married a low-born girl and introduced her into the middle class. Yet Lottie has learnt her lesson quickly enough. The cushioned sitting-room with lace dollies, a cerise plush sofa and a cupboard laden with knick-knacks is a perfect setting. Lottie does credit to her husband when she hastens to buy the earrings, the sterling silver candelabra and the Limoges dishes which her friend sells her at a bargain price.

At the third generation level, Marvin is a conformist who is perfectly integrated into Vancouver society. His loving wife manipulates him without scruples. She believes in the power and efficiency of religion. Her mother-in-law will not be allowed to die without the assistance of her minister.

In the camp of the non-conformists Bram Shipley at first plays the part of the romantic outcaste. The forty-year old widower goes round with half-breed girls and leads a completely uninhibited sexual life. Jason's judgement, like

Lottie's, is not lenient : "He's common as dirt" (8). Bram's crude language and coarse manners set him apart from the educated people. His life is a succession of disappointments and failures due to laziness and misfortune. By relieving himself against the steps of Currie's Store, the rebel challenges his wife and all those who embody the middle-class values and etiquette.

From his father John has inherited a taste for pleasure and alcohol. His liaison with Arlene expresses his hatred of conventions. The two young people live on the fringe of a society which rejects them. Their dreadful death is their retribution for their insolence and madness.

In this society where the upholders of order rub shoulders with its detractors, Hagar stands out as a fascinating character. The child, the adolescent, then the young woman are moulded by the Presbyterian order at home and at school. The rebellion, a consequence of intolerable pressures, leads to a sudden crisis. The clash between father and daughter brings Jason's dream to an unexpected end. The stereotype of the submissive, well-behaved girl breaks into pieces. Hagar's marriage is a revolt against the overpowering father's rule, a liberation from the tyranny of tradition. At the end of her life Hagar analyses the motives which brought together the disreputable farmer and the well-educated girl :

> ... we'd each married for those qualities we later found we couldn't bear, he' for my manners and speech, I for his flouting of them (9).

Henceforth two antagonistic forces, one conservative, the other subversive fight for the possessions of the heroine's mind. Unable to exorcise her past, she tries to re-educate Bram, that is to model him on her father's image, in the hope of some future reconciliation :

> ... Father would soften and yield, when he saw how Brampton Shipley prospered, gentled, learned cravats and grammar (10).

After her father's death, Hagar is actually haunted by Jason's spirit. Now and again she catches herself repeating his precepts to her children. Her decisive meeting with Bram is symbolically located in Currie's Store. Her hatred bursts out : Bram is socially doomed, his attitude is a disgrace to the family.

This new crisis leads to the irrevocable ; Hagar's exile to Vancouver is a break with her ne'er-do-well husband. Her stay at Mr. Oatley's is the first stage of her reintegration into the middle-class :

Life was orderly, and conducted in a proper house filled with good furniture, solid mahogany and rosewood, and Chinese carpets... (11).

The second stage is the purchase of her own house. Thanks to the money she inherits at the death of Mr. Oatley, she becomes independent and reaches the social status which her spiteful and selfish father has denied her.

Bram's death gives Hagar the opportunity of obliterating twenty-four years of disillusion. She has him buried in the Currie plot and has his family name carved on the other side of the marble stone which bears the respected name of Currie. Bram is normalized, his memory is rehabilitated, all traces of disorderliness have been erased.

The Calvinistic-Presbyterian outlook fashions the mind as well as the temper. Jason prided himself on forging his daughter's will : "You take after me... You've got backbone, I'll give you that" (12), he told the child after striking her with a foot-ruler. From an early age Hagar has learnt to master her own feelings and govern her passions. When she is married, she can control her emotions even in the most intimate relations with her husband. Never does she confess that her blood rises to meet his. She makes sure that her trembling is all inward and keeps her enjoyment secret. She gradually turns into the replica of the stone angel : "The night my son died, I was transformed to stone and never wept at all" (13).

As years pass by, physiology betrays Hagar, she partly loses control of herself. Old age impairs her reflexes ; tears, "the incontinent wetness of the infirm" (14), spring unbidden.

Hagar is driven to despair when Marvin and Doris resolve to take her to Silverthreads. The nonagenarian will not bow her head ; she rebels against the outrageous authority of her son and of her daughter-in-law, for she is about to be dispossessed of her property and of her rank. This third crisis is symmetrical to the first one. It causes a similar reaction. Hagar summons up her courage and her physical energy, and flees to Shadow Point. She refuses to behave according to the norm, as she is expected to. Once more she recovers her freedom.

Spiritual and physical liberation are connected. In the forest Hagar is no longer weary. Keats's poem surges up from the dark caves of her mind :

Old Meg she was a gipsy,
And lived upon the moors ;
Her bed it was the brown heath turf,
And her house was out of doors... (15).

Hagar's identification with Meg Merrilies announces the emergence of her new self.

In the ramshackle house whose windows are broken, Hagar roams about the phantasmal world of the drowned :

> Now I could fancy myself there among them, tiaraed with starfish thorny and purple, braceleted with shells linked on limp chains of weed, waiting until my encumbrance of flesh floated clean away and I was free and skeletal and could journey with tides and fishes (16).

The heroine frees herself from the categories of time and space. Poetic reality is the substitute for everyday routine.

Far away from the petrifying rules of society, Hagar goes through a process of purification. Her meeting with Murray Lees is a salutary experience. In the disused cannery she drinks wine with a perfect stranger and sinks into sleep close to him. The fastidious lady is not ashamed of herself. For the first time maybe, she has established a genuine relationship with a man and understood the meaning of human solidarity.

Hagar's return to the city is not a return to conformity. She is a new woman, the scales have fallen from her eyes, the protective shell has opened up :

> Every good joy I might have held, in my man or any child of mine or even the plain light of morning, of walking the earth, all were forced to a standstill by some brake of proper appearances - oh, proper to whom ? When did I speak the heart's truth ? (17).

Hagar has measured the harm caused by her Calvinistic-Presbyterian education, which values appearances, that is decency, propriety, decorum. She questions her own past takes a new course of action. In spite of the risk she runs, she goes out of her bed and relieves her neighbour's pain ; she also deliberately lies to her son for his sake.

At the last moment, when she wrests the glass full of water from the helping hand of the nurse, Hagar is the fighter who drives back the assault

of chaos ; she belongs to the proud race of the pioneers who never despair. She is also the woman who assumes her own free will.

Is Hagar an unregenerate sinner or not ? Margaret Laurence does not answer the question. All we know for certain is that at the end of her life Hagar repudiated the social order more than once and accepted the order of the heart, the higher order which opens the way to love and understanding.

Margaret Laurence the artist apparently disagrees with Margaret Laurence the thinker. The thinker denounces the harm that conventional society may do to individuals. On the contrary the artist imposes a rigid logic upon life and the irrational. The story develops on two levels, the present and the past which alternate and finally unite in the last chapter when the attention concentrates on the crucial here and now. The chronological order is always followed. We cannot help objecting that memory normally operates at random through flash-backs and that the minds of old people are often muddled. Margaret Laurence has justified herself :

> "This method seems a little rigid, but I was dealing with a very rigid character... In some ways I would have liked Hagar's memories to be haphazard. But I felt that, considering the great number of years those memories spanned, the result of such a method would be to make the novel too confusing for the reader" (18).

In these lines Margaret Laurence has proclaimed her classicism in art.

NOTES

1. *Margaret Laurence,* **The Stone Angel,** *Toronto: McClelland and Stewart-Bantam, 1979, p. 22.*

2. *W.L. Morton,* **Manitoba : a History,** *Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 1979, p. 156.*

3. **The Stone Angel,** *op. cit., p. 5.*

4. **Ibid.,** *pp. 2-3.*

5. **Ibid.,** *p. 23.*

6. **Ibid.**, *p. 36.*

7. **Ibid.**, *p. 38.*

8. **Ibid.**, *p. 42.*

9. **Ibid.**, *p. 69.*

10. **Ibid.**, *p. 43.*

11. **Ibid.**, *p. 139-40.*

12. **Ibid.**, *p. 7.*

13. **Ibid.**, *p. 216.*

14. **Ibid.**, *p. 26.*

15. **Ibid.**, *p. 134.*

16. **Ibid.**, *p. 144.*

17. **Ibid.**, *p. 261.*

18. *Margaret Laurence, "Gadgetry or Growing : Form and Voice in the Novel",* **Journal of Canadian Fiction,** *1980, nº 27, p. 56.*

MARGARET LAURENCE PAPERS

by André DOMMERGUES
Université de Paris X

Researchers interested in Margaret Laurence can find useful material in the archives of McMaster University and York University.

I - McMaster University : Mills Library

At present the Margaret Laurence collection contains original typescripts and a Xerox copy of the typescript of *The Diviners.*

BOX 1 :
A Bird in the House - 168 leaves. Typescript including
"The Sound of the Singing" - 28 leaves
"To set Our House in Order" - 17 leaves
"Mask of the Bear" - 25 leaves
"A Bird in the House" - 21 leaves + 7 revision sheets
"The Loons" - 12 leaves
"Horses of the Night" - 24 leaves
"The Half-Husky" - 15 leaves
"Jericho's Brick Battlements" - 26 leaves

"The Drummer of All the World" - 17 leaves. Typescript.

BOX 2 :
The Fire-Dwellers - 229 leaves. Typescript and a summary of revisions (7 leaves). Also an outline of the plot and form of the novel, 2 leaves holograph.

Jason's Quest - 119 leaves. Typescript and 16 revision sheets - 13 leaves holograph.

Long Drums and Cannons - Some Nigerian Writers 1952 to 1966 - 240 leaves. Typescript. With a note commenting on the effect of the Biafran war on Nigerian literature (1 leaf). The manuscript is signed by the author.

A Jest of God - 223 leaves. Typescript.

The Stone Angel - 258 leaves. Typescript.

BOX 3 :
The Diviners
Folder 1 : Parts I and II : Xerox copy of typescript, annotated by author ; 197 p.

Folder 2: Part III : Xerox copy of typescript annotated by author ; 144 p.

Folder 3 : Parts IV and V : Xerox copy of typescript annotated by author ; 207 p.

Folder 4 : Reviews.

Heart of a Stranger
Folder 5 : annotated typescript and printed copies of stories. There is an introduction by Margaret Laurence for each story (annotated typescript).

Folder 6 : typescript used by the printers ; 181 p.

II - York University : Scott Library

The Margaret Laurence collection includes typescripts, manuscripts, holograph notes, letters, photographs, articles, reviews from newspapers, records etc...

In July 1981 some of these items were displayed in the main hall of the Scott Library. It is advisable to write to the archivist for permission to examine the collection.

BOX 1 to 6 :
Letters sent to Margaret Laurence by novelists, critics, poets, professors,etc...
Among the 118 correspondents, we can mention :
Margaret Atwood (letters sent from 1971 to 1980)
Earle Birney (letters sent in 1969)
George Bowering (letters sent from 1974 to 1977)
Morley Callaghan (letters sent from 1964 to 1979)
Marian Engel (letters sent from 1974 to 1979)
Hugh MacLennan (letters sent from 1970 to 1980)
Norman Levine (letters sent from 1965 to 1971)
Alice Munro (letters sent from 1976 to 1980)
Mordecai Richler (letters sent from 1968 to 1975)
Malcolm Ross (letters sent from 1962 to 1978)
Sinclair Ross (letters sent from 1966 to 1978)

Gabrièle Roy (letters sent from 1976 to 1980)
Allan Sillitoe (letters sent in 1965)
Clara Thomas (letters sent from 1968 to 1978)
Rudy Wiebe (letters sent from 1973 to 1978)
Adele Wiseman (letters sent from 1959 to 1962)
George Woodcock (letters sent from 1967 to 1980)
Richard Wright (letters sent in 1973)

BOX 7 to 19 :
File 1 : Correspondence 1980
File 2 : Awards 1977-1980
File 3 : Correspondence with Imperial Oil 1974-1975
File 4 : United Church 1976-1980
File 5 : Censorship 1978-1979
File 6 : Talks, Scripts 1965-1970
File 7 : News Clippings 1968-1970
File 8 : Souvenirs

BOX 20 :
Files 1 and 2 : Letters and reviews : *The Diviners* 1974-1975.

BOX 21 :
File 1 : Review : *Rachel, Rachel*
File 2 : Clippings, letters, reviews : Censorship
File 3 : Souvenirs

BOX 22 :
File 1 : Notes for *The Diviners* 1970-1974
File 2 : Reviews from newspapers 1974-1977
File 3 : Short stories, scripts
File 4 : Articles 1962-1972 ; Lecture convocation address ; Manuscripts 1976-1977
File 5 : Article 1970-1976

BOX 23 :
File 1 : Short stories
File 2 : Desk calendars 1965-1979

BOX 24 :
Printed Material :
Vox 1947

Prism 1960-1961
Winter's Tales 1960
Records of songs from *The Diviners* (McClelland and Stewart Ltd in association with Heorte Music).

I am indebted to Professor Brian Pocknell and Mr. Bruce Whiteman (McMaster University) as well as to Mr. David Hughes (assistant-archivist, York University) who kindly helped me to collect this information.

WOMEN AND WOMAN IN THE STONE ANGEL

by Marcienne ROCARD
Université de Toulouse-Le-Mirail

In all four of Margaret Laurence's native novels the central figure is a woman, who also functions as point-of-view character. *The Stone Angel* (1), the first of the Manawaka series, is different, however, from the other three in that it is dominated by a Hecate figure (2), an old woman, Hagar Shipley, confronted with decrepitude and death, whereas Rachel Cameron *(A Jest of God),* Stacey MacAindra *(The Fire-Dwellers),* and Morag Gunn *(The Diviners)* are facedwith middle-age and its attendant problems.

Variety also appears in their positions as narrators. Nonagenarian Hagar drifts down the many years gone by, borne by associations alone ; more sophisticated Morag, a writer, reconstructs her past in a more complex, less spontaneous way whereas Rachel and Stacey are essentially immersed in the present. These female characters, however, have one trait in common : their determination not to let themselves be defeated by whatever threatens to endanger their liberty and dignity as women and human beings.

In *The Stone Angel* the author's deep—almost exclusive- interest in woman is evidenced by the numerical and dramatic predominance of female characters. Freedom and survival, Laurence's favorite themes, constitute the thematic web of the novel and inform the picture of woman that emerges from it.

> Above the town, on the hill brow, the stone angel used to stand. I wonder if she stands there yet, in memory of her who relinquished her feeble ghost as I gained my stubborn one, my mother's angel that my father bought in pride to mark her bones... (p. 1).

The stone angel—a feminine figure—symbolically dominates the book as she dominates the town. The whole passage devoted to that remarkable figure—attacked, yet undestroyed by time and weather—is to be read as a prologue to the story of Hagar Shipley.

In a first-person narrative Hagar recalls the successive stages of her life : in Manawaka, as the only daughter of a well-to-do, conservative widowed father, raised with two brothers by widow Stonehouse ("Auntie Doll"), the housekeeper ; on a farm, as the wife of sexually attractive Bram Shipley and the mother of two sons ; in a big city on the West Coast, after she ran away with

her younger son from her uncouth and incompetent farmer husband, as housekeeper to Mr. Oatley ; back to the farm and to her dying husband for a while ; in her city house, purchased with Mr. Oatley's legacy, as reluctant, self-asserting dependent of her elder son and his wife ; finally transferred by the pair, after a nearly fatal escape, to a hospital.

The fact that the point-of-view character (who, in spite of her years, is endowed with an excellent eyesight and a particularly acute hearing) is a woman may account for her emphasis on women and her unsatisfactory portrayal of male characters ; her old age is certainly responsible for her wistfully tender attitude to the younger generation.

We are presented with a variety of female characters, mostly contrasting with, or pitted against, one another, an all-feminine approach which is to be found again in *A Jest of God.* Here they are, the fat and the lean, bulky Hagar facing the slim girl who shares her hospital room (p. 253) or old Elva Jardine, "that creature flimsy as moth wings" (p. 240) ; the old and the young, ninety-year old Hagar fondly thinking of grand-daughter Tina ; those from well-established families and the social outcasts, Charlotte Tappen, the local doctor's daughter, Hagar Currie whose father is a prosperous tradesman, as the beautiful marble angel adorning his wife's grave testifies, and Lottie Drieser, born of an unwed mother, or the half-breed girls with whom Bram Shipley used to be seen. Hagar will marry downward into a lower class whereas Lottie will marry upward into a better class ; in 1886 Regina Weese died a virgin and the victim of an irascible mother ; poor Mrs. Stonehouse who substitutes for a mother with the Currie children has a hard time with young indomitable Hagar ; relationships between mother-in-law Hagar and daughter-in-law Doris are anything but fond ; the female inmates of the hospital are a nuisance, sometimes a comfort to one another.

To be noted within this contrasting pattern, is Laurence's particular insistence on the relationship between a very old woman and very young girls—one of the most touching aspects of the book ; as a matter of fact, this is the only satisfactory human relationship in the novel. Four times ninety-year old Hagar is confronted with very young girls : once, fleetingly, during her escape, when she is gently taken to the wicket of the bus station by a teenager ; a second time, for a longer period, in the hospital, where she shares her room with a young Oriental who has just had an appendectomy and whom she helps with the bed-pan ; one day, as she watches two children playing house on the beach she is sharply reminded of her own performance and identifies with the girl. Another time, on the packed bus from the hospital a teenage girl "in a white and green striped dress, a girl green and tender as new Swiss chard"

(p. 81) gives her seat to the old tearful woman who has just had a grueling time on the examining table and wishes she could express her gratefulness better. Note the brief yet charming picture of the girl and the appropriate image derived not from the animal world (generally used by Laurence for sarcastic ends) but from the vegetal world. There is another girl, however, Hagar is never physically seen together with, though she is ever-present in her thoughts : it is Tina, her grand-daughter, her favorite. Tina appears in the book, several times, indirectly : we learn that she once gave her grandmother a bottle of eau de Cologne as a Christmas or birthday present ; that it is to Tina, not to Doris, that the old lady intends to leave the brown pottery pitcher that belonged to Bram's mother (probably knowing that the girl would not trade it for something else as John, her uncle, did with the Currie plaid pin) ; that Tina left recently to take a job down East and would no longer sit with her grandmother at night ; that Hagar's grief over her husband's death prevented her from paying due attention to the birth of that child that was to be so dear to her ever after ; that she wants Tina to have her own sapphire as a wedding-gift ; that the girl intends to marry on her own, not on her parents', terms.

What strikes old Hagar in these girls and attracts her to them is that, while reminding her of her own youth ("Maybe all girls her age look that way. I did myself, once." (p. 130), they represent what she wished she had been and never was and never will be. They are slim, and she is not, never was really (an obsession with Laurence's heroines I shall revert to later) :

> Her stomach is concave, and her breasts are no bigger than two damson plums... Her hips are so narrow, I wonder what she'll ever do if she has children ? (p. 253).

They are also independent and daring, and more so than she could ever dream to be in her days. Looking at the young passer-by, she envies "that haughtiness only the young can muster, not wanting to be bothered" (p. 130). Tina is no longer dependent on her parents.

Beside presenting to the ninety-year old woman an ideal image of youth, the girls have with her such relationships as she never had with anybody else. She confesses that she preferred asking a girl for information rather than a man : "... I'd not have the nerve to approach a man" (p. 130). Besides the girl's face is "not unlike (her) Tina" *(ibid).* In the hospital she somehow feels more comfortable with young Sandra Wong than with her contemporaries ; as it is, neither as a daughter, sister, sister-in-law, wife, nor as a mother stepmother or mother-in-law, has Hagar experienced such requited love and happiness as she has with

Tina. She lost her mother, fought with her father, even broke with him, was too different from her brothers to get along with them, ignored Bram's two daughters by his first marriage, became soon estranged from her husband and elder son, Marvin, was bitterly disappointed in the younger on whom she had lavished such attention ; of Doris she remains viscerally suspicious. Repeatedly the grandmother expresses her fondness for "*my* Tina" (p. 130) ; she sees no malice in her grand-daughter's gift of a bottle of perfume labelled "Lily of the valley" (lilies of the valley were used for funeral wreaths in Manawaka) ; she worries about Doris' anxious look merely because it seems to portend some evil for Tina ; and she is relieved to hear that the girl has not broken a leg but only planned to get married.

Men are not only fewer but also less interesting. They do suffer from the author's dominant interest in and masterly handling of women ; like many other female writers Laurence has often been criticized for the unsatisfactory nature of the male characters. Hers are no individuals in their own right ; Nick, Rachel's boy friend, in *A Jest of God* is practically non-existent ; Stacey in *The Fire-Dwellers* overshadows her husband, father-in-law and young lover ; in *The Diviners* Jules Tonnerre fares somewhat better, but professor Brooke Skelton is flat to the point of being incredible.

The women in *The Stone Angel* tend, as it were, to resemble the imposing matron of the nursing home, a creature with "a look of overpowering competence that one always dreads" and whose "rabbity man" "feared she'd devour him" (p. 85). Hagar, indeed, dwarfs Bram, however strong and loud he is ; the old woman's real opponent is Doris, not Marvin ; Aunt Dolly, the housekeeper, is given as much importance as the heroine's own father ; grandson Steven comes second to Tina, his sister, not only in his grandmother's affection but also in the reader's interest ; when he visits the old woman in the hospital, a large part of their conversation bears on Tina's marriage.

There is no attempt on the part of the author to really get into the inner selves of her male characters who are dismissed—Bram, the protagonist's husband included—in a few lines ; they are exclusively seen from the outside. In addition to that most of them are inarticulate so that dialogues are scant. We get to know more about the Shipley family, about Bram's talent for dancing, his reputation as a rake and bar—lounger than about his own feelings ; we are just allowed a disappointing glimpse into Mr. Currie's amorous life (p. 15).

Laurence's partiality for her own sex in *The Stone Angel* also appears in her particular view of woman. Woman she presents essentially as both a victim and a survivor—a dual aspect symbolized by the stone angel that stands on the

grave of the heroine-narrator's mother as well as by the lesser ones scattered through the graveyard ; all of them are both reminders of victims (the dead) and survivors (because they are still standing above the town).

Attitudes in victims range from acceptance of their victim role to consciousness that salvation lies inside the self and outside traditional and recognized society patterns for the female. The victims range from those who remain locked into their victim role (i.e., who stay in position two, if we go by Margaret Atwood's diagram in *Survival,* who never make it to position three, let alone to position four) to the survivors.

Significantly, the novel begins with the evocation of a dead woman, Regina Weese, who had been a hopeless victim, and it ends with the picture of the dying Hagar wresting a glass full of water from Doris and holding it in her "own" hands (p. 275) in a frantic struggle to remain alive and independent. From the beginning Laurence, through her protagonist's mouth, makes it clear on whose side she is, and she does not mince her words :

> So much for sad Regina, now forgotten in Manawaka... And yet I always felt she had only herself to blame, for she was a flimsy, gutless creature, bland as eggcustard,caring with martyred devotion for an ungrateful fox-voiced mother year in and year out (p. 2).

Different forms of victimization are presented in the novel physical, social, racial, marital. Woman is trapped in her body, by overweight, pregnancies, gynecological troubles, old age. Like middle-aged Stacey and Morag, Hagar is obsessed by the fact that she is running to fat and turning out like Clara, Bram's "fat and cowlike first wife" (p. 154) ; the narrator compares fat women, including herself, to "cows" or "heifers" (when younger like Bram's daughters), as opposed to the enviable "moth"—like, flimsy female species ; she envies "that china figurine look some women have, all gold and pink fragility" (p. 52) ; she regrets not having worn a foundation garment ; her overweight, aggravated by old age, becomes a real handicap to her by rendering her less mobile. Young Mrs. Currie died in childbed after Hagar's birth ; Sandra's mother had to have a hysterectomy and is still suffering from "the emotional upheaval afterwards" (p. 257) ; the reader is not spared any of the inconveniences of old age.

Laurence, however, is more emphatic on woman's difficulty in asserting herself in a man's world. Of course, things are easier for her these days than they used to be in young Hagar's time. At the beginning of the XXth century, although the battle for emancipation had started a few decades earlier, women were still maintained in a state of dependence, especially in such small prairie

towns as Manawaka. A middle-class girl received such education as could teach her "good manners" (which Hagar was to miss so badly in her unsophisticated husband), how to look "smart" (p. 57), "to dress and behave like a lady" (p. 36) ; that education taught her the Victorian cult of true womanhood and domesticity and prepared her for the acceptance of the "woman's sphere" (3) to which she was to be confined, a part from the bustle of real life. Years later, in a city on the West Coast, nothing will be left to Hagar but to hire out as house-keeper and care for others as Mrs. Stonehouse once did. With her tongue in her cheek Hagar/Laurence evokes young ladies in those days ;

> We tiptoed, fastidiously holding the edges of our garments clear, like dainty-nosed czarinas finding themselves in sudden astonishing proximity to beggars with weeping sores (p. 22).

Only once and duly "chaperoned by Auntie Doll" (p. 39) is twenty-four year old Hagar allowed to go to a charity ball at the school. Hagar Currie, however, had a chance to go East—and going East for a prairie girl at that time meant quite a promotion—to a finishing-school in Toronto because brother Matt had rather help in the store. But what she learnt there failed to completely satisfy her :

> Hardly ideal accomplishments for the kind of life I'd ultimately find myself leading, but I had no notion of that then. I was Pharaoh's daughter reluctantly returning to his roof, the square brick palace so oddly antimacassared in the wilderness... (pp. 36-37).

Her father, however, would not let her go to college and become a teacher like the minister's daughter ; a "silly" daughter would, indeed, have suited him better than a "foolish" one (p. 37).

She, in fact, chooses to be a fool and rush into marriage as an escape, thus disregarding her father's objections, in order to achieve her freedom ; which Rachel, martyr sister to "virginal Regina" (p. 2) could never bring herself to do. Marriage is for the Currie girl the only way out of a restrictive environment. But her marriage to Bram Shipley, a first step toward an illusory liberation, proves to be another form of oppression.

By becoming Bram's wife Hagar has become a prairie farmer's wife. The Shipley place is one of those "unpainted houses that strain and crack against the weather, leached by rain and bleached by the bone-whitening sun" (p. 35). The whole sequence on the farm could be part of a regular Canadian Prairie novel ; for the Canadian Prairie novel is built on a contrast between two antithetic sets of value, two modes of life, between the city and the farm, the former representing a possible escape, an opportunity for life, the latter meaning

hard unrewarding toil. It is often built on an opposition within the family between husband and wife, between the children themselves. The land is omnipresent, oppressive as in F.P. Grove's novels or the short stories of S. Ross. Hagar soon feels trapped on the farm, whose isolation is emphasized by the snow and the wind :

> Here I felt cut off from any help, severed from all communication, for there were times when we couldn't have got out to the highway and into town to save our immortal souls, whatever the need (p. 76).

She leads a dreary life, punctuated by domestic chores. Years later, Doris, a city woman, will refuse to live on the farm and care for her dying father-in-law. In the hospital Elva Jardine, retrospectively sympathizing with Hagar, evokes the plight of the farmer's wife in a sharp comment : "Must've been hard for you... My Mom was widowed at thirty. It's no life" (p. 243). Soon the discrepancy between Hagar and Bram (and their elder son) becomes more apparent. She has borne him two children only because he had wanted to ensure his dynasty as had her own father. Beside being annoyed at Bram's bad manners Hagar resents his lack of interest in anything but horses ; Bram's reading is limited to Eaton's and the Hudson's Bay catalogues whereas she receives more sophisticated magazines sent to her by Auntie Doll. There are no pictures in the Shipley house, and Hagar is interested in pictures as the symbol of something else, of the outside world from which she feels so depressingly cut off.

Actually *The Stone Angel* is closer to the stories of Ross, *A Lamp at Noon and Other Stories* (4) than to Grove's novels, though Bram is different from the usual prairie farmer in that he does not identify with the land because he is unable and unwilling to work it properly. But the family pattern is the same as in the stories of Ross : inadequate husband-wife relationships, painful inarticulateness of the husband, the wife first finding release from her confining existence in dream (Marvin "lives in a dreamless sleep" (p. 51) and music, then trying vicariously through her younger son to enjoy a life she can't afford ; after twenty-four years of bickering and denying herself she elopes with him to higher things, to a big city, partly to save him from the farm and send him to college.

Except for two successful couples, Elva and Tom Jardine, Doris and Marvin Shipley, marriage proves unsatisfactory ; marriage works only when it rests on mutual concern and understanding. Too often, as is the case of Stacey in *The Fire-Dwellers* or of Jess, Bram's daughter, woman gets trapped in her role as a housewife ; thus, to her, marriage only means children with runny noses and a husband to feed in a hurry.

By walking out on her husband Hagar Shipley breaks from society's established norms, and that society is still ruled by the same sexual and racial taboos, the same conventions as of old. Hagar recalls the Puritan background in which she grew up ; how cruelly Lottie Drieser was excluded from good society because of her illegitimate birth (Mr. Currie would never have married her mother ; neither would he have his house-keeper) ; Lottie was practically as badly discriminated against as the half-breed girls who lived on the fringes of the town ; her disgraceful nickname "No-Name" was branded on her as was the scarlet letter on Hester Prynne's breast.

Things have changed for woman over the ninety odd years covered by the narrative ; more opportunities are offered down East to Tina than were ever offered to her grandmother ; Lottie "No-Name" finally made it into good society by marrying into a well-established family ; ironically enough, years later, *she* will object to her daughter Arlene marrying a Shipley ; what was anathema before is no longer : old Hagar smokes publicly and drinks.

Laurence's purpose in *The Stone Angel,* however, is not to advertize the progressive improvements of the Canadian woman's condition over ninety years nor to call for more ; her approach is neither sociological nor political but purely psychological ; her intention is to present the survival process in a human being, more particularly in a woman, who might have been born to be a victim but, in fact, was born a survivor.

From the first Hagar has refused to be a victim ; unlike Regina Weese she resists a domineering parent (and gets married) ; unlike Grove's virtuous, modest, submissive wives she will not be sacrificed to the land and to a husband who has no time for partnership (and she walks out on him) ; she fights a long desperate battle with son Marvin and daughter-in-law Doris and runs away from them and the nursing home to which they plan to move her.

The author also wants to show that in her struggle toward self-liberation the heroine does not resort to outside means but draws upon her own inner resources (5).

Hagar's physical sturdiness, which is stressed over and over again throughout the novel, is a metaphor for her will to survive, i.e. to live on her own terms ; so is the stone angel. The statue was once defiled by vandals just as the heroine was hurt by life herself ; later :

> The angel was still *standing* there, but winters or lack of care had altered her. The earth had heaved with frost around her, and she *stood* askew and tilted (p. 273),

as the old woman, though declining, insists on getting up from her hospital bed. That the author intended the stone angel as a metaphor for Hagar appears clearly at two significant points in the book : first, when she is riding on the bus that is talking her away from home to some unknown destination : "Rigid as *marble* I sit, solid and stolid to outward view" (p. 129) ; second, when, after John's death in a car accident, she decides she can't afford to collapse : "I was transformed to *stone*" (p. 217).

From the first Hagar's unusual physical strength and her marked rebelliousness and determination distinguish her from those surrounding her ; her "awful strength" contrasts with her mother's "weakness" (p. 51) ; she is not fragile like Mavis nor dainty like her brothers, one of whom died prematurely ; to the end of her life she will retain an "amazing constitution" (p. 272). From a very early age too, she shows herself determined to live up to the motto of the clan to which her Currie ancestors used to belong : "Gainsay Who Dare", and she does, indeed. Here again she is different from her mother, "that docile woman" (p. 51), who "relinquished her feeble ghost as Hagar gained (her) stubborn one" (p. 1), from the old ladies in the hospital "feeding like docile rabbits on the lettuce leaves of other times, other manners" (p. 3), whereas she resembles those "tough-rooted", "wild and gaudy flowers" in the cemetery *(ibid)*. She takes after her father physically and morally ; her dauntless stare meets his unflinchingly. However tough he may be, Bram is so much impressed by his second wife, the very opposite of dull Clara, his first wife, that he will never call her "mother" but "Hagar" ; he will sometimes refer to her as "*that* Hagar" (p. 153), using the emphatic demonstrative ambiguously fraught with either a pejorative or meliorative connotation.

In a deeper, more admirable way, Hagar's survival is achieved through irony, through pride and dignity, through sympathy and human warmth ; it owes nothing to religion. That Laurence must have chafed under the rigidity of her Prairie Scots-Presbyterian upbringing is undoubtedly reflected in the attitude of her heroines to religion, one of amused skepticism or, at best, indifference. Unlike Doris or Lou Lees, a fanatic member of some odd sect, Hagar is not religious ; she has no more use for religion than her father had, and his version of the Pater Noster (p. 5) – which sounds like Jacques Prévert's "Notre Père qui êtes aux cieux/Restez-y" (6) – is very much like her own at the end :

> Ought I to appeal ? It's the done thing. *Our father* -no. I want no part of that. All I can think is -*Bless me or not, Lord, just as You please, for I'll not beg* (p. 274).

In vain Doris has Mr. Troy, the minister, come and bring her the comfort of religion ; she won't listen to him. As a matter of fact, the scenes between the two are the most comic in the book.

Irony, not religion, brings her comfort and joy. Her favorite targets are precisely the minister and the well-meaning Doris, the messengers of God. She handles self-irony still more efficiently, as a means of self-defense, by drawing particularly on the inexhaustible resources of animal imagery.

Pride and a keen sense of her dignity make her strong. As the old fisherman in *The Old Man and the Sea* wants to prove to himself and to others that he is still a man by going too far out alone, so the old lady insists on behaving as a responsible human being, dressing properly, spurning any help, straining her forces to go to the bathroom instead of using the bed-pan or to hold the glass full of water in her "own" hands (p. 275) ; when she struggles out of her bed and down the corridor to bring the bed-pan to her young companion she realizes she may have done it as well for herself as for the girl.

Toward the end, however, that woman, who has become stone in order not to collapse becomes an angel of mercy. She tells Marvin what her son has been wanting to hear from her for years : "You've not been cranky, Marvin. You've been good to me, always. A better son than John" (p. 272). Thus Hagar, who has been as yet shackled by her pride, becomes "truly free" (p. 274) even though that freedom should have cost her a lie.

Hagar is no feminist nor is Laurence, who would not go to war for woman's rights (7). A staunch feminist would certainly have abstained from making that hilarious allusion to the Oriental wives smuggled in (by Mr. Oatley) packed like "tinned shrimp in the lower hold, and if the Immigration men scented the hoax, the false bottom was levered open, and the women plummeted" (p. 138) ; or she would have taken issue with this instead of laughing it off. She would more explicitly have deplored (by having the experienced woman intervene instead of quietly observing the scene) that the six-year old girl should forever want to play house on the beach and blamed on tradition and education her tendency to automatically view herself as a potential housewife. She would have extolled Murray Lees' mother, who already in her day, had resented losing her maiden name through marriage and had partly recovered it by giving it to her son as a middle name.

The Stone Angel is a love story, the story of Hagar Shipley's unhappy but undying love for Bram and John, her second son. Someday both husband

and wife will rest under the same stone in the Manawaka cemetery. "Someday she (the stone angel) 'll topple entirely and no one will be able to set her upright again" (p. 273).

NOTES

1. *Toronto, McClelland and Stewart-Bantam (Seal Books), 1978. All the quotations will be taken from this edition. The few words underlined in these are underlined by me, except for Hagar's prayer (p. 274).*

2. *Cf. Robert Graves' division of woman into three mythological categories : Diana or the Maiden figure ; the Venus figure ; the Hecate figure* **(The White Goddess,** *Faber)* **in** *M. Atwood,* **Survival : A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature,** *Toronto, Anansi, 1972, p. 199.*

3. *Nancy F. Cott,* **The Bonds of Womanhood : "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780-1835,** *Yale U.P., 1977.*

4. *Prefaced by M. Laurence.*

5. *"Hagar in* **The Stone Angel** *was not drawn from life, but she incorporates many of the qualities of my grandparents' generation",* **Heart of a Stranger,** *Toronto, McClelland and Stewart-Bantam (Seal Books), 1980, p. 4. About the theme of survival—the dominant theme in* **The Stone Angel**— *Laurence writes : "... not just physical, but the preservation of some human dignity and in the end some human warmth and ability to reach out and touch others..." (***ibid** *p. 6).*

6. **Paroles,** *Paris, Gallimard, 1972, p. 60.*

7. *Laurence is wary of organized groups : "I disagree with the aims, but because my way of dealing with it is not protest or propaganda. It's a case of reform tactics versus revolution and my way is at the individual psychological level using fictional characters. Some of their tactics put men down and I think this is one of the great problems. I'm not sure men need to be attacked...", Donnalu Wigmore, "Margaret Laurence : The Woman behind the writing",* **Chatelaine.** *Feb. 1971.*

NOTES ON SYMBOLISM IN THE STONE ANGEL

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The most obvious symbol in *The Stone Angel* (1), in Margaret Laurence's novel, is the stone angel which stares out sightless from the cemetery over the town of Manawaka where Hagar grows to womanhood and where the crucial events of her life take place, shaping her character, an obduracy of spirit as hard and cold as the angel itself. Margaret Laurence exploits the symbol of the angel and its relation to Hagar in various ways as we shall see.

A good many of the points made here about the symbolism in *The Stone Angel* have been made before (though it is worth rehearsing them here)—this for two reasons, partly because the novel has been submitted to about as much scrutiny as any Canadian novel (because it is one of the finest) and partly because the symbolism, or at least obvious symbolism, in the novel is slight. The stone angel itself is the most obvious symbol and a number of commentators have pointed out why this is so. It is associated with death because it sits in a cemetery and thus, paradoxically, it is associated with Hagar's rage to live—the book is about fighting against extinction as the whole of the book, including the final incomplete and ambiguous line shows. While the angel is antipathetic to life, the book, to say it another way, is an assertion of life, of hanging on, and of extracting value.

Moreover, specific references to "stone", the quality of stone and of this quality in relation to human attitudes and thematic relations in the novel—most of them associated with Hagar—secure this point and may be listed in sequence as follows :

> "Above the town, on the hill brow, the stone angel used to stand... I wonder if she stands there yet, in memory of her who relinquished her feeble ghost as I gained my stubborn one, my mother's angel that my father bought in pride to mark her bones and proclaim her dynasty, as he fancied, forever and a day.
>
> Summer and winter she viewed the town with sightless eyes. She was doubly blind, not only stone but unendowed with even a pretense of sight. Whoever carved her had left the eyeballs blank. It seemed strange to me that she should stand above the town, harking us all to heaven without knowing who we were at all" (p. 3).

The others, as I recall, were a lesser breed entirely, petty angels, cherubim with pouting stone mouths, one holding aloft a stone heart, another strumming in eternal silence upon a small stone stringless harp, and yet another pointing with ecstatic leer to an inscription" (p. 4).

I turn and walk away, wishing to be haughty, but hideously hitting the edge of the dining-room table, joggling the cut-glass rose bowl she uses now, although it is mine. She runs, rejoicing in her ill fortune, catches the bowl and my elbow, guides me as though I were stone blind. We gain the living-room, and as I lower myself to the chesterfield, the windy prison of my bowels belches air, sulphurous and groaning. I am to be spared nothing, it appears. I cannot speak, for anger (p. 58).

My bed is cold as winter, and now it seems to me that I am lying as the children used to do, on fields of snow, and they would spread their arms and sweep them down to theirs sides, and when they rose, there would be the outline of an angel with spread wings. The city whiteness covers me, drifts over me, and I could drift to sleep in it, like someone caught in a blizzard, and freeze (p. 81).

I could not speak for the salt that filled my throat, and for anger-not at anyone, at God, perhaps, for giving us eyes but almost never sight (p. 173).

But I shoved her arm away. I straightened my spine, and that was the hardest thing I've ever had to do in my entire life to stand straight then. I wouldn't cry in front of strangers, whatever it cost me (p. 242).

The night my son died I was transformed to stone and never wept at all. When the ministering women handed me the cup of hot coffee, they murmured how well I was taking it, and I could only look at them dry-eyed from a great distance and not say a single word. All the night long, I had only one though—I'd had so many things to say to him, so many things to put to rights. He hadn't waited to hear (p. 243).

Biblical allusions, archetypes based on old testament matter, and associations with other figures—not Biblical but like Biblical heroes—also add to the symbolism.

The novel invites comparison with another classic of twentieth century fiction in English, Thomas Wolfe's *Look Homeward, Angel.* One does not want to extend the comparison beyond its just bounds, of course. Wolfe's book

is a self-consciously literary achievement, strewn with the cullings of his readings expressing his heightened enthusiasm for the classics of English literature. More than this Wolfe's book is a book about Youth, its optimism, its quest for experience and fulfilment. Eugene Gant has learned harsh lessons of death from seeing his father die and especially in the loss of his believed brother Ben. But he sets off in search of life and of America as the book closes.

Margaret Laurence's book, on the other hand, is a story told by a woman of 90, not a youthful but a mature novel reflecting on the experiences of a very long life. It is a summing up. Nevertheless a comparison between the two works is useful. The Angel of the title of Wolfe's novel is the angel in Milton's *Lycidas* :

> Or whether thou (the poet's college friend who
> has drowned), to our moist vows denied,
> Sleep'st by the fable of Bellerus old,
> Where the great Vision of the guarded mount.
> Looks toward Namancos and Bayona's hold.
> Look homeward, Angel, now, and melt with ruth :
> And, O ye dolphins, waft the hapless youth.

Here Milton evokes the protector Angel, St. Michael, to turn from foreign threats so that he might weep for a disaster at home. It has been pointed out (by William New in the Introduction to the New Canadian Library edition of the novel, p.x) that while Hagar does have some kinship with the stone angel on the grave... "this is not the angel from Milton's *Lycidas*... for it is eyeless in its wilderness and for a long time so is she".

I think contrary to the suggestion made by New that a possible allusion to Lycidas is not inappropriate ; there is a connection : Hagar does look back to the past, thus homeward, with compassion, to her lost men, and to opportunities missed. The allusions to the angel are complex : there is the association, deriving from Lycidas, with pity, (compassion-ruth) ; there is the association of obduracy with stone in relation to Hagar's attitudes and responses to the events of her life over the years-which continue into the present until she blesses Marvin ; it is this obduracy, this hardness, impatience, stubborness which causes her to look back with ruth. The fact that the angel is blind seems to me to have nothing to do with sight for the look that Hagar casts is a backward glance, redolent with recollection, a look cast into the soul there to search for meaning, for accountability, for justice ; justice, after all is blind, and that is part of what the book is saying.

An association with *Look Homeward Angel,* by Thomas Wolfe is, therefore, not gratuituous (Margaret Laurence mentions Wolfe and his first novel in *The Diviners*) though differences are apparent. Wolfe's book is about youth

turning into manhood and maturity,one which reveals the complexities of human relations seen from the point of view of youth. When Eugene Gant leaves home after Ben's death, he knows that most of his life is behind him.

Hagar on the other hand looks back over an immense amount of time. Hers is a retrospective telling. She is mature, introspective and urgent as death closes in on her. What Hagar's life symbolises in terms of the consistent Biblical archetypes Margaret Laurence exploits in the book has been commented on in various places and New's remarks are still the best. It is important to note as well that Margaret Laurence's treatment reveals that the *spiritual* and the *physical* aridity of Hagar's life are engendered by her own temperament springing from the "Gainsay Who Dare" cry of the Cutties.

There is a second aspect of Wolfe's treatment in *Look Homeward, Angel* which assists an interpretation of Margaret Laurence's novel. This is his use of the sub-title, "A Story of the Buried Life". Doubtless borrowed from the short poem by Matthew Arnold which begins "Light flows our war of mocking words", Wolfe draws on Arnold's assertion in the poem that in man's hidden life, behind the disguises that he wears and underneath his inability, except in moments of love—rarely attained—there is a buried life which is the real life and which confirms meaning in existence. Love, Hagar knows, would be the agent of her redemption—if she could give it. The second part of her quest, and the one which becomes the agent of discovery of the profoundest truth, is love. As has been noted by many critics Wolfe drew the neo-platonism implicit in the lines adumbrating Arnold's meaning from Wordsworth and Coleridge. That this is so is made clear from the prose-poem which faces the first chapter of his novel. The appositeness of these allusions to Hagar's quest—to the symbolism in Margaret Laurence's novel—is plain : "Naked and alone we came into exile. In her dark womb we did not know our mother's face ; from the prison of her flesh we have come into the unspeakable and incommunicable prison of this earth".

One has to be careful in claiming deliberate associations where none exist. There is no evidence that Margaret Laurence was as self-consciously literary in her approach to treating her materials as Wolfe was. But these associations of Hagar's state, her quest, the impossible problems of communication, the charnel house she makes of her life, her obduracy in connection with her inability to love—which is nevertheless seen as the agent of her release and which she is eventually able to offer, intellectually and cynically if not compassionately find association with Wolfe. Furthermore God is not the agent of her discovery—she makes no more mention of God than does Wolfe (or Arnold or Wordsworth).

Hagar never achieves the calm if uncertain understanding of Arnold's figure—

> And there arrives a lull in the hot race
> Wherein he doth forever chase
> That flying and elusive shadow, rest.
> An air of coolness plays upon his face,
> And an unwonted calm pervades his breast.
> And then he thinks he knows
> The hills where his life rose,
> And the sea where it goes.

She rages against the dying of the light—but the cycle of birth and dying, after long and tortuous life, is not unlike Arnold's poem and bears close resemblance to the neo-platonism of Wordsworth's great Ode :

> When my second son was born, he found it difficult to breathe at first. He gasped a little, coming into the unfamiliar air. He couldn't have known before or suspected at all that breathing would be what was done by creatures here. Perhaps the same occurs elsewhere, an element so unknown you'd never suspect it at all, until—Wishful thinking. If it happened that way, I'd pass out with amazement. Can angels faint ?
> Ought I to appeal ? It's the done thing. Our Father—no. I want no part of that. All I can think is—Bless me or not, Lord, just as You please, for I'll not beg.

What Margaret Laurence's novel lacks—and what characterizes neo-platonic romanticism—are echoes of pre-existence. But there is a hint at the close, again in Hagar's cynical and mocking mode, of a return : "He (John) couldn't have known before or suspected at all that breathing was what was done by creatures here. Perhaps the same occurs elsewhere an element so unknown you'd never suspect it at all, until... Can angels faint ?".

There is another literary comparison which suggests itself—one which the author herself has noted in a passing reference. And this is between *The Stone Angel* and *King Lear,* and between Hagar and Lear as principal figures. Differences of course are more readily apparent than similarities. *King Lear* is the single great masterpiece of English literature (if one had to choose one) and perhaps the greatest piece of tragic drama the world possesses. There is a great public theme in *King Lear* : the personal tragedy of Lear emanates from his decision about the conduct of public affairs ; nations and the weal and woe of whole societies (as Lear comes to recognise) are affected by his

self-indulgence. One admits—the point needs hardly be made—that *King-Lear* is a supreme poetic achievement. *The Stone Angel* does not strive for the aesthetic effect that Lear attains. Fiction in any case—it is a tautology to say it—is not poetic (though it can be just as symbolic) as is drama.

This comparison between *King Lear* and *The Stone Angel,* between what happens to Lear and Hagar, between what their lives consist of is worth pursuing if for no other reasons than the illumination our contemplation of the greater work throws on the contemporary one.

The Stone Angel, like *King Lear,* is about a variety of related themes—age and aging, children and family relationships, gratitude and ingratitude, pride—pride prompts Lear's downfall and "pride was Hagar's wilderness". Associations between the two texts proliferate and adumbrate their meaning. Hagar in her age dwells on her "lost men" : "No, I'll not think that...". She might almost say with Lear : "No, not that way : that way madness lies". Hagar hears, as does Lear, the "terrible laughter of God—the jests of God as they pluck the wings of men like flies for sport. "Hagar, fleeing her children who would consign her to the oblivion of a gerontological centre is like Lear abandoned on the heath. In her drunknessness she is like Lear : she goes through a period of reflective madness from which she must recover. And in the wasteland Hagar, like Lear, is alone and crushed by the elements, the agent of her madness :

> Old Meg was brave as Margaret Queen,
> And tall as Amazon ;
> An old red blanket cloak she wore,
> A ship hat had she on ;
> God rest her aged bones somewhere...
> She died full long agone.

> I wish I had a blanket cloak. It's cold here. My room's so cold tonight. It's just like Doris, not to put the furnace on. What a penny-pincher that woman is. We could all freeze in our beds before she'd warm the house to the rune of half a dollar. I can't stop this wretched shivering. But I'll not call her. She'll not hear me complaining (p. 163).

Hagar bedecking herself with the backs and bellies of beatles is like Lear as his sanity begins to return.

Hagar learns, though she fights it until the last sentence of the novel, that she is not her own master but rather part of the flux of general reality. Hagar, like Lear is helpless against forces which are relentless in having their own way. Underneath the rage with which she confronts the objective world Hagar is insecure, anxious, defensive. And like Lear she is obdurate—her pride drives her from the social world to live amongst the elements. There, in the derelict cannery, in the midst of a thunder storm, she meets Murray Lees, reduced, himself, to rock bottom. Like Edgar, Lees has lost his faith and, like Edgar, Lear, and Hagar, he has escaped the social world for purposes like theirs. Well might he say with Edgar :

> I will preserve myself ; and am bethought
> To take the basest and the poorest shape
> That ever penury, in contempt of man,
> Brought near to beast.

It is worth noting that it is in the cannery that Hagar, like Murray Lees, declares her loss of faith (and like Lear and Gloucester in the elements who also recognize that they have had children and have lost them through abnegation). This is one of the most chilling scenes in the novel :

> We sit quietly in this place, except for ourselves, and listen for the terrible laughter of God, but can hear only the vapid chuckling of the sea (p. 234).

There is a good deal of reference to God in *The Stone Angel* – in the hymns that are sung ; in the severe puritanism which shapes the soul of Hagar and her society ; in the visits of the minister of the church with his vapid solecisms about God ; in the extended Biblical analogy which forms the metaphoric framework of the novel (The analogies between Hagar and her Biblical counterpart are familiar in the commentaries on the novel). So that as Hagar and Murray Lees tell each other of the loss of their children and contemplate the terrible pain these losses have occasioned, they muse : if there were a God he would treat human kind as subjects for his terrible jests. No time is spent contemplating God in *King Lear* (there is only one reference to God in the singular—V, iii, l. 17) but if there were a God it would seem (as with the wanton boys) he would treat mankind as indifferently and mercilessly as he has the sons of Lees and Hagar in *The Stone Angel.*

Analogies between the children of Lear and those of Hagar in their treatments of the aged parents are also apparent, though there is none of the terrifying, unqualified evil in Doris and Marvin that one finds in Goneril and Regan. Nevertheless "ingratitude" is a theme in both lives. And both Lear and Hagar

are adamant in their refusal to display their responses to the "heartless treatment life doles out : "You think I'll cry ? No I'll not cry", says Lear and, when John dies, Hagar's heart turns to stone : "The night my son died I was transformed to stone and never wept at all". Like Lear when he keens Cordelia dead in his arms, Hagar comes to the recognition, too late : "I'd had so many things to say to him, so many things to put to rights. He hadn't waited to hear".

Thus Hagar learns the same lessons that Lear learns—that there is no governing principle in the universe but rather anarchy and motiveless evil. The play asserts that there is no capability in human action or affirmation powerful enough to combat evil, to assert a positive moral principle which acts for good (Gloucester is blinded, for example, because Goneril and Regan cannot destroy the personal good in him ; Cordelia is murdered once the main political action of the play has passed—there is no defence for this at all : it is wholly motiveless). Hagar finds no reason for John's death : "It was senseless... that was the thing. Pointless. Done for a bet". By implication she is asking the same sort of question as Lear, the play's most important abstract question : "Is there any cause in Nature that makes these hard hearts ?". And the answer is that explanations about evil and its manifestations are beyond nature. Hagar is not concerned, of course, (as is Lear) with the difference between moral evil (which is defeated in Lear) and basic evil (which prevails). But she is concerned to learn about God and reject Him—he is merely a jester and if he exists at all, anarchic in his behaviour.

Hagar, when she defects, has reached the same point Lear has reached before he is thrust out into the storm. Hagar might well cry out with Lear :

> O, reason not the need ! Our basest beggars
> Are in the poorest thing superfluous.
> Allow not nature more than nature needs,
> Man's life's as cheap as beast's... But, for true need,—
> You heavens, give me that patience, patience I need !
> You see me here, you gods, a poor old man,
> As full of grief as age ; wretched in both !
> If it be you that stirs these daughters' hearts
> Against their father, fool me not so much (1)
> To bear it tamely ; touch me with noble anger,
> And let no women's weapons, water-drops,
> Stain my man's cheeks ! ... You think I'll weep ;
> No, I'll not weep.

This is her assertion of true need.

King Lear ends as tragedy ends with a sense of tragic waste and with the emotions of pity and fear heightened to the breaking point. In Lear nothing is resolved ; Kent's bewildered question : "Is this the promis'd end ?" goes

unanswered. The best he can do is suggest that Lear's suffering can come to an end while that of mankind will continue :

> He hates him.
> That would upon the rack of this tough world
> Stretch him out longer.

Hagar, learning the same lessons as Lear learns, brings her life to a quieter close. She has lived a lesser (though no less important) life ; she has been stretched on the rack, has cast herself into the wilderness, lived as unaccommodated man. She learns wisdom, humility and compassion—from the dying women in the hospital ward, from the young girl with the festering appendix, from a young nurse and from her grandchild. As the socialisation of Hagar takes place her world shrinks from the wide expanses of sky and land of the Canadian prairies where men eke out an uncertain livelihood subject to the infinite caprices of nature, to the middle-class suburban home of Marvin and Doris : Marvin's talkative, self-protective moralism—much like Edgar's when he first adopts his madman's weeds in *Lear*—irritates Hagar as his patient evading of issues, and the wary goodness he displays incite Hagar's rage, a rage almost as impotent as her failing, flaccid body ; her world shrinks to the decaying wilderness of the derelict cannery, so apt a symbol for her own state and that of Murray Lees ; to the hospital ward and then to the single room—as the shrinking takes place so the socialisation accompanies it. In the end Hagar can say :

> Pride was my wilderness, and the demon that led me there was fear. I was alone, never anything else, and never free, for I carried my chains within me, and they spread out from me and shackled all I touched. Oh, my two, my dead. Dead by your own hands or by mine ? Nothing can take away those years (p. 292).

And this recognition proceeds from the knowledge she gains at the end of her life :

> This knowing comes upon me so forcefully, so shatteringly, and with such a bitterness as I have never felt before. I must always, always have wanted that—simply to rejoice. How is it I never could ? I know, I know. How long have I known ? Or have I always known, in some far crevice of my heart, some cave too deeply buried, too concealed ? Every good joy I might have held, in my man or any child of mine or even the plain light of morning, of walking the earth, all were forced to a stand-still by some brake of proper appearances—oh, proper to whom ? When did I ever speak the heart's truth ? (p. 292).

She seeks no more, and comes to the same recognition as Lear :

> When thou does ask me blessing, I'll kneel down
> And ask of thee forgiveness.

The Christian theme is rounded off at the novel's close ; the allusions to Jacob associated with Marvin are consolidated in the final scene between Hagar and her eldest son :

> Now it seems to me he is truly Jacob, gripping with all his strength, and bargaining. *I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.* And I see I am thus strangely cast, and perhaps have been so from the beginning, and can only release myself by releasing him (p. 304).

She passes a blessing on Marvin at the end—a lie :

> The dead don't bear a grudge nor seek a blessing. The dead don't rest uneasy. Only the living, Marvin, looking at me from anxious elderly eyes, believes me. It doesn't occur to him that a person in my place would ever lie (p. 304).

W. H. New makes the point with reference to the allusions to Jacob that John, the favoured younger son, wrestling to erect the fallen angel on the Currie-Shipley grave above the town of Manawaka is not the Jacob Hagar would have him. "John in wrestling with this angel is only himself, sweating, grunting, swearing. It is Marvin... who is truly Jacob" (p. viii).

New also points out how the Biblical analogies—the Genesis story of Jacob and of Abraham's two families of but also the way in which Margaret Laurence draws on St. Paul's reference to Hagar's story in Galatians :

> For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a free woman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh ; but he of the free woman was by promise. Which things are an allegory : for these are the two covenants ; the one from the mount Sinai, which engendereth to bondage, which is Agar. For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above us is free, which is the mother of us all. For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not ; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not : for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath a husband (p. viii)

broadens and deepens the weight of meaning and the implications of the action of the novel.

New also draws our attention to the numerous desert images in the novel—the prairie in drought, the wilderness through which Hagar wanders ; the imagery associated with carnal things (her husband Bram's "banner over me was his skin") when taken together with Biblical archetypes fosters the sense of Hagar as tragic figure. Yet despite the fact that Hagar's tragic, or domestic tragic, status is heightened by an association of Biblical references out of which Margaret Laurence forges a contemporary archetype, her story is not a Christian story and her tragedy, as we have suggested, takes place in a world like Lear's rather than that of the Biblical figures. Hagar redeems herself in the end. Her recognition is prompted by the preacher singing a hymn, but the hymn is an accidental agent.

The imagery associated with Hagar in the present tense action of the novel, as she, rampant with memory, surveys her life, is drawn from nature. And while much of the humour of the book comes from Hagar's unflinching and sometimes derisive associations between herself and natural things—birds, fish, creatures of the land—the imagery has a deeper affect in associating Hagar with fundamental life, much in the way Lear is associated with the fundamental life as when he says in the speech cited above, "man's life is cheap as beast's" and when Shakespeare builds up a pattern of images of power and horror such as that associated with "filial ingratitude" where Lear says :

> Is it not as this mouth should tear this hand
> For lifting food to it ?

and culminating in Act IV, Scene VI where man and beast are indistinguishable :

> I pardon that man's life. What was thy cause ?
> Adultery ?
>
> Thou shalt not die. Die for adultery ? No.
> The wren goes to't, and the small gilded fly
> Does lecher in my sight.
>
> Let copulation thrive ; for Gloucester's bastard son
> Was kinder to his father than my daughters
>
> Got' tween the lawful sheets,
> To't, luxury, pell-mell ! for I lack soldiers.

Behold yond simp'ring dame,
Whose face between her forks presageth snow,
That minces virtue, and does shake the head
To hear of pleasure's name.

The fitchew nor the soiled horse goes to't
With a more riotous appetite.

Down from the waist they are Centaurs,
Though women all above.

But to the girdle do the gods inherit,
Beneath is all the fiend's.

Here disgust and loathing replace civilised values and the world, governed by fiends and not even gods (let alone God) is bestial and nihilistic.

Disgust and loathing play a part in Hagar's ruminations from the outset of the novel and are associated with decay even in the midst of life, stifling man's puny attempts in creating order and finding beauty in its midst. These are typical passages :

> Above Manawaka, and only a short way from the peonies drooping sullenly over the graves, was the town dump. Here were crates and cartons, tea chests with torn tin stripping, the unrecognizable effluvia of our lives, burned and blackened by the fire that seasonally cauterized the festering place. Here were the wrecks of cutters and buggies, the rusty springs and gashed seats, the skeletons of conveyances purchased in fine fettle by the town fathers and grown as racked and ruined as the old gents, but not afforded a decent concealment in earth. Here were the leavings from tables, gnawed bones, rot-softened rinds of pumpkin and marrow, peelings and cores, pits of plum, broken jars of preserves that had fermented and been chucked reluctantly away rather than risk ptomaine. It was a sulphurous place, where even the weeds appeared to grow more gross and noxious than elsewhere, as though they could not help but show the stain and stench of their improper nourishment (p. 26).

It is here in the "staggering heaps" of discarded eggs that some of the eggs had been fertile and had hatched in the sun. The chicks, feeble, foodless, bloodied and mutilated, prisoned by the weight of broken shells all around them, were trying to crawl "like little worms, their half-mouths opened uselessly among the garbage. I could only gawk and retch, I and the others, all except one".

Or : There was little enough time or room for flowering shrubs there, with that land that was never lucky from the first breaking of the ground, all the broken machinery standing in the yard like the old bones and ribs of great dead sea creatures washed to shore, and the yard muddy and puddled with yellow ammonia pools where the horses emptied themselves. The lilacs grew with no care given them, and in the early summer they hung like bunches of mild mauve grapes from branches with leaves like dark green hearst, and the scent of them was so bold and sweet you could smell nothing else, a seasonal mercy (pp. 29-30).

Or, speaking of Bram :

He managed usually to keep himself in line during harvest, when the threshing gang was there. They'd be half-breeds from the mountain, mostly, or drifters, and why he should have cared what they thought of him, I can't imagine, but he did. In ten years he had changed, put away the laughter he once wore and replaced it with a shabbier garment. When the threshing gang was there, he used to boast about his place and what he planned to do with it. To hear him then, you'd think the great red barns would be rising, miraculous as Jesus from the tomb before another year had passed. Toolsheds would blossom like field buttercups. Fences would shake their old shoulders and straighten of their own accord. Silos by the score would sprout like toadstools. The hawkfaced men, listening, would laugh their low laughter, grin their slow grins, and say, "Sure, sure". Then they'd glance sideways out the window to the gray-bleached barn that settled a little more each year into the dung-soft loam, the henhouse surrounded by chicken wire that sagged bunchily like bloomers without elastic, the tip-tilted outhouse looking like a child's parody of the leaning tower. That damned outhouse bothered me most of all. It always looked so foolish (p. 114).

And there is the human concomitant in Hagar's disgust with her rotting body which she tries to cover—to no avail—with silks festooned with flowers :

Heaving, I pull myself up. As I slide my legs out of bed, one foot cramps and I'm helpless for a second. I grasp the bed, put my toes on the icy floor, work the cramp out, and then I'm standing, the weight of my flesh heavy and ponderous, my hair undone now and slithering lengthily around my bare and chilly shoulders, like snakes on a Gorgon's head. My satin nightgown, rumpled and twisted, hampers and hobbles me. I seem to be rather shaky. The idiotic quivering of my flesh won't stop. My separate muscles prance and jerk (p. 300).

Margaret Laurence's world does not approximate the degree of loathing of Lear's and Shakespeare's world. But the images she populates the novel with suggest their common humanity and the similarity of the circumstances in which they reconcile their positions in the world. The images are too numerous to list in their entirety but a sampling suggests their appropriateness to the symbolic level at which they function. The pattern is introduced at the point where the present time action of the novel begins. Hagar in her present state says of herself : "I gasp and flounder like a fish on the slimy boards of a dock". Later on in a profusion of images Hagar compares herself to "a fenced cow", "an earthworm impaled by children on the ferociously unsharp hook of a safety pin", "a sow in labor", "an old malevolent crow", a "constipated cow". Her voice "erupts like a burst boil", she is held "securely like an egg in a crate". As the novel progresses and as Hagar escapes the confines of the restraining domesticity of Marvin and Doris for the decaying cannery she compares herself to "an overturned lady bug, frantically waving" ; she lives among "oily hempen ropes that lie like tired serpents, limp and uncoiled in corners".

As her condition worsens in the cannery she anticipates her death and the waste of saying prayers and spraying flowers over her : "I'll be dead as a mackerel", she says. Later still she refers to herself as "huge and immovable, like an old hawk caught, eyes wide open, unblinking". And when Marvin, Doris and the policeman finally arrive to retrieve her, her reaction is couched in terms associated with the capture of animals : "Have I grown so weak I must rejoice at being captured, taken alive ?". In the hospital ward, her own deteriorating condition associated with that of others like herself semi-drugged into sleep, she compares the breathing and the voices of the ward to the "flutter (of) birds caught inside a building".

Hagar is as hard on other characters in the novel as she is on herself— or say rather that she is impartial in her treatment of others. Her daughter-in-law Doris is referred to as a "pouch-faced gopher eyeing acorns, eager to nibble", and of one of her fellow sufferers in the hospital ward Hagar says "her dental plate clicks like a snapping turtle".

These images overwhelm others associated with Hagar's rage to live— flowers (rarer and more cherished because of the difficulty with which they live on the arid prairies) and latterly flowered print silk dresses (as opposed to the dull plastic dresses Doris wears).

Richard Chase, writing in *The American Novel and Its Tradition* says of the function of imagery in imaginative writing that a rendering of the meaning of poetic symbols is not always easy to manage :

> ... a poetic symbol not only means something, it is something—namely, an autonomous truth which has been discovered in the process by which the symbol emerged in the context of the poem. It still permits us to think of it as an ordinary symbol—as something that stands for something else—we see that it does not point to anything easy to express. Rather, it suggests several meanings. ...Furthermore, the "poetry" of a novel will probably reside less in the language than in the rhythm and relation of picture, scene, character, and action...

And it is in this respect that the most important quest of the novelist and her character is discovered. Underneath Hagar's obduracy—in whose unyielding and unloving nature, in struggle with her inner being one perceives the cries of her soul to extend and receive love, to overcome her obduracy—is revealed the deeper search the novelist makes. It has to do with an examination of the "buried life" and the source of things. Like Wordsworth, Arnold and Wolfe, Laurence seeks for understanding of meaning at the most fundamental level. She wants to look into the life of things. She wants also to account for what seems to her a motiveless energy—if not malignity—in the universe.

NOTES

1. *Laurence, Margaret.* **The Stone Angel,** *(New Canadian Library, McClelland and Stewart), Toronto, 1968 (All references in my text are to this edition of the novel).*

NARRATIVE AND THEMATIC PATTERNS IN THE STONE ANGEL

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The Stone Angel is not a reflection of life in Manawaka, even less of life in Neepawa, Manitoba, at the time of Margaret Laurence's childhood. It is a novel, that is an artificial construction made of words chosen by a writer who was indeed raised in a town which possesses similarities with the Manawaka of her novels, but who did not write Hagar's story *because* she lived in Neepawa. She definitely treats her fictional personages as if they possessed a life of their own, as if they were actual friends or relatives with whom she lives :

> I don't think I have ever written anything in which the main character hasn't been in my mind for at least several years, sometimes many years..." (1),

but the realities of writing are obstrusive enough for her not to confuse fiction and life. About the time sequence in *The Stone Angel* and the flashback technique, she admits that

> (it) is *not* after all the way people actually remember... I am still not sure that I decided the right way when I decided to place Hagar's memories in chronological order... One can say that the method I chose diminishes the novel's resemblance to life, but on the other hand, writing – however consciously ordered its method – is never disorderly as life. Art, in fact, is never life. It is never as paradoxical, chaotic, complex, or as alive as life (2).

Fiction is not a mirror of life but a selection of elements duly borrowed from reality, sociological and cultural, but not to be mistaken for it. Fiction is a verbal structure which is set up with and against the whole corpus of novels, and more generally of fiction writing which is part of a writer's culture and that of the readers for whom the novel is composed. The responses of the reading public are partially predicted and controlled by their "literary" and cultural competence ; they are taken into account by the writer who resorts to certain conventions of writing and breaks others in order to create precise effects which have nothing to do with real life.

As a consequence, the traditional approach to novel analysis is definitely confusing : Margaret Laurence is praised for her life-like picture of the Manawaka

world ; criticism deals with the personages, the locations and actions of the novel in the same terms in which one deals with their analogues in real life, thus eliminating the specificity of the fictional discourse. Fiction is not life ; it is patterned writing. Life-like as they may be, fictional characters are constructions of the writer's mind : the features selected to give them the appearance of life, the actions invented to organize the story are ways of making the fiction signify by setting up meaningful patterns. This may correspond to what Margaret Laurence herself calls the form of her novel :

> I am concerned... with finding a form which will enable a novel to reveal itself, a form through which the characters can breathe (3).

The Stone Angel is not built around a human being called Hagar who might exist outside the fiction ; it entirely creates the personage through the discourse which it attributes to a linguistic subject whose existence is nothing else that the materiality of the words on the page. Hagar is not a "fictional human being", as a commentator presents the main character, but simply a verbal creation. The analyst is not performing his critical function when he is encouraged by the same commentator, to "respond and disclose in synchrony with the character" (4) in order to fully understand Laurence's novel. Identification with the hero and absence of distanciation inevitably and naturally characterize novel reading in most instances and there is nothing to be distressed about since the aim of the genre is to get the reader involved. But reader involvement cannot be a sound foundation for literary study. Transcending the mimetic, the analyst must attempt to make explicit the systems of conventions and the cultural codes and associations which enable the fictional discourse to provide its meanings (5).

My concern in this paper will be the discovery of the forms which organize the fictional discourse and constitute the ordering or artful disordering of the narrative and discursive sequences. The analysis will not start with the mistaken assumption that Hagar Shipley and the other personages of *The Stone Angel* are real beings, even if one of the aims of the novelist is to give the reader the illusion that they are real. The analysis will be founded on the only reality which a novel happens to constitute — words and nothing but words.

The Stone Angel is presented as the direct transcription of the speech acts of a speaking voice not supposed to have listeners ; it appears as a sort of sound recording totally unmediated and whose transmission to the reader is conventionnally accepted and raises no problems concerning its origin and reliability. The reader accepts the illusion to be present in the mind of a mentally-

speaking subject. The discourse is not a narrative but the mimesis of Hagar's consciousness, an inner soliloquy freely interspersed with exact transcripts of conversations or dialogues always recorded form the exclusive point of view of the speaking voice, the author being conventionally absent or nothing more than a privileged, impartial stenographer.

Hagar is made to speak to herself, and the form of the novel permits the subject to keep the speaking part of herself at a distance : she is made to watch herself in the process of speaking, thus creating in the reader an impression of total lucidity which is again conventional, but effective. In addition, the very form of the discourse gives to the subject verbally realized a coherence which is refused to all other personages. Hagar is alone and linguistically unique. This is not the consequence of her so-called temper and personality, but the result obtained by a certain form of verbal construction. The fundamental isolation of the subject, the radical opposition set up between Hagar and the world is not psychological but is the direct effect of the linguistic form of the novel, for the speaking voice excludes all others. The secondary characters are secondary because the discourse reduces them to the status of objects. Hagar is linguistically the only subject : the others exist through the words she utters. The world created by her discourse is exclusively her own : she sets it up against the "I" of her discourse. Thus, the very form of *The Stone Angel* postulates and foregrounds the isolation of the main character.

The novel aims at representing the incoherence and complexity of the stream of consciousness, and the reader must be led to recognize the unpredictability of the mental associations which constitute the soliloquy. Disorder is therefore carefully built in. A concession to the tradition of classical fiction writing is made : the novel is divided into ten chapters with roughly the same length. Otherwise, it avoids explicit ordering by systematically mixing elements concerning the fictional present with narrative or reflexive passages relating to the fictional past, instead of having the time sequence flow one way : the heroine is made to recall her entire history within the span of a few weeks. Even so, the novelist complies with the conventions of chronological time in traditional fiction : the memories flow in an orderly way, from infancy to maturity, as the events of the fictive past are supposed to have succeeded one another. The memories of childhood are narrated in the first chapter ; what follows in the past is unevenly distributed among the following chapters, from two to seven, and what is supposed to immediately precede Hagar's present is introduced in chapter eight, the last two chapters constituting the junction of past and present and preparing the denouement.

But order is obscured, and what is foregrounded in the discourse is precisely not the orderly outflow but its incessant interruption. There is a constant, yet irregular oscillation between two opposites, past and present. The length of past and present episodes varies from a few lines to nearly one chapter, and the narrative sequences are unpredictably mixed with reflective ones suggesting the spontaneity of life. Flashbacks are introduced at the most unexpected moments and their motivation corresponds to the vagaries of the mind in real life : it is when Hagar is made to take some rest or when she seems to doze or is forced to wait for the doctor's visit that the long sequences of her past are recorded in the novel.

But the attentive reader discovers regularities that go beyond the minimal concessions to the conventions of novel writing. They correspond to a form of patterning which affects both the narrative and the semantics of the discourse. Margaret Laurence carefully chooses the elements of past and present which she opposes in the same chapter. The first contrasts two self-portraits — the child and the old woman. A pattern of exclusion informs chapter two : Hagar's elder son, Marvin, is anxious to evict Hagar from her house and have her admitted into a rest home. This sequence in the present is provided with an analogue in the past : she was rejected by her father when she rebelled against the family rules by marrying the wrong person. In the third chapter, her reaction to the threat of exclusion is introduced in the present as in the past : Hagar dissembles but refuses to yield. She is eventually defeated in the sequences which refer to the past narrated in chapter four, as she will be defeated in the present ; but, in order to maintain the suspense, the fictional discourse does not make the parallelism explicit. In chapter five, Hagar is made to narrate her past flight from her husband's house and the parallel flight from her son's in the fictional present. Chapter six opposes and places in parallel the old, ruined cannery in which she finds a temporary refuge in the present, with the ramshackle, dilapidated farm of her dying husband. Chapter seven, even more artificially and quite explicitly, associates the narrative sequence in which two children are "playing house" on the beach close to the cannery and the memory of Hagar's second son playing house with his girl friend at Manawaka. Chapter eight introduces an old man who visits Hagar in the cannery and whose fate is parallel to that of the old woman : both rebelled against their parents, both contracted ill-assorted marriages, and both caused the deaths of their beloved sons through irrational behaviour. Chapters nine and ten do not oppose past and present sequences : they simply bring the story in the present to an end by preparing the heroine's death. Therefore, it is obvious that narrative symmetry is clearly pursued, even if it contradicts the requirements of plausibility which demand disorder and incoherence in the stream of consciousness. The novelist definitely prefers what she calls the "form" of her novel to the conventions of make-believe which might obscure her design.

Patterning is present in yet another way, even more meaningful. The parallelism in the narrative sequences is constantly reinforced by recurrences which structure the novel from beginning to end. The main pattern perceived through the multiplicity and diversity of the episodes is one of opposition. In practically all sequences, the main character is placed in a relationship of antagonism with the other characters, either in the past or in the present. Hagar is constantly portrayed as different and hostile. When a temporary or even a lasting similitude is introduced, as with her father whose rigid pride she possesses, it is soon turned into animosity and aggressiveness. What Hagar is made to do, the way she is made to behave, is marked by the seme of opposition.

In the present sequences, this opposition is given the form of an unequal contest for the possession of a house in which Hagar lives with Marvin and his wife : they want her to settle in a rest home and she is determined to stay where she is. In the memories of the past, opposition to all other characters, whoever they may be, is the only pattern which emerges out of the apparent confusion of the incidents successively recorded : the speaking voice is either passively facing antagonists and thus singled out and placed apart and aloof, or she is actively resisting attack and fighting back. The family war-cry or motto, "Gainsay who dare !" (p. 13) is significantly granted to her in preference to her more tractable brothers. It constitutes the very matrix of the novel : all narrative episodes are mere expressions of this model signifying opposition.

Apparently the relationship of opposition is not provided with a uniform semantic content. The novel manages to entertain confusion about the origin, the motivation, and the modalities of this opposition : the heroine is made to oppose not a particular set of values, but any protagonist placed in relationship with her. She opposes her father who wants to marry her to a decent man who will provide well for her, and she picks up Bram whose unrefined manners antagonize the family. Once married, Hagar opposes Bram for the very reasons she rebels against her father, and she now dreams of being a lady and having a fine house. The first-born son, Marvin, is identified with Bram and consequently despised and rejected, though he behaves sensibly and tries to take advantage of his limited possibilities. The second son, John, is presented as being more like his mother, but the story again sets son and mother in open confrontation, and the core of the novel is constituted by a series of conflictual scenes between John and Hagar, paralleling those between father and daughter, or between husband and wife. The opposition between Hagar and John culminates in the narrative of the accidental death of John, motivated by the last manifestation of resistance on the part of the mother who refuses John's marriage and drives him to despair and to a death which comes close to suicide (pp. 239-243). The invariant in all scenes, past and present, is clearly the "Gainsay

Who Dare !" of the first chapter, an oppositional pattern which seems to be set up for its own sake. The speaking voice's essence is thus reduced to sheer antagonism.

The death of John brings the recollection of the past to an end and no one is left to fight against except Marvin. But the novel rearranges a new set of relationships between Hagar's and Marvin's worlds, and the narrative elements in the present are again patterned by the exclusive figure of opposition : Hagar fights any initiative of her son and daughter-in-law. Most dialogues, either with them or with the kind, well-mannered minister who visits her are transcripts of verbal fights, and the vocabulary which records them is one of conflict and warfare with skirmishes, attacks, blows, retreats, defeats, and temporary truces. Until her last gasp, Hagar is presented as opposing and fighting : she holds on and refuses to yield, whether she is right or wrong. Existence becomes opposition. From this point of view, the novel is monotonously consistent and predictable : the whole narrative part is the expansion of the same pattern presenting the subject in systematic opposition to all protagonists invented by the fictional discourse. This pattern of opposition without a content accounts for the impression of contradiction and confusion which is in the reader's mind about the heroine. The discourse makes her unpredictable : she says what she does not want to say (pp. 98, 262, 274) ; she wants something and its opposite (p. 100) ; she hates the old man in the cannery and she is fond of him (p. 253). "I do know it and I do not" (p. 36), she says, and "There's no explaining it" (p. 92). Again, this is superficial disorder and inconsistency, but at a deeper level, it appears as so many translations of the same fundamental form of opposition deprived of a precise content : the speaking voice exists by resisting all objects, whatever their semantic form.

Other narrative patterns can indeed be perceived, like the recurrent behaviour of children repeating the actions of their parents and reproducing their attitudes. But this does not account for the whole structuration of the novel. It also seems that Margaret Laurence likes to foreground the lack of communication between protagonists, and emphasizes in her narrative all that signals incommunicability and isolation, but this orientation is not a structuring pattern either, and it is often presented as the mere effect or the internalization of the oppositional patterns dominating all narratives, and not as an organizing principle with a consistency of its own. Hagar's privileged means of communication with the protagonists of the novel is aggression in its various forms – open fight, bickering, sarcasm, rebellion, flight, hostile silence. It is not what is opposed that is significant, but the mere existence of opposition as the exclusive way of relating the main personage with the others. This is what the discourse translates as pride : "pride was my wilderness", Hagar exclaims (p. 292).

Opposition and its narrative transcription as agrressiveness is also given a purely stylistic form by means of lexical violence. The language which the discourse attributes to Hagar is notoriously undecorative and at times obtrusively unconventional ; it is less an instrument of dialogue and exchange than of aggression and violence. The incongruity of the imagery is not gratuitous : its debunking force is used as a weapon, even when the speaking voice wields it to hurt the part of herself which she is supposed to observe with little sympathy. The metaphors and similes are often mercilessly cruel : "I grow perturbed, a fenced cow..." (p. 53) ; "I am held... like an earthworm" (p. 54) ; "I glare like a malevolent crow" (p. 91). About middle-aged men, she is made to remark that they are "in their prime, as they say, like beef" (p. 6). The text manifests little compassion for age and infirmities, fostering, she says, late devotion : "age increases natural piety like a kind of insurance policy falling due" (p. 98). The heroine is provided with a power of observation which spares no one : hostility in the speaking voice is general, and its stylistic translation is not less effective than its narrative manifestations. There is no doubt that opposition structures the discourse on multiple levels and should be read as the dominant form of the novel.

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Other patterns can be detected, neither narrative nor stylistic, but directly affecting the discursive level. The speaking voice proposes a vision of the world which is not neutral. Beneath the surface of the narrative, a complete system of values can be apprehended, organized as a set of binary oppositions which semantically structure the novel. Instead of the effect of confusion possibly created by a pattern of opposition void of any permanent content, an inescapable impression of coherence is derived by the analyst who cannot fail to discover unmistakable semantic recurrences shaping the vision attributed to Hagar.

The first sequence of the novel provides the most explicit expression of this vision founded on binary oppositions which can, at least partially, be superimposed and must definetely be combined : the paradigmatic correspondences and oppositions between lexical items introduced in the first three pages are clearly marked and highly significant.

First, they ostensibly oppose a strong man and a weak woman : the marble statue in the cemetery was erected by Hagar's obstinate father in memory of her mother "who relinquished her feeble ghost" in a process parallel, yet contrary, to that of the child who "gained (her) stubborn one" (p. 3). The stone angel is both the symbol of a small "pharaoh", aggressively rich and proud, and of a feeble woman who died prematurely.

To the evocation of the angel is juxtaposed the description of "petty angels" which repeats the same motive in another variation : one of these angels honours the memory of "a flimsy, gutless creature, bland as egg custard" (p. 4) – all notations containing the seme of weakness – called Regina, who died a virgin after caring long, devoted years for a strong mother who, as soon as she was freed from her daughter's feeble devotion, rose from her bed and began to live. The opposition strength / weakness cannot be more blatantly, though ironically, formulated. The whole sequence euphemizes strength and pejorates weakness, associated with lack of life and with dull pettiness.

A second set of opposites appears in the same evocation : the first sequence says little about the strong, rich father. It is more explicit when it deals with Regina and her mother : the latter is presented as "an old, disrespectful lady" who "must be laughing spitefully in hell, while virginal Regina sighs in heaven" (p. 4). It is clear that the fun and joy of disorder accompany strength, whereas weakness connotes sterility and sadness.

The third descriptive element of the opening pages clarifies the second set of opposites and completes the associations. The cemetery, with its unavoidable connotations of death is evidently linked with order and distinction. It is described as a place where one parades and shows off, where the sociable and fashionable flowers are systematically weighted with pejorative modifiers : "pompous blossoms hanging leadenly, too heavy for their light stems... infested with upstart ants" (p. 4). Thus, the symbols of pretension and social integration are threatened both by their own weakness and the assaults of disorder represented by objectianable ants. And the same opposition between order and disorder is even more manifest in the last lines of the opening sequence introducing the little girl walking "primly" in her Sunday clothes, threatened by disorderly thistles and disarray (pp. 4-5). "How anxious I was to be neat and orderly", Hagar is made to remark. Disorder is also present in the guise of a "disrespectful wind", "the coarse couchgrass encroaching upon the dutifully cared for habitations of the dead" ; other flowers manage to grow in opposition to the pompous, official ones : they are "tough-rooted", "wild and gaudy", and they attack the "clear and clearly civilized plots" ; their smell is musky and wild. The last notation completes the cluster of lexical items creating the opposition order/disorder : the weeds are explicitly associated with the Cree, the wild, uncivilized inhabitants of the Prairie "with (their) enigmatic faces and greasy hair" (p. 5).

At the beginning of the second sequence, when the fictional discourse announces that the speaking voice is "rampant with memory" (p. 5), we cannot

fail to notice another variation on the same opposition : on the one hand, dandelions connoting weediness, and on the other, the falsity of dissembling associated with weak-minded Marvin, who is somehow comforted by the picture of ladies feeding like docile rabbits (p. 5), another evocation of ordered weakness.

Thus, the two sets of opposites are clearly defined in less than three pages : weakness is opposed to strength, and order to disorder. The two sets do not exactly coincide, since the image of the father is associated both with strength and with social pretension connoting weakness. Yet the pattern is unmistakable in spite of its partial ambiguity : order connotes weakness and death as well as social conformity and nice manners ; disorder is related to strength, wildness, and boisterous life. The narrative implication is clear enough, though implicit : the intuitive response of strength is to resist order, as various episodes, both past and present, will help elucidate. Excess, incongruity, and agressiveness are somehow euphemized from the very beginning. The reflection which the discourse attributes to Hagar at the end of these significant pages cannot be mistaken either : the seme of disorder is meant to affect the heroine as a mark of life and positivity. Hagar must appear as an undignified, quarrelsome, unmanageable old woman : "to carp like this... is my only enjoyment, that and the cigarettes... Marvin thinks it disgraceful of me to smoke at my age" (p. 5). Carping and cigarette-smoking are presented as manifestations of the same irrepressible vitality : both notations signify incongruity and resistance to order. This disorderly vitality — or wild strength — is the feature that the discourse attributes to Hagar from her first memories of childhood to the last scene in the hospital. Seen in this light, the novel assumes a structural unity which the apparent complexities and contradictions of the narrative pattern of opposition partially conceal but do not occult. Even when she opposes strong and weak indiscriminately, Hagar organizes her world into two numerically unbalanced groups : the host of those who are weak and who conform is opposed to the few whom she fiercely fights but who gain her admiration, whereas she despises the weak.

Among those whom she is made to despise, Mr. Troy, the bland minister, is a prominent figure. Lexically, the discourse applies to him the seme of feminity, weakness, submission to order, and also refinement which goes with distinction. He is presented as "pearly Mr. Troy", "plump and pink" (p. 38), murmuring words of consolation. He is the epitome of everything the text opposes to Hagar, and he belongs to the same world as Hagar's brothers who "took after our mother, graceful, unspirited, who tried to please him (the father) but rarely could" (p. 7). Marvin is a member of the same group : he never fights and he

likes peace. Less conspicuously, because the discourse does not give them a comparable importance, the doctor, the nurses, and the old people of the rest home are all included in this fraternity of the weak and sociable : they accept order and submit to the rules.

The strong ones are not numerous in the novel. Hagar's father is depicted in an ambiguous way : there is nothing nice about him and he is introduced as a harsh, insensitive man. Yet, he is also rich, class-conscious and pretentious, though this respectability is not linked with sophistication and distinction, and consequently untainted by weakness.

The novel creates two more fictive personages whose thematic function is not ambiguous : Bram, the husband, and John, the younger son, are constantly associated, and the last chapter unites them in a significant syntagm : "O my two, my dead !" (p. 292), Hagar exclaims. The features attributed to them combine wildness and strength, disorder and manliness. Bram is depicted as a powerful man with dirty fingernails and hair rough as thistles ; he looks like a bearded Indian (p. 45), and he has been seen with half-breed girls (p. 47) ; he is vulgar, obscene, and violent — all notations being obvious variations of the pattern established in the opening sequence.

John is presented as the favourtie of his mother because he does not yield :

> ... when I tried to put an arm around him, he pulled away, clattered upstairs to his own room and locked the door... (p. 131).

He too is associated with outcasts, the Métis of Manawaka, who will play so decisive a role in *The Diviners* and who are introduced here as the obvious symbols of marginality. John is made to play reckless games with them ; he will die playing one of the most daring ones they could devise. The narrative reunites John and Bram after several years' separation : the son helps the father prolong his utterly uncivilized life, distills his booze and consorts with the same Métis. The dilapidated farm in which they live their miserable lives stands as another symbol of their rejection of social order.

The three strong men, especially the last two, are constantly related to the weeds, the excesses and the Indians of the first sequence. Yet, ironically, Bram and John also stand as the main antagonists of Hagar. This apparent confusion of the issues does not mask the explicit bias of the discourse for strength combined with resistance to order, and balances the violence of Hagar's fight with the fierceness of her sympathy for anything or anybody that is socially objectionable.

The pattern runs throughout the novel and informs it. The polarities set up in the first pages recur again and again, and the novel is merely a series of variations on the clear motif presented at the outset : weakness is nice and civilized ; strength is unrefined but exuberantly alive.

The ambiguity of the father image is somehow reproduced in the very contradictions attributed to the main character of the novel. The house to which Hagar is made to desperately cling until the denouement is the metonym of social integration as well as of independence and strength. As long as Hagar lives in it, she is a recognized human being, she thinks. The fights that mark her past recollections are as much for social integration as against social order. Margaret Laurence internalizes the central binary opposition, placing the two contrasting poles *within* the heroine. The narrative transformation which is effected in the novel is a passage from the triumphant inclusion of the young girl, walking primly in kid boots and dangling Sunday skirts, and getting a university degree in preparation for a comfortable, refined, secure life in a nice, little town, to the pathetic exclusion of an old rebellious woman whose pranks and antics make her an embarrassment to all. Hagar is made to refuse and to desire order at the same time, in a contradictory approach which only a logical, lifeless pattern could exclude. The irreducible semes of strength and weakness, of order and disorder are reunited in the subject of the narrative, lending the personage the baffling contradictions of real life. This ambivalence, far from constituting a structural anomaly, contributes to give the fictional discourse its ultimate shape and it can be read as the key-feature of the novel as well as the perfect mimesis of life.

* * *

The heroine of *The Stone Angel* is eventually rejected and defeated. The insistence of the discourse on the solitude and defeat of the main character is part of a pattern of isolation which is not unlike the pattern of tragedy. Hagar is alone and lonely : she does not know her father (p. 19) ; she does not know her brother (p. 20) ; she does not communicate with her husband (pp. 87-101) ; she does not even understand her favourite son. When she makes peace with the other son on her death bed, it is a pretence and a lie (p. 304). She does not know her own mind either, and the words which she recalls about John are also hers : "What's the use ?... I don't know why, and that's all there's to it" (p. 195).

To exclude Hagar, all forces ally, from the cruel father and the degraded husband to the sensible son and daughter-in-law, not forgetting the minister, the family physician, the staff and inmates of the rest home, the nurses of the hospital, as well as old age, infirmities, and Hagar's own mistakes. Even God,

represented by Mr. Troy, sides with society and common sense. In the actantial scheme which can be proposed to account for the main narrative reduced to this process of gradual exclusion, the function of assistance is assumed by all personages, and Hagar represents the only counterforce of opposition to the process.

What constantly recurs in the last phase of this process is the opposition between a social norm associated with the family and the authorities, and Hagar's refusal to conform to the norm. Her behaviour causes shame and discomfort. The old woman shoud realize that she has become a burden and acknowledge defeat. Hagar is undeniably presented with the attributes of the victim in the tragic process which always culminates in the death of the hero. Superficially, the novel narrates the last weeks of an old, rebellious lady ; more significantly, *The Stone Angel* is constructed as the exclusion of the heroine who defends her right to be different against a society which wants her to accept its rules.

One of the last incidents chosen by the novelist enhances this unconventionality : against all likelihood, the heroine is made to run away to an old factory where she lives as an animal— or an Indian ? — and is visited by another semi-outcast. Significantly, they fraternize for a short night, huddled together and drinking cheap wine like bums and winos, the very image of unholy, disorderly life, according to the Protestant code of morality.

Order takes over after this last act of rebellion. Hagar is duly taken to a hospital and shackled onto a bed which she twice escapes to practise ironical yet meaningful pranks : she goes to the toilet alone and she brings the bedpan to her young neighbour (pp. 300-302), two unimportant but significant acts of rebellion ; in both cases, a sort of gratuitous act, ludicrous and incongruous, and connoting Hagar's refusal to conform. She rebels against all institutions, even the religious one. When she thinks that she will faint and die, she wonders whether she should behave as a decent old lady : "Ought I to appeal ? It's the done thing. *Our Father* — No. I want no part of that" (p. 307). Without unduly stretching the case, Hagar's exclusion and death may be read as the rejection of the non-conformist. The novel ends on the implicit victory of order and common sense : the rebel is finally defeated.

Yet the novelist mixes this rebellion with enough ambivalence to make the victim both innocent and guilty. One of the last revelations of the novel is the confession of chapter eight : the visitor of the old cannery and the mother of John both killed their sons. John's death is unambiguously attributed to Hagar's opposition to his marriage. Quite ironically, the novel makes Hagar

a champion of order and social integration, a tyrannic force demanding submission and conformity in her relationship with her son. She brings about his death and acknowledges her responsibility shortly before being sacrificed by the very forces of social order which she served. Far from introducing some inconsequence, this partial guilt adds another dimension to Hagar's victim status. The victim is not innocent : she belongs to the same world as her oppressors and she is guilty of the same oppressive tactics ; she partially shares their values though she is made to die as a rebel.

Isolation of the heroine, victim status, innocence and guilt, the articulateness that the form of the discourse necessarily endows the speaking voice with — all the ingredients for a tragedy are present in *The Stone Angel.* Without establishing an explicit link of causality between the rebellious attitude of Hagar and her death, the story is made to end in failure, with the radical marginalization of death being inflicted upon the heroine. Hagar, after Bram and John, seems to pay the price of resistance to social norms. Her rejection, even if it may be read as the normal process of natural death, partakes of the exclusion of the victim which characterizes the tragic pattern and which John's death prefigures : both son and mother rebel and they pay the penalty of their independence. Only Hagar is actually tragic, because she is the only one that is given articulateness : she dies but she also knows that she is dying, and she fights death until the very end with the energy she deployed when fighting the others. The form of the novel, excluding all other voices, privileges this fight by making it unique, and the discourse attributes to the only subject the lucidity expected from a truly tragic figure. Audaciously, if not convincingly, it maintains the heroine's lucidity to her last gasp. Hagar does not sink slowly into unconsciousness : the "I" of the fiction remains alert and alive, watching the fight of the exhausted heart and the progress of death. Plausibility is sacrificed to the imperatives of the tragic form : death is stylistically recorded as a simple interruption, an unfinished sentence opening on nothing : "And then —" (p. 308). It simply signals the end of the fight, the defeat of life.

At first sight, this tragic process is concealed behind the triviality of an ordinary death. The tragedy is neither heroic nor sacred in *The Stone Angel.* God has no part in this banal business. Yet there is more than an echo of the Greek tragedy. Hagar is made to defy not just men but also God, whose mention is one of the most frequent recurrences of the discourse. God's manifestations are presented as an absence, a negation, or a doubt : "Why should He care who mates or parts ?" (p. 167) ; "we listen for the terrible laughter of God, but can hear only the vapid chuckling of the sea" (p. 234). Hagar does not acknowledge God because such an admission is associated with yielding : "All I can think is — Bless me or not, Lord, just as You please, for I'll not beg" (p. 307).

God is also present in the derisive guise of the plump minister, his representative. It is Mr. Troy, of all people, who tries the hardest to have Hagar excluded from her circle, with the help of pious, sanctimonious Doris.

The Stone Angel can thus be read as a cry of defiance against a Fate or a divine absence blinding man, and possibly blind too. The order of nature is eventually restored and the rule is that the old must die for life to continue, but its termination in the fictional discourse has the brutality of all exclusions, and, more shockingly, it is carefully deprived of any obvious meaning. The tragedy of the novel may well lie in this yearning for a meaning which is constantly refused, and the final realization that it is impossible to obtain one. Tragic death proves nothing, and the novel, accordingly, offers no justification and no explanation. It just happens and it is ironically opposed by a strong countermovement of rebellion and also by another feature of the tragic process, "a capacity for doing and suffering which is above human experience", as N. Frye says (6). Hagar is given this capacity and this rebellious mind. This is possibly why the personage invented by Margaret Laurence comes so close to the tragic stature.

If the story, as all tragedies, has no meaning and refuses any other form than that of opposition and failure, at least retrospectively, the title of the novel finds its justification, and the thematic function of the first pages which introduced the statue is brought to light in the denouement : the stone angel of death cannot but be the very subject of the fictional discourse, the "I" of the speaking voice. But ironically again, and from the outset, a gap is arranged, a discordance and an inadequation between the symbol and the heroine. The statue is not that of Hagar but it concerns her exact opposite, a meek, fragile woman, prematurely dead. This opposition is reinforced in the discourse by a process of contamination : in the third paragraph of the opening sequence, another angel — a petty one — points to the grave of Regina, another frail woman whose death is linked with her very fragility. Yet the statue is also clearly associated with pride and strength and the vigorous aggressiveness of Hagar's father who erected the angel as the symbol of his success and elevation. Hagar is the duplicate of this parental stubbornness, connoting blindness and strength, the impossibility to communicate which affects the blind, cold statue. Thus the symbol is both of strength and weakness, exactly as Hagar is constantly linked to both poles of the fundamental opposition which her fictional fate reunites. She falls as the statue was toppled down in the cemetery and derisively smeared with lipstick. Like the stone angel, Hagar is undermined from the beginning by an inherent weakness, that of mortality hiding beneath the hardness of stone. The angel becomes the adequate image for an aspiring human being weighted down by a rebelliously weak body. The title of the

novel, with its explicit oxymoron combining the two opposites of strength and weakness, sums up the whole structure of a novel founded on the dynamic interplay of binary polarities, which can be detected in the narrative as well as in the themes – death and life, submission and rebellion, order and disorder, integration and marginality.

NOTES

1. *In Clara Thomas,* **The Manawaka World of Margaret Laurence** *(Toronto : McClelland & Stewart, 1975), p. 60.*

2. *Margaret Laurence, "Gadgetry or Growing : Form and Voice in the Novel",* **Journal of Canadian Fiction,** *27 (1980), pp. 56-57.*

3. *C. Thomas, p. 66.*

4. *Ronald N. Labonte, "Disclosing and Touching : Revaluating the Manawaka World",* **Journal of Canadian Fiction,** *27 (1980), pp. 170-171.*

5. *Jonathan Culler,* **The Pursuit of Signs** *(Ithaca, N.Y. : Cornell U.P., 1981), pp. 13-14, 42-43.*

6. *Northrop Frye,* **Fools of time** *(Toronto : University of Toronto Press, 1967), pp. 4-5.*

MULTIPLE PLOT IN MARGARET LAURENCE'S THE STONE ANGEL

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I

The most important variable in our model is character. When a complete change of personnel takes place in a work of fiction, we can be fairly sure that a plot in its own right is to be developed. We do not find this kind of variation in *The Stone Angel.* Hagar Shipley is always present, and everything is presented from her point of view. The people she is in contact with hardly capture our interest for their own sakes. Rather, they help bring Hagar's nature to light and advance the Hagar-centred plot.

Still, there is some variation of the variable of character. It is closely connected with the particular handling of the variable of time in the novel. Hagar is presented on two different time-levels, which follow upon each other at fairly regular intervals, each taking up about half of the novel. For one thing, there is a significant difference in the number of characters that appear on the one level as opposed to the other. In the narrative present only Hagar's son Marvin and his wife Doris are developed at some length. This small number of characters around Hagar reflects her age and her stationary mode of living. Furthermore, the narrated time span covered on this level encompasses only a few weeks. The level of the narrative past, however, deals with Hagar's life from her childhood up to her last visit to Manawaka after the death of her son John. As a result, more characters appear along this line, for example her father Jason Currie, her husband Brampton Shipley, her sons Marvin and John, Mr. Oatley, for whom she works as a housekeeper, and a few of her friends.

Multiple plotting is an established technique in fiction, in our own age as in the past. But critical analysis of this phenomenon is rare. How does the interaction of two or more plots affect a novel's form and theme ? Can we generalize the structural characteristics of multiple plots ? Can we profitably compare these characteristics with those of a single plot novel ?

Such questions are worth asking. Margaret Laurence, for one, exploits the technique of the multiple plot in some of her novels, for instance in *The Stone Angel.* By analysing this work we can describe the essential components of multiple plotting and assess the artistic advantages which the device offers. At the same time, this structural approach towards her work may open up some aspects of her novel as a whole, which we might not be aware of otherwise.

To help us, we may construct a simple theoretical model based on fundamental, but variable elements in imaginative literature. The four variables we must work with are character, place, time and theme. For literary works usually deal with some human agent in some particular place at some particular time, which are part of the fourth indispensable aspect of theme. Considering each of these qualities and their potential variation in turn will provide a systematic way of displaying the structure of *The Stone Angel.*

Some of these characters appear exclusively in the narrative past, for instance Mr. Oatley, while some of them, such as her son Marvin, appear on both time-levels. On the whole, however, the two character sets are kept apart—Hagar is not shown ruminating about people important in her past on the time level of the present. Her thinking aloud about John's death in front of Murray Ferney Lees may be considered a notable exception or, rather, a significant overlapping of the two time-levels. Symptomatically, the reader at first does not consider this unusual overspilling of the past to be part of the narrative present at all, and even Hagar herself is not aware of what she is doing. Only after the telling of this important episode of her life are Hagar's and the reader's attention drawn to the fact she "has been saying it all aloud" (1).

The character sets appearing in the two strings of action thus vary, but, due to the central character, there is also a fair amount of overlapping. To qualify as a multiple plot novel, at least one of the other variables of our model has to change. In this novel the element of time does. On the level of the narrative present Hagar is ninety years old. On the level of the narrative past she is first introduced when she is six, and we are gradually made familiar with the important stages of her life—her childhood, her married life, her motherhood. Strictly speaking, this string of plot ends with the recollection of Hagar's last visit to Manawaka with Marvin and Doris. As the latter have cared for her for about twenty years, this visit probably took place some time during this period. The gap of time between the two time-levels would thus range somewhere between eighty-four and twenty to one year. This last visit, however, is only a short insertion rather than a separate block of narrative. It is therefore safe to say that the events of the narrative past end with the climactic recollection of John's death, so that there is a relatively great distance of time between the two lines of action.

The question whether the variable of time stays constant in a particular novel (strictly speaking, of course, it never really does) is difficult to answer. We cannot lay down hard and fast rules about this but must make our decision according to the context of any particular work. On the level of *histoire,* the events of *The Stone Angel* lie, of course, along one continuum of time, though

there is a considerable gap between Hagar's middle and old age. We are, however, concerned with the manner in which the story is presented as a narrative, i.e. rather with the level of *discours*. Our impression of a parallel development of two relatively independent strings of action is primarily engendered by the equal proportion the two time-levels take up in the novel as a whole (125/150 pages), their fairly regular alternation and, last but not least, the chronological order in which each of them is presented. There are only a few, almost negligible deviations from chronology, for instance the short insertion on page 274, "When my second son was born...". This point of time had already been passed by the preceding development of this string of action so that the reader's understanding is not hampered by the disarrangement of time. We never get lost in the well articulated succession of the two time-levels.

The question whether our third variable, place, varies is a relative one, too. Two rooms within the same house may be considered both as "same place" or as "different places", depending on the overall context of the work. The amount of crossing over between the locales and the length of time spent at the places—with regard to narrative rather than to narrated time—have to be judged individually, too.

In *The Stone Angel* the narrative present takes place in Vancouver exclusively. At ninety years of age Hagar no longer has the physical capacity or the financial resources to travel. A certain amount of movement does, however, take place. Hagar is first introduced in her house in Vancouver, she then visits the "Silverthread" old-folks home, after which she escapes to "Shadow Point", a holiday resort near Vancouver. It seems, however, sufficient to say that the events around and within Hagar as a ninety-year-old take place in Vancouver.

The handling of place on the level of the narrative past is different. Hagar grows up in the fictional town of Manawaka, located in Manitoba. We first see her in her father's house, later in her husband's home, the Shipley place. She then leaves her husband and Manawaka and goes to Vancouver, to become a housekeeper for Mr. Oatley. She sometimes goes for a visit to Manawaka, for example to see her dying husband, but she really lives in Vancouver for the rest of her life. As we would expect because of the longer period of time covered, there is thus more movement on the level of the narrative past.

Both with regard to time and setting, the two strings of action converge towards the end of the novel. At the very end of the recollections of the past we are told that Hagar bought her own house (p. 217). But we do not really see her living in it on this time-level. At the beginning of the narrative present,

however (p. 30), this point of time is taken up and continued, so to speak, after some gap in the narrated time : "You'll never sell this house, Marvin. It's my house. It's my house, Doris. Mine". Time and place are neatly dove-tailed, but are still separable.

The constellation of the three variables and their variation in the novel suggest the existence of two separate plots, especially if their symmetrical arrangement and their quantitative equality are also taken into account. Because of the non-variation of character it is, however, appropriate to have a closer look at the development of the theme. This is an even more subjective category but, especially in borderline cases, it must be taken into consideration.

It would obviously be unjustified to expect two completely different themes for a novel which follows the development of one central character. Both time-levels deal with a woman in the context of her family, trying to come to terms with them, with life, and with herself. As the passage of a long period of time and a fairly big time gap suggest, the two plots stress slightly different aspects of what is the same theme, i.e. a journey of a difficult woman towards self-understanding. In the narrative past external events are more in the foreground than in the present, though there are analyses of people and events also on that level. Through the sequence of events in the past Hagar's character is established and developed : she is proud, stubborn, selfish, blunt, impolite, fussy, impetuous, brash. When we see her at a later stage in her life she is basically the same person : "Oh, I am unchangeable, unregenerate. I go on speaking in the same way, always, and the same touchiness rises within me at the slightest thing" (p. 262). However, many of her characteristics have become more pronounced. Her stubbornness is almost unbearable, her selfishness does not leave any room at all for concern about other people, her bluntness is offensive, her impetuousness is sometimes childish. These characteristics are now presented in a different context, which brings in new aspects or brings out her personality even more clearly. She is still the proud woman resisting dependence upon others. Now, however, because of her old age and, in particular, her weak physical condition, she is really dependent on people around her. If *she* does not see and accept this, the reader certainly does.

On the other hand, Hagar is in a way a very perceptive person, and towards the end of the novel this applies also to her perception of herself. For a long time, however, she finds the beginnings of a real understanding of herself hard to accept and frequently formulates them in a tentative manner, for instance : "Is it possible, just barely possible that I became irritated with her over some trifling thing or other - but would not recall ?" (p. 25). In the cannery, isolated from the world and practically thrown back upon herself, Hagar, led on by

Murray Ferney Lees, takes the decisive step of confessing her share of the responsibility for John's death. After this "catharsis" she is for a while no longer able to distinguish between past and present, but later on her comments about herself become definite statements which set off the past from the present and show Hagar to have changed in certain respects, for example : "I wish I hadn't added that. I never used to say whatever popped into my head. How slipshod I'm growing" (p. 254). Or :" 'Quite - okay '. I have to smile at myself. I've never used that word before in my life. 'Okay ' - 'guy' - such slangy words. I used to tell John" (p. 269). The most thorough and explicit understanding of her past and of herself is brought about by the hymns sung to her by Reverend Troy :

> Pride was my wilderness, and the demon that led me there was fear. I was alone, never anything else, and never free, for I carried my chains within me, and they spread out from me and shackled all I touched. Oh, my two, my dead (p. 261).

The very end of the novel, however, shows a relapse, a sign of the ambivalent nature of her personality which cannot really be altered at ninety years of age. But the self-revelatory experiences were genuine and Hagar's vision of herself has been sharpened :

> "What do you think I am ? What do you take me for ?... Oh, for mercy's sake let me hold it myself !". I only defeat myself by not accepting her. I know this - I know it very well. But I can't help it - it's my nature... And yet, if she were in my place, I'd think her daft, and push her hands away, certain I could hold it for her better (p. 275).

These are the circumstances under which Hagar, presumably, dies. Her life has come full circle, but shortly before her death she has come to a new understanding of the life which lies behind her. As Clara Thomas puts it, "Hagar is a tragic figure, a stone angel whose eyes learn to see just before it is too late" (2).

The thematic analysis of the two lines of action thus yields the following results : On each of them Hagar is presented as surrounded by different people, under different circumstances of life and with different problems preoccupying her, though one can see, of course, a certain continuity in her life. Each of the two strings of action has its own development, its own climax, its own thematic basis, each of them attracts the reader's interest in itself : Though the novel would lose tremendously, each of the two lines of action could stand on its own feet. Thus, with also the fourth variable of theme changing to a certain extent, our model has mirrored and made more explicit our intuitive response to the structure of *The Stone Angel.*

The decisive variable on which all the differences instrumental in the generation of the two plots hinge is the variable of time. A considerable passage of time, a certain time gap between the two strings of plot and a specific arrangement of the incidents seem to be requirements for a multiple plot novel in which the most important variable, character, does not change essentially. Only under such conditions are there likely to be considerable thematic variations and also changes concerning the other variables, which bring about the structural phenomenon of multiple plotting.

II

This leaves us with the question of the functional significance of the two plots. Are we dealing with an overall plot which is made up of a main plot and a subplot, or rather with two main plots making up one overall plot ? In other words, is *The Stone Angel* an example of a rarer, more specific category of the multiple plot novel, namely a double plot novel ? Our model is helpful primarily in the first step of analysis, i.e. in the separation of plots from each other. The further question about their functional relationship is even trickier, as in this case we are dealing with differences of degree rather than category. It is, however, fair to say that a novel in which all the three primary variables vary throughout in a consistent manner is made up of equally important plots. To be sure, in *The Stone Angel* the quantitative criterion, which may but does not have to be a decisive factor, works strongly in favour of a double plot. However, only two variables, time and place, change completely, and even these two converge. In such cases we have to fall back upon the thematic content of the plots.

The level of the narrative present provides the basis from which the flashbacks into the past take their departure. Margaret Laurence uses the "resonance technique" as a structural principle : events and thoughts in the present trigger off flashbacks into the past. The past, however, provides important background information about Hagar. We thus come to see not only *what* kind of person Hagar is but also *how* she has developed into what she is. Still, we read the narrative past not only, or even primarily, in order to come to a better understanding of the narrative present. On the other hand, it would also be inappropriate to consider the narrative present as a subplot ; it is, after all, on this level that the important changes with Hagar take place. Significantly, the novel begins in the narrative past and ends in the narrative present, and the last section is by far the longest (53 vs. 20 and less pages) and also the most important in the novel as a whole. Quantitative and qualitative relationships of the two sequences of action combine to generate a double plot novel.

There is thus a heuristic value about the splitting up of a plot into its constituents. This analytic approach to fiction should, however, be complemented by a consideration of the integrative principles at force in any novel.

III

Some of the integrative factors in *The Stone Angel* have been hinted at above : the obvious linkage through the character of Hagar and through other overlappings of character, the congruence of setting and time, the consecutive relationship between the two plots. The crucial thematic development near the end of the novel presupposes the events of the past for its effectiveness. This close interrelationship of the two time-levels is stressed by the smooth transitions between the present and the past. For instance, the bareness of the walls in Dr. Corby's waiting-room induces Hagar's thoughts to go back in time to the Shipley place which "didn't have a single solitary picture" (p. 72). This opportunity is then grasped, as it were, to elaborate upon the characteristics of Hagar and Bram and the relationship between them. Sometimes the connections strike us as being overstated and thus unrealistic, as on page 87 : "Being alone in a strange place, the nurse's unseeing stare, the receding heat of the day - all bring back to mind the first time I was in a hospital, when Marvin was born", the narration of which then follows. Not all the transitions are, however, as obvious as the latter example, and on the whole the attempt to mirror the psychological principle of the free association of ideas works. The manipulating hand of the author cannot help but be felt, but the reader accepts this because it is in general not done in too conspicuous a manner and, more importantly, makes the reception process so much easier.

But at some stage of the analysis the question has to be asked. Why did Margaret Laurence go to all the trouble ? Why did she not write a single plot novel, not bothering about the interweaving and the setting off of different lines of action ? In other words, what are the effects and the advantages of a multiple plot ?

The most general function of multiple plotting is to provide variation and abundance, which, if skillfully handled, may increase our enjoyment of a novel. The reading of *The Stone Angel* also gives a certain aesthetic delight in the sense that the alternating disarrangement of the time-sequence is unified in the mind of the reader, and the realization of the neatness with which the several parts dovetail with each other to form an organic whole is valuable in itself. There are, however, more important reasons for the use of multiple plot. The repetition mostly with variation, in the one plot of certain aspects of Hagar's character established in the other plot is a method of emphasis. It may also have a generalizing effect : if a particular kind of behaviour, for example, is presented in the narrative past and then repeated in the narrative

present, we may expect it to be a general characteristic, if not a character trait, of the acting person. In the terminology of Wayne Booth, it may thus be a short-hand form of "telling" or "showing". The function of explanation or illustration, too, may be a matter of economy. We saw that in *The Stone Angel* the level of the narrative past serves as an explanatory foil which sheds some light on Hagar in the narrative present so that we come to a better understanding of her. A similar effect could have been brought about by telling *The Stone Angel* in its real temporal development. The alternating presentation of the two story-lines adds, however, significant aspects to our reception of the novel. The constant alternation between two plots may first of all result in a creation of suspense, if the author makes a point of cutting off one plot at the climax of the tension to take up another plot. This function is hardly, however, made use of in Margaret Laurence's novel. The flashbacks are, as we saw, elegantly introduced in the narrative present, and end at appropriate points, when the particular episode has been fully presented anyway. Margaret Laurence tries to counteract the impression of artificiality by suggesting that the events of the present abruptly interrupt the reveries about the past.

> But Jason Currie never saw my second son or knew at all that the sort of boy he'd wanted had waited a generation to appear. "You all right, Mother ?" Doris's voice. "Dinner will be a few minutes yet..." (p. 55).

Another result of the regular alternation between two plots is that we are constantly invited to see one plot in the light of the other. The reader thus becomes more perceptive about particular points, in both contexts. The singling out of the past for a plot of its own gives, of course, particular weight to it. The method of presentation thus has thematic implications. The relative autonomy of the past, the important role it plays in the present, the necessity to live with it and to accept it for a genuine understanding of oneself are a great concern of Margaret Laurence, as of contemporary Canadian writers in general. In her latest novel, *The Diviners* (1974), she takes this principle a step further : In this work not only the individual but also the collective past is probed into and plays a crucial role in the present lives of the characters. In both novels, the structural principle of multiple plotting is an essential device for the effective interweaving of past and present, for the presentation of our past as our roots from which we may grow but never really break free.

NOTES

1. *Margaret Laurence,* **The Stone Angel,** *(Toronto : Bantam-Seal, 1978), p. 24 (1 st ed. Toronto : McClelland and Steward, 1964). Subsequent quotations will refer to the same edition.*

2. *Clara Thomas,* **The Manawaka World of Margaret Laurence** *(Toronto : McClelland and Steward, 1975), p. 75.*

NOTES ON THE NARRATIVE VOICE (S) IN THE STONE ANGEL

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I am : yet what I am no one cares or knows
I am the self-consumer of my woes.

John Clare

Commenting on some of the problems she faced while writing *The Stone Angel,* Margaret Laurence mentioned "one difficulty of first person narration - the lack of external point of view, in fact the abolishing of the narrator"(1) . Clearly the novelist here goes counter to the trend which sees in the I-narrator a proper narrator. It is not within the scope of this paper to discuss concepts of the narrator, the enunciator, the "implied author", etc. My purpose is simply to have a look at the first-person narration in *The Stone Angel,* and especially at the various delegations of power which the novelist entrusts to the narrating instance, the various layers which are thereby created.

As we open *The Stone Angel,* we are faced with a narrative situation which is familiar.

> Above the town, on the hill brow, the stone angel used to stand. I wonder if she stands there yet, in memory of her who relinquished her feeble ghost as I gained my stubborn one, my mother's angel that my father bought in pride to mark her bones and proclaim his dynasty, forever and a day, etc.(2).

An *I* is reminiscing about the past from what must be a considerable spatial and temporal distance. Indeed, we soon learn that the voice belongs to Hagar Shipley, an old woman of ninety. From the beginning, we perceive the system of dualities which organize retrospective first-person narration : the remembering *I (I wonder, I think now),* is opposed to the remembered *I (it seemed strange to me, I was too young,* etc...) ; the faraway town of Manawaka, where Hagar is "doubtless forgotten", is acquiring specific features while the here from where she speaks remains shadowy ; story time, created with a wealth of past tenses and a few deictics *(then, in those days)* is dominant, although discourse time crops up in fairly numerous present tenses *(as I recall, I remember,*

she must be laughing, Virginal Regina sighs) and in the repeated *now.* In short we seem to be in for a traditional kind of (pseudo) autobiographical narrative.

The first departure from the conventions of this genre is made so smoothly that we may not notice it :

> Now I am rampant with memory. I don't often indulge in this, or not so very often anyway. Some people will tell you that the old live in the past - that's nonsense, (...) How unfair I am ! Well, why not ? To carp like this is my only enjoyment, etc... (p. 5).

Since such remarks constitute a sort of metadiscourse - the narrator's commenting on her reminiscing or carping mood - we may assume that what is foregrounded is simply discourse time, narrating time, while story time, narrated time, slips into the background. On closer look however, the present tense splits further into narrated and narrating time :

> Now I light one of my cigarettes and stump around my room, remembering furiously for no reason except that I am caught up in it (p. 6).

The remembering *I* is *described* as remembering, not to mention the fact that the narrator is shown acting in the present. It soon becomes obvious that the narrative is concerned not only with the past of Hagar but with her present as well and that, in fact, the opening evocation of the stone angel and the Manawaka cemetery is a flashback. The structure of the novel is a cinematographic one, which interweaves two time sequences of greatly unequal length - the few weeks that lead to Hagar's death, and the years of her long life - but of equal thematic importance, insofar as they are both necessary to an understanding of the character's spiritual struggle.

Shall we then say, with one critic, that we have "two stories told about the same woman by the same woman" (3) ? Far from being abolished, the narrator is, in this view, doubled. We come back to the ticklish question raised by the quotation from "Gadgetry or growing...". For to say that there is no narrator in *The Stone Angel,* or that there is a double one, is, in either case, to obscure the differences between the narrative stances which generate the novel.

In the primary frame, the "author" transfers, or delegates the enunciation to the character, with the result that we are immediately made privy to the desires, sensations, feelings and thoughts of Hagar as they surface in her

consciousness. Even actions can be recorded, contrary to what Mendilow thought (4), as in the following examples :

> I walk back into the house. Painted railing, then step and step, the small back porch, and finally the kitchen (p. 53).

> I rummage in my bag and take out the soda biscuits and two triangles of swiss cheese. I peel the silver paper away with my fingernails and put it in my bag for I can't bear people who litter beaches (p. 190).

> I'm crying now, I think. I put a hand to my face and find the skin slippery with my tears (p. 244).

Undoubtedly, as far as the telling of actions is concerned, the method has limitations (which we cannot go into here) and could easily become awkward. But in *The Stone Angel,* the device is naturalized by the very age of the protagonist, which makes physical action a hazardous and often painful enterprise, hence something which involves awareness. At the same time the narrative cannot quite be called interior monologue since Hagar registers the conversations she has with Doris, Marvin, the doctor, Murray Lees, and others. The important point, however, is that the character is not *telling* her story, she is presented - through the working of her mind - as *living* what the reader apprehends as her story. And the basic convention is that the motion of her mind is simultaneous with what moves it. (When looked at closely, of course, the functioning of the convention is not particularly realistic. For example, the tags that assign utterances, (e. g. "Mr. Troy inquires", "he asks", "I say", "says Mr. Troy", "I reply", pp. 120-121) are totally unneeded in real life experience of conversations. The remark, let me hasten to add, is not a criticism of the particular device or any other that may be used to foster the illusion that the narrative covers the present of the fictional enunciating instance. This, being of necessity an illusion, must needs be implemented by various technical procedures). Under the circumstances, Margaret Laurence's reluctance to see in Hagar a narrator is quite understandable and I submit that the word *locutor,* for all its drawbacks, would better refer to the activity of the enunciating instance that I have briefly described. Obviously, however, when Hagar starts remembering about her past in extended flashbacks, another transferral of narrating power occurs, no longer immediately, from author to character, but mediately from character-as-locutor to character-as-narrator (5).

The Interweaving of the narrative voices

Thus the novel must be seen as the interweaving not only of two time-sequences but of two narrative frames. To the extent that they coincide an analysis of the latter will bring out features that also characterize the former. For one thing, while the narrator's story is written backwards from a present that, though moving, keeps determining a then-and-there, the locutor's discourse unfolds forward from a present that is labile, as it swiftly becomes the past, and is not anchored in anything but the locutor's ongoing utterance. Then, the distribution and placement of the narrator's pieces within the locutor's speech flow are significant. The novel starts with the narrator's voice but ends on the locutor's silence. However, it is to be noted that the narrator, in the evocation of the stone angel, multiplies the suggestions of death (though the mother's death is the source of the protagonist's life in an exchange of *ghosts*) while the locutor's last words *open* on sequentiality, and imply continuity. "And then". Indeed the whole movement of the novel is from a foregrounding of the narrator's activity in the earlier chapters to a gradual emergence of the locutor. The past looms very large in Hagar's mind when she is the passive object of Doris and Marvin's care but the present reasserts itself when she takes, and acts on, the decision to escape, so as not to be sent to a nursing home. And when she lies, in acute pain, on her hospital bed ; for though she has avoided facing death and the dying throughout her life, she has to live out her own death. There are no flashbacks in chapter 9 and in chapter 10 -the last chapter- there is only a 44-line evocation of Hagar's last visit to the Manawaka cemetery (as compared to the 72 lines of the first description of it, and the 50 lines of the scene when she goes there with John and finds the marble angel toppled among the peonies, and a few line memory of her second son's birth) (6).

Usually locutor's discourse gears into narrator's story according to the principles of associative memory, as Leona Gom has shown (7). And the different memories that make up a remembered sequence are linked in the same way. But the shifts may be more or less abrupt :

> Every last one of them has gone away and left me. I never left them. It was the other way around, I swear it. When John was the age to go to college he couldn't go right away because what I'd been able to save wasn't enough (p. 164).

> I've said the very same thing to Bram. *Hush. Hush.* Don't you know every one can hear ? The Reverend Dougall MacCulloch passed away quite suddenly with a heart attack... etc. (p. 89).

Or they may be more smoothly drawn when Hagar moves from contemplation of her picture as a girl to telling of her brother Matt's death, through a series of generalizations on "handsome girls" or women with "a china figurine look" and on to a memory of her sister-in-law :

> Handsomeness lasts longer. I will say that.
>
> Sometimes these delicate-seeming women can turn out to be quite robust after all, though. Matt's wife Mavis was one of those whose health had always been precarious (...). Yet that winter when the influenza was so bad, she nursed Matt and never caught it herself (p. 60).

Quite often the transits are strongly marked :

> And now there comes to mind another thing that happened when I was almost grown (p. 26).
>
> (I) lean here mutely, waiting for whatever they'll perform upon me.
>
> I've waited like this, for things to get better or worse, many and many a time (...). So many years I waited at the Shipley place — I've almost lost count of them. I didn't ever know what I was waiting for, etc. (p. 112).
>
> I'm like the children, playing house. I've nothing better to do. And now I remember some other children, once, playing at house, but in a somewhat different manner.
>
> I wired Mr. Oatley after Bram's death and told him my brother had died (p. 192).

Indeed, one may regret, with George Roberston (8), that the transitions are a little too obvious. Perhaps Margaret Laurence felt that, since the central consciousness is, as we shall see, not always coherent, the narrative ought to be posted with clear signs (9). The transits often function as anticipations : for instance, the "playing at house" metaphor programs our reading of a narrative unit in which the full significance of the phrase becomes explicit only towards the end. But more importantly, they are also clues to Hagar's character : they indicate, for instance, the locutor's need to control the narrator, ("caught up" in remembering as she is, Hagar tries nonetheless not to let herself go, although this becomes more and more difficult). And they hint at Hagar's self-defense mechanism. To come back to our last example, the metaphor triggering the sequence that tells of John's love, his mother's meddling and

his death, is undoubtedly quite crucial and emotion-laden ; nevertheless it also enables the speaker to remain partly blind to what was at stake in the *adult* relationship between her son and Arlene, and to her own role in the tragedy.

As for the shifts back *into* the locutor's discourse, they cannot, of course, be textually announced, nor do they have to be narratively justified. Hence they are much less conspicuous. Yet Margaret Laurence varies the procedures for gearing back into the first narrative level. Now the character (and the reader) is brought back with a jolt to the present as when Doris' voice jarringly intrudes the here-and-now upon Hagar's consciousness (pp. 64, 88, 136). Now the character slides easily back into her present self ("And here I am the same Hagar, in a different establishment once more, and waiting again", p. 160), or occasionally moves back and forth between remembering, commenting and experiencing (p. 81). Another interesting return enables the novel to counterpoint different times. Talking to the minister, the locutor decides that her affairs are no business of his and she "will not tell him more" (p. 42) but then the narrator takes over and relates several major events of her life, including her meeting Bram Shipley and her marrying him against her father's opposition (pp. 42-52), before the locutor picks up again the thread of her conversation with Mr. Troy : "It's all long past, I say to Mr. Troy, to smooth him and myself" (p. 52). Apparently there has been hardly any break in the exchange between the two. This superimposition of a tiny segment of remembering time with a fairly long span of remembered time which emphasizes the duality of the character's, indeed anyone's, sense of time, the fact that the *now* always defines itself against the *then* (10), also suggests the discrepancy between chronological and psychological time, or between telling time and remembering time.

Since "all Hagar's memories are touched off by something which occurs in her present" (11), there follows that the novel offers many examples of parallel, and eventually contrasting, situations, events, responses, in the locutor's and the narrator's discourses, often in the same chapter (See for instance, chapter five which juxtaposes escape from Marvin's house in the present, and escape from the Shipley farm, in the past, a description of Hagar's "castle" by the sea and an evocation of Mr. Oatley's house, etc.). Throughout the novel, the parallels are all the more striking since the flashbacks are neatly placed in chronological order. Margaret Laurence herself has owned that "the coincidence of present happenings touching off -conveniently- memories in sequence is probably straining credulity" (12). But she has defended it on aesthetic grounds. If "one can say that the method I chose diminishes the novel's resemblance to life, (...) on the other hand, writing -however unconsciously unordered its method- is never as disorderly as life. Art, in fact, is never life. It is never as paradoxical, as chaotic, complex or as alive as life" (13). Is there even any

need to concede that the method diminishes the lifelikeness of *The Stone Angel* ? As I have already hinted, the text, if regarded from the point of view of a real life utterance, is in any case an impossibility. The novel's "resemblance to life" cannot depend on a reflection of the working of the mind. It is therefore irrelevant to assess the strength or the weakness of the narrative in mimetic terms (14). The problem is rather in what ways does the novel build credibility ? And a certain rigidity in the handling of the narrative structure may be regarded as homologous to the locutor-narrator's "stubbornness", her compulsive tidiness, or at least as conveying something of it. Furthermore, the chronological order affords progressive revelation of the protagonist's increasing destructiveness and of the sensitive areas in her memory. Obviously, she is not able to master much feeling about the harsh way she dealt with her dour father ; she feels more regret where her husband is concerned but the thing she would most like to escape is the memory of her failure with John -the second son whom she loved and destroyed. This appropriately is delayed in the narrative. The parallel between the chronological order and the emotional order, however, is kept from being mechanical. For Hagar, when she recalls the childhood of her first son, never seems to realize that her unloving treatment of the child could only thwart his development. Yet after she has sought a kind of absolution for what she did to John, she recognizes that Marvin was really the one who played Jacob to her angel. If telling him that he has been a better son to her than John comes too late to repair the psychic damage she has done, it is nevertheless what he "wants" from her and the lie which was "yet not a lie" "releases" him. This climactic moment in the locutor-protagonist's life has no equivalent in the narrator's discourse about Marvin, whereas symmetry was operative in the case of John, when, as we shall see, the locutor's absolution was achieved through the narrator's confession. But Marvin's release and Hagar's are brought about by the increasing self-awareness that the recollection of John's death made possible. Thus the narrator's discourse and the locutor's are intricately linked.

Before we leave the interweaving of the narrative frames, two last points must be made. While they alternate in fairly long stretches, the flashbacks being usually quite extensive and internally linked to one another, there are occasions when the locutor/narrator shifts are much briefer :

> Rest. And swing, swayed and swirled hither and yon. *I remember the Ferris wheel at the fairgrounds once a year. Swoop ! That's how it went. Swooping round and round, and we laughed sickly and prayed for it to stop.*
> "My Mum brought me this cologne..." (p. 303, emphasis mine except for the word swoop).

Only in the italicized sentences of the above example is the narrator in charge. The others represent the locutor's utterances (15). Except for being shorter and often seamlessly integrated into the first level narrative, such little flights of reminiscence are no different from the more systematic retrospectives. But there is one moment in the novel when the two narrative levels merge. In chapter eight, after Murray F. Lees has told her of his guilt about his child's death, and Hagar has confided that she had a son and lost him, the two remain silent. Then follows the narration of John's last weeks with Arlene and his mother, and the relation of the accident which takes his life (pp. 235-244). At first reading we take this for a flashback - though the shift is unmarked.

> I close my eyes once more. John came in one afternoon to tell me Arlene was going east (p. 235).

Only with the return to the present do we realize, together with Hagar, that this poignant memory, unlike the other flashbacks, was not an *inner* narrative.

> ... Then startlingly a voice speaks beside me. "Gee, that's too bad". I can't think who it is, and then I recall - a man was here and we talked, and I drank his wine but I did not mean to tell him this (pp. 244-245).

Thus, at this highly charged point in the novel, locutor's time and narrator's time coincide : the narrator's activity, instead of being an escape from the present, is objectified as part of the locutor's interaction with another suffering human being. This merging of times prepares the ensuing scene in which Hagar, in her delirious state, will attempt not only to retell her past but to change it. The locutor tries to speak the words which the narrator knows should have been spoken. "If there's a time to *speak* it is surely *now*", she says, unconscious of the time lapse (p. 247, italics mine) and therefore of the ambiguity of her remark. For now is always the time to speak the words that will relate us to the other and when the deluded Hagar seeks forgiveness from the unknown man she takes for her son, she does obtain a kind of absolution whose effects, in spite of the feeling of loss she experiences the morning after, will transform the few days that are left to her.

The functions of locutor and narrator

To a great extent, the functions of narrator and locutor are the same, since it is through both their discourses that is constructed the fictional world (or worlds) of the heroine and since both are resolute commentators of their experience. Yet there are some differences and the gap between narrator and locutor is partly what energizes the narrative. Either is present as source and guarantor

of the narrative, as analyst and commentator, as stylist and particularly as producer of metaphors (16). While we might have expected the narrator to resort more to iterative narration and indirect speech, Margaret Laurence has Hagar recall her life mostly through a series of *singulative* scenes in which the participants' words are *quoted directly.* The method which tends to blur the difference between the two narrative stances, makes for a narrator with a vivid power of recollection and a strong sense of the immediacy of her past, but it also pinpoints one of the character's problems. If she is to make sense of her life, and indeed justify it (17), she must understand it as a whole, she must find the continuity between the discontinuous phases and the several roles, which eludes her for a long time.

What sharply distinguishes narrator and locutor is that while the former can to a great extent organize her experience —selecting which moments to remember, structuring her remembrances— the former is not free to do so, immersed as she is in the flow of moment-to-moment living. A good deal of the material which fills her consciousness is imposed on her, either from without, whether it be Doris' nagging or the doctor's probings, or from within, as her physical deterioration causes her more and more assorted pains, her fears of being put into a nursing home become more disturbing, and her mental grasp of reality keeps slipping. This relative freedom of the narrator and the quasi-bondage of the locutor not only inform all their respective utterances but in fact condition what may be called their dialogue. For the locutor, considered as a shifting device to project roles which will mesh into aspects of the character, implements more of the fictional / than does the narrator who can be regarded as a projection of the locutor (18). By turning narrator, the locutor projects by the same movement, a perceiver of her past self and a self image, and thus makes room for herself, gives herself a breathing space.

As narrator, Hagar enjoys a measure of distance from her experience. The large temporal gap which separates the narrating from the narrated enables her, on occasion, to look forward into the future :

> I used to think how sad to spend one's life in caring for the houses of others. I never had any premonition and I felt myself to be - oh, quite different from Auntie Doll... etc. (p. 634),

or she may link one period to another, in what, to the reader, becomes an anticipatory hint :

> It was a becalmed life we led there, a period of waiting and of marking time. But the events we waited for, unknowingly, turned out to be quite other than what I imagined them to be (p. 160).

But more importantly the temporal gap accentuates the duality between perceiver and perceived, so that the narrator can judge her past actions. Such responses as the following are very frequent throughout her narrative :

> Some girls would have spent a week preparing him. Not I. It never occured to me (p. 643).

> It was so clear to me then who was in the wrong. Now I'm no longer certain (p. 671).

The narrator ponders over what happened, questions her decisions, evaluates her self :

> How clearly her words come to mind. If she'd not said them, would I have done as I did ? Hard to say. How silly the words seem now. She was a silly girl. Many girls were silly in those days. I was not. Foolish I may have been, but never silly (pp. 48-49).

Evidence of both the older Hagar's increased understanding and the limits of it is provided by the numerous statements that indicate uncertainty ; "I wonder now", "I no longer know", "I can't explain it", etc . That the narrator still misinterprets the actions of others and her own, however, is an important element of her mental make-up. Yet, in brief flashes, she may show a dim awareness of some inner block : "Where that line comes from. I can't now rightly say or *else for some reason it hurts me to remember*" (p. 80 - emphasis mine). Indeed what demonstrates the *narrator's* growing freedom is her ability to evoke the events which, at the beginning, the locutor consciously dismissed from her mind : "O my lost men. No, I will not think of that. What a disgrace to be seen crying by that fat Doris" (p. 6). The *narrator* gradually brings herself to talk about her lost men because of all that the *locutor* experiences in between the flashbacks, and it is significant that the flow of her memories about John's death is released when Hagar has broken away from her house and family and lies in a wine-induced daze. Not that the narrator can be said really to change. Nor should the *emotional* distance between the perceiver and the perceived be exaggerated. In one of the later sequences, when she is recalling the last weeks of John's life, the narrator remembers finding a walnut box which contains a petit-point bookmark and a hair-wreath. The narrator knows that these are relics of Clara, Bram's first wife, whose firstborn died, but she reports the protagonist's unfeeling response without distancing herself from it :

No Cross No Crown.
I wondered if Clara had made it, as a girl, perhaps, but I couldn't imagine her sausage fingers wielding the thin needle, although I could believe well enough that she might gain support and justification from the morbid motto (p. 193).

Even the hair-wreath does not elicit from the narrator more sympathy than the limited interest of the younger Hagar : "I wondered how Clara must have felt about that boy, to fashion such a patient wreath and keep it hidden away here" (p. 194). Although she is dealing with the most sensitive area of her past, and ought to be more sympathetic, the narrator maintains her usual contempt of the weak. In this way the character's lack of self-knowledge in the past is often counterpointed by the narrator's blindness in the present. On the other hand, because she hardly changes, the narrator can up to the last conjure up the bygone days with great vividness of detail and coherence of arrangement. There is never any confusion in her mind between herself as perceiver and herself as perceived, between now and then, nor even any doubt about what happened when. Again, from a psychological point of view, such lucidity is hardly realistic, if we consider how rambling and confused the locutor is. But as a fictional device, it works very well. Just as the juxtaposition of the image of the "hoity-toity" young Hagar "with the shining hair, the dark-maned colt" (p. 42) and the image of the grotesquely "bloated" old woman, "a prisoner of the animal functions of her body" (19) creates a two-dimensional view of the character, so does the montage of clearly contrasting "voices" contribute to what Clara Thomas has called "the double exposure" of *The Stone Angel* (20) (We must however bear in mind that the two dimensional view, or the double exposure, are in fact metaphors for the *total* effect of the novel ; the narrative method of Margaret Laurence, in reality, multiplies or splits time-frames and angles of view : we are not faced simply with an older and a younger Hagar nor with an acting self opposed to an observing self, or a narrating self to a narrated self– since such functions are constantly fragmented off). Furthermore, the fictional device helps create the possibility of a change for the character, inasmuch as the narrator's structured memories affect the locutor : "The very ability to see ourselves", says another Prairie writer, "is based on the narrative mode" (21). Such a possibility for change was needed all the more because the Hagar whom the narrator evokes has very set patterns of behaviour. Rather than adjust, she moves from place to place, and from phase to phase but whether as daughter, sister, wife, or mother she repeats the same errors... Conversely, the discrepancy between the narrator's consistency and the locutor's lack of it highlights the dynamism of the latter. For it is at this level that inner discontinuities (as distinguished from the discontinuities that separate –and link– the segments of the two narratives) are the most operative.

The locutor's utterances, which purport to record Hagar's waging her last battles with her family, with the world and with herself, are pulsing with contradictions, sudden alterations of mood, questions and ruptures. Insofar as the locutor's discourse registers a double flow of present information about what goes on in the outer world and in the inner world of the protagonist, it *has* to shuttle back and forth between the two. (See for instance the tea time scene, p. 34, too long to be quoted here). Such intermittences, however, being inherent in the nature of narrative, are not necessarily invested with meaning. Of greater interest are those breaks in the inner world which are exemplified in the following statements :

(a) I can hear my voice saying something and it astounds me. "I'm - frightened, Marvin, I'm so frightened -" (p. 303).

The I-locutor assumes the functions of speaker ("my voice", the quoted utterance), of perceiver ("I hear") and of commentator ("it astounds me") to underline the divorce between the *I* who utters the word and the *I* who thinks. Hagar, subscribing to the commonsense notion that the *I* is fully in control of its speech, is always astonished when confronted with the fact that something speaks from within.

She may be surprised at the sound of her voice :

(b) "One voice has almost screeched. Some time elapses before I realize the voice was mine" (p. 275) (23). Or she may wonder at what she says, as when she admits to being frightened : "What possessed me ? I think it's the first time in my life I've ever said such a thing" (p. 303). In fact, this is such a recurrent experience of the locutor, who is both in remarkable command of her language (24) and "possessed" by language, that it deserves closer examination. Take the following example :

(c) I'm strangely pleased to see him. I don't mean to complain. But when I speak, out it all comes.
"You'd not believe it, Marvin, the row that goes on here at night" (p. 262).

Here again the voice speaks what the speaker had not meant to say. But here the narrative perturbs the normal sequence of events by stating the thinking *I*'s intentions and *announcing* the speaking *I*'s betrayal —"out it all comes"— whereas in the examples quoted above, the realization of the locutor was either after the fact (example b) or concomitant with it (example a). The perturbance shows how split the *I* is. The locutor, who is purported to experience the gap between thinking self and speaking self and between talking self and hearing self, is now revealed as divided by the tiniest temporal interval between

experiencing and articulating self. Thus the novel multiplies at all levels the splintering process between subject and object in which all (pseudo) autobiographical narrative is rooted, so that we have, diachronically, a succession of Hagar's and, synchronically, a knot of fragmented selves. To return to the divorce between voice and speaker, it might seem as if when "possessed", Hagar were expressing her "heart's truth" (25). And indeed when she says she is frightened, she reveals her subconscious feeling of the moment, as well as a feeling that she has refused to acknowledge all her life, in her zeal to deny any form of "weakness" or "feebleness". But by the time she leaves off her mask of strength in front of Marvin, Hagar has already discovered that "pride was (her) wilderness" and "the demon that led me there was *fear*" (p. 292, italics mine). If the disclosure is "shameful", it is because it is not private, not because it dredges up the repressed. And what about the numerous occasions when Hagar blurts out her bitterness, her resentment ? Is Hagar then more true to her "innermost self" ? However ingrained Hagar's bitterness, nothing allows us to consider that it is "innate" (26). Actually the novel suggests that Hagar's pride and her more unlovely traits have been shaped by her environment – personal, social and physical – and that she is in the words of Dick Harrison, "still paying for the conquest of the land which demanded that the pioneers so ruthlessly conquered themselves" (27). Therefore one might as well say that Hagar's thwarted potentialities for a fuller and more loving life – the potentialities for "rejoicing" which she discovers on her deathbed (p. 278) – are what lie most deeply in her, were it not that the use of duality in the novel precludes such easy layering of the character's experience. Hagar herself comes closer to an acceptable exploration when she asks herself :

> How is it that my mouth speaks by itself, the words flowing from *somewhere,* some half-hidden hurt ? (p. 68, emphasis mine).

And the novel demonstrates – through having the mouth take over repeatedly – that the indeterminate "somewhere" is not topically located in some psychical reality that would transcend appearances. For the half-hidden "hurt" traverses and cleaves the whole of the *I*'s experience.

Contributing also to the dynamism of the locutor's discourse is the constant questioning. The questions fulfill many functions and for instance, they naturalize the report of current actions, while showing the character's attempt to understand what is happening :

> ... then I see the black iron gate and still I do not understand. Why is Marvin turning and driving through this open gate ? (p. 95)

When Hagar has had one of her lapses of memory or when she emerges from one of her short trances, her thoughts are often in the interrogative :

> Doris' voice. How long have I been standing here with lowered head, twiddling with the silken stuff that covers me ? (p. 157).

Taken unwillingly to the nursing home for a preliminary visit, the locutor puzzles at length over her situation ("Can they force me ? etc...) the place in which she finds herself ("Has it walls and windows ? ... Is it a mausoleum?") and finally about the legal and moral ownership of her house ("Has he purchased it, without my knowledge, with time and work, his stealthy currency ?" p. 96). Altogether, such queries evince both the locutor's failing grasp of reality and her game attempts to retain it. What really energizes the narrative, however, are the numerous moments when she puts herself in question. Thus, she asks herself ; "How is it that I never knew about the sheets ? How could I not have noticed ?" (p. 74) ; or after recalling how she was shamed into not going to church by Bram's behaviour, she wonders if she "shouldn't have kept on going" :

> What if it matters to Him after all what happens to us ? (...) Yet the awful thing is that I can't get out of my mind a more pressing question - could have Doris felt the same about me just now as I felt that day in church about Bram ? (p. 90).

Though she does not pursue that line of investigation ("It doesn't bear thinking about"), she is spurred to make a resolution : "I will be quiet, I swear, never open my mouth", only to add "I know it's nonsense and impossible for me" (p. 90). In this way a running dialogue is kept up within the locutor's double self as well as between the locutor and the narrator. Because the locutor is able, however intermittently, to establish links between her past and her present attitudes or behaviour and to doubt herself, the character can ultimately achieve some kind of unity and of grace. The character, of course, *acts out* her newfound freedom but this freedom is gained for the *actor* by the *locutor* and in one of her two "free" acts, speech is intricately involved. Not only because Hagar gives to Marvin the lie which is the blessing he has been struggling for, but because the very *image* Hagar has of Marvin as Jacob helps trigger her response :

> Now it seems to me he is truly Jacob, gripping with all his strength, and bargaining, *I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.* And I see I am thus strangely cast, and perhaps have been so from the beginning, and can only release myself by releasing him (p. 303).

In a sense, too, her linguistic and spiritual heritage contributes to the liberation of Hagar. In short, even though the narrator has greater control of her narrative than the locutor has of her discourse, it is only the latter who, from the depths of her immersion in the destructive present, can make the verbal commitment to the living and to life that redeems the character and, bed-ridden, death-ridden as she is, frees her.

Just as the narrator's and the locutor's narratives merge for a moment, so do two distinct forms of the locutor's discourse —inner and outer— when Hagar is confused. In the doctor's waiting room, in the grocery store, Hagar speaks her thoughts aloud. If such moments mostly hint at the character's loss of control, one, however, has larger implications (28). Interestingly, when her mind wanders, Hagar encounters the figures of her "two lost men", Bram and John (29). Although the cry to Bram is not treated as an episode, the reappearance of Hagar's husband at this late point (in the narrative and in the protagonist's life) is significant and it prepares for her further evocation of the two men : "Oh, my two, my dead. Dead by your own hands or by mine ?" (p. 292). This clearly echoes Hagar's earlier statement and throws light on her earlier refusal to go on thinking about them. But while she did not then want to face her responsibility, now she acknowledges the possibility of guilt, and ends on an ambiguous sentence : "Nothing can take away those years". Those years, we must understand in the light of the immediate context, when "I shackled all I touched", and the sentence means : my mistakes cannot be undone. But can we not *also* supply the phrase, "those years when I had my man and my child", in which case the sentence means : my dead are still with me. And the statement is double-edged, both a lament and a rejoicing in the gifts of life, *Freude und Leide.*

Both, the uncontrolled cry and the lucid meditation share a feature. They are, strikingly, addressed towards the other(s) , whereas both the narrator's and the locutor's discourses are, to a very great extent, self-oriented. To be sure, in both there are appeals to an exterior narratee. Now he may be called to witness :

> It will begin all over again. Wouldn't you think they could give it a rest for a day or so ? (p. 121, also p. 139).

Now he may be included in the generalizations which the locutor makes :

> To move to a new place - that's the greatest excitement. For a while *you* believe you carry nothing with *you* - all is canceled from before, or cauterized, and *you* begin again and nothing will go wrong this time (p. 155).

> What would *we* do without these well-thumped phrases to extricate us ? (p. 121, emphasis mine).

Certainly, too, some of the details are supplied for the benefit of someone who does not know Manawaka (E.g. "Charlotte Tappen was the doctor's daughter", p. 10 ; "In winter the Wachakwa river was solid as marble", p. 3) or the locutor's family ("On my dressing-table is a bottle of *eau de cologne,* given me by Tina - their daughter and my grand daughter, grown up already", p. 33). Yet such indications are not numerous enough nor obvious enough to create the impression that the narration is intended for another person. Indeed, the many descriptions are so remarkably motivated within the context that their presence need not imply an exterior narratee. If familiar objects are often and minutely described, it is because prized possessions – and material things – count so much in Hagar's life that she feels the need to review or evoke them in her mind : "They support and comfort me" (pp. 58-59) (30). On the whole, both narrator and locutor basically address variants of the self ; the narrator's discourse is oriented towards the locutor, the locutor's towards an *I,* to whom, as we have seen, many questions are put, but who can also on occasion be scolded ("Stupid old woman, Hagar, baggage, hulk, chambered nautilus are you ? Shut up" (p. 162),or coaxed :

> What albatross did *I* slay, for mercy's sake ? Well, well, *we*'ll see - *come on,* old mariner, up and out of *your* smelly bunk and *we*'ll *see* what can be found (p. 186, see also p. 301; italics mine).

The fragmentation of the consciousness into first-person singular sender and second-person singular receiver *(come on, your)* is both explicited again and subsumed in the jocular first-person plural *we*. Though admittedly such examples are fairly rare, they do not constitute a rupture of the basic situation of discourse but a more conspicuous manifestation of it. And the last mirrors, *en abyme,* what is involved in Hagar's inner flow of words, an attempt to "see", to understand herself, to achieve communication between her successive or discontinuous "*I*'s", and to assert strongly : I am. "Stupid old baggage, who do you think you are ?", she once reproaches herself and answers : "*Hagar.* There's no one like me in this world" (p. 250).

Because so much of the "narrative" is a self-message, the apparitions of addressees that belong to the character's world, whether present or past, are all the more noticeable. I have mentioned that the *locutor* calls to Bram in the night. Once, she defends herself against the accusations of an invisible Doris (p. 153). As for *the narrator,* she happens to be so caught up in her evocation of her stormy days and silent – but not quiet – nights with Bram that in an

unusual lapse of memory she addresses her husband : "listen, Bram" (p. 116), as though she were about to tell him the truth that can never be told (31). Then she wakes up to find herself in the X-ray room, feeling she must be "*naked,* exposed to the core of my head" – a nice transit, this. That such moments should occur almost only when she is daydreaming, on the verge of sleep or wandering, emphasizes the inturned character of her narrative, and the difficulty for her to break out of the shell, chambered nautilus that she is, of her profound isolation (She perhaps has to fantasize the meeting with John because she is unable to talk to her dead, as many people do, on the conscious level. Needless to say, the fantasy is also much more gratifying than any inner dialogue inasmuch as the compassionate Murray Lees, impersonating John, gives her the absolution she seeks). On the other hand, such borderline moments highlight the one conscious moment when she does reach out towards her husband and son, "Oh, my two, my dead", and when the use of the pronominal "your" turns the objects of her earlier lament into true addressees, *subjects* than can be engaged in an attempt at intersubjective communication, no matter how interior. The attempt is of course doomed to fail in reality and Hagar after telling herself her life story, is left with the impossible yearning to tell it to her grandson :

I'm choked with it now, the incommunicable years, everything that happened and was spoken or not spoken I want to tell him. Someone should know. This is what I think. Someone really ought to know these things. But where would I begin, and what does it matter to him anyway ? (p. 296).

Though it comes too late for Hagar, the lesson of her experience is clear and supports a statement which Margaret Laurence made in an interview : "The private world is ultimately meant to communicate, to turn outward, not to keep on turning inward" (32).

But what the character fails to achieve in the world of the story, Margaret Laurence achieves in the space of literature. That "someone should know" was perhaps the objective of the novelist who has repeatedly proclaimed her concern with "the exploration of personality" and her interest in the generation of her grandparents (33). At any rate, she does tell about "the incommunicable years" in such a way that the reader not only gets "to know these things" but in fact is allowed to know much more than Hagar knows.

Narrator/locutor and reader

Although the relation of the reader to the character and her narrative is too complex to be examined here, a few remarks are nonetheless in order.

To stress the obvious, the reader soon realizes that the narrator/locutor cannot be entirely trusted. Not only because she is forgetful and occasionally senile but because she is unreliable in Wayne Booth's sense of the word (34) : the norms which she takes for granted in her self-centered blindness, are not those of the work. We are not invited to share her values. Hence the many discrepancies, incongruities, discontinuities are signals to the reader. Some of these are punctual and alert us immediately. Here is Hagar reporting on her relation with her employer :

> I thought it only fair to tell him a little about my background, who my father had been, a few things like that. I told him my husband was dead (p. 158).

Hagar's bragging, and her lying about Bram, understandable enough in their context, are made objectionable by the narrator's introductory sentence, "I thought it only fair". No more than the actor, the narrator seems to have any idea that, however opportune the lie was, it was hardly "fair", unless she uses words very loosely. In either case, we must be on our guard. A similar but more extended reliance on patriotic cant makes her account of Marvin's departure for the war so self-righteous and unfeeling that it becomes, for this reader, one of the most painful scenes in the novel. It is distressing because of what it unwittingly reveals of the relationships between the principals involved and of what it betrays of the narrator's continued blindness (p. 129). Other self-betrayals may, on the contrary, turn the narrator into a more sympathetic character, projecting some of the anxieties that underlie her assurance. "I never left them, it was the other way around, I swear it" (p. 164), claims a deluded Hagar but her shrill insistence is evidence of some inner uneasiness. Or suddenly emerging from "the junkyard of (her) memory", the allusion to the killing of the chicks suggests that, deep down, Hagar has some awareness of the ambiguity of her action to spare John the miseries of married life with "a covey of young".

Some signals require the reader to link things which are textually separated. For instance, we cannot properly evaluate the narrator's harshness towards her own stern and overbearing father until we have seen how she deals with her own children. It is not simply that when related to one another the discontinuous scenes stress how much she has been —unwittingly— repeating the pattern of her father's behaviour, important as that is to our understanding of the protagonist. We also come to feel that, however much the child resented her fathers' severity or the young woman his effort to prevent her mariage, the narrator's experience shoud have taught her some compassion, enabled her to qualify her younger self's unwillingness to believe in the reality of his concern for her. On the other hand, if we juxtapose some of the images used by narrator

or locutor we perceive how Hagar's sensitivity increases. Thus the already mentioned Ancient Mariner metaphor, indicating indirectly a feeling or guilt she is unable to acknowledge fully, is to be related to her later whimsical transformation of an outdoor scene into a court room scene where, coming closer to her sense of guilt, she casts herself as the accused (p. 192). But the quotation from Coleridge demands from us one more linkage. It is apparently induced by the immediate realistic fact that Hagar is thirsty and there is nothing to drink in her sea-shore retreat. But to this superficial association made by the locutor, the reader can superimpose another, for in the flashback that immediately precedes, the narrator recalled how her husband died and she did not cry. We can therefore grope towards an answer to the locutor's question : "What albatross did I slay for mercy's sake"(p. 186) . But our greater knowledge has been rendered possible both by the locutor's unawareness of the applicability of her allusion *and* her subconscious establishing of a continuity between her past and her present through the rich metaphorical nexus of tears and water (35).

In this way the narrative technique of self-revelation and self-deluding puts the reader through his paces. Not that it is difficult to follow the narrative or make the necessary connexions. On the contrary, one might perhaps find fault with Margaret Laurence's too frequent winking and nudging to ensure that collusion between author and reader which Wayne Booth spoke of (36). Nevertheless the reader's part is far from being easy. Since there is no constant extradiegetic narratee, whose position we might occupy, in the illusion that the tale is narrated to us, there is, as it were, no room prepared for us. So we are compelled to stay close to an I-narrator with whom we cannot at first *unselfconsciously* identify. Yet as the I-narrator splits into narrator and locutor, we are also obliged to shift our ground. Now the distance between the two creates a gap in which we find a measure of freedom : we can watch Hagar's internal struggles. We can pass judgments, we are safe. But, in the absence of all external viewpoint, we, in fact, judge Hagar on the basis of what she herself tells us. Our clear-sightedness depends, as I have said, on her being blind and not blind. Futhermore, our attempt to understand her only reflects her endeavour to come to terms with her life and with herself. On the other hand, when we smugly evaluate her lack of compassion and tolerance, we are guilty of that pride which is her besetting sin. Our response is a shuttling back and forth : we oscillate between rejection of the arrogant old woman, and a growing respect and liking for her, between immersion in her story and critical distance, between voyeurism and self-examination, between a sense of human bondage and a sense of human freedom. Our role as readers embroils us in a series of involvements / disinvolvements in which our capacity for knowing Hagar finally tests our capacity for knowing ourselves and relating to others.

NOTES

1. *"Gadgetry or growing : form and voice in the novel",* **Journal of Canadian Fiction,** *vol. 21 (1980), p.57.*

2. **The Stone Angel,** *New Canadian Library, McClelland and Stewart, 1968, 3. All references, further to be indicated between brackets, are to this edition.*

3. *See Paul Cappon, ed.,* **In Our Own House. Social Perspectives on Canadian Literature,** *Toronto, 1978, p. 116.*

4. *"A narrative in the first person and written throughout in the present tense would, if it were possible at all appear so artificial as to make any identification impossible. It would obviously be limited to sensations and thoughts and exclude all action". A. Mendilow,* **Time and the Novel,** *London, 1952, quoted in Philip Stevick,* **The Theory of the Novel,** *N.Y., 1967, p. 274.*

5. *I will use the word character to refer to the bundle of functions that make make up "Hagar Shipley", thus character stands to locutor and narrator as the whole, of which they are only aspects.*

6. *Pp. 177-180. These are, moreover, among the shortest retrospectives of the novel.*

7. *Leona M. Gom, "Laurence and the Use of Memory",* **Canadian Literature,** *71, Winter 1976.*

8. *George Robertson, "An Artist's Progress",* **Can. Lit.,** *21, Summer 1964.*

9. *Such signs, at any rate, often leave something to the imagination as when the shift between narrative levels is emphasized but the associative link between past and present is not. The reader then is invited to puzzle it out, all the more since, in many other cases, the association is explicitly made by Hagar herself. Thus the introductory tag, "I recall the last time I was ever in Manawaka" does not clarify the association between the report of Hagar and Marvin's last visit to the family plot and the immediate context in which Hagar, overhearing her son's voice, thinks that the anger and the tenderness in it are "more than (she) could now reasonably have expected out of life" (p. 305). But the connexions*

between the two experiences and between them and other experiences have to be made by the reader.

10. *"The past and the future", writes Margaret Laurence, "are both always present,* **present** *in both senses of the word, always now and always here with us" ("Time and the Narrative voice" in William New,* **Margaret Laurence,** *Toronto : Mc Graw-Hill Ryerson, 1977, p. 157).*

11. *Margaret Laurence, "Gadgetry or growing...", p. 57.*

12. *"Gadgetry or growing...", p. 57.*

13. *"Gadgetry or growing...", pp. 56-57.*

14. *This is what Clara Thomas does when she asserts : "this is the way (Hagar) would speak and remember, (...) forcing order on her own mind as she had tried always to force her own order on all those around her"* **(The Manawaka World of Margaret Laurence,** *Toronto, 1976, p. 67), and while trying to correct Clara Thomas's views, Leona Gom defends the method of* **The Stone Angel** *on the psychological grounds that "these trigger mechanisms do operate according to the principles of associative memory": "Laurence and the Use of Memory", p. 49.*

15. *See also pp. 33, 34, 54, 302 for other examples.*

16. *The list of functions is taken over from Gérard Genette,* **Figures III,** *Paris, 1972. For a discussion of the metaphors of* **The Stone Angel,** *see Zailig Pollock, "Angel & Bird in* **The Stone Angel",** **English Studies in Canada,** *II, 7, Fall 1976 ; Ann Thompson, "The Wilderness of Pride : Form and Image in* **The Stone Angel",** **Journal of Canadian Fiction,** *IV, 3, 1975.*

17. *Hagar, at first, does not seem to feel the need for self-justification. She describes herself "remembering furiously* **for no reason** *except that I am caught up in it" (6, italics mine). But on page 192, she not only sees herself standing before a (fantasy) court but in her imagination, she is condemned : "Now we need only summon the sparrows as jurors, but they'd condemn me quick as a wink, no doubt".*

18. *In fact the locutor is so important a part of the character that an in-depth analysis of the former - which cannot be undertaken here - would amount to a portrait of the latter, while a detailed examination of the narrator alone would not be quite as revealing.*

19. *The phrase is Ann Thompson's, p. 99.*

20. **The Manawaka World,** *p. 64.*

21. *Robert Kroetsch, "Beyond Nationalism : A Prologue",* **Mosaic,** *Sept. 1981.*

22. *Let us observe, however, that though Hagar's speech is disconnected, her language is never incoherent. Margaret Laurence is a traditional writer who does not seek to disconcert the reader. At least at this stage in her career, she was concerned to make things easier for the reader. See her discussion of flashbacks in "Ten Years' Sentences",* **Writers of the Prairies,** *D.G. Stephens,ed., Vancouver, 1973.*

23. *Of course by then Hagar is half dazed by pain and drugs. But see also "leave me be - leave me be -" ; "Can this torn voice be mine ? A series of yelps, like an injured dog", p. 31 and p. 96,110,etc.*

24. *Hagar is adept in poetic descriptions. Margaret Laurence "worried about this quite a lot, because I did not want Hagar to think out of character" but argued that "even people who are relatively inarticulate, in their relationships with other people, are perfectly capable within themselves of perceiving the world in more poetic terms (...) than their outer voices might indicate" and so she "let (Hagar) have her way" ("Gadgetry or Growing..." p. 57). In fact the sensitivity of the inner* **I** *'s language (whether as locutor or as narrator) which is at odds with the insensitivity she often displays in her remarks and responses is an important clue to the duality of her character and to the social background which fostered such alienation. It also invites the reader to expect better things of Hagar - expectations which will be fulfilled towards the end when she acknowledges that "pride was (her) wilderness" and reaches towards others.*

25. *Or as T.D. Dombrovski puts it, "the uncontrolled cry is indeed bound to innermost personality", "Word and Fact, Laurence : the Problem of Language",* **Canadian Literature,** *Spring 1979.*

26. *As does Dombrovski, p. 56.*

27. *Dick Harrison,* **Unnamed Country. The Struggle for a Canadian Prairie Fiction,** *Edmonton, 1977, p. 194.*

28. *It enters into resonance with former episodes concerning Bram and is part of a complex thematic field centered about names and naming.*

29. *See also p. 160.*

30. *Describing is an important activity of both narrator and locutor which would deserve a special study.*

31. *Wandering again, Hagar at one time expects Bram to speak to her: "It's not so much to ask" but she doesn't address him, p. 284.*

32. *Margaret Laurence, "The Black Celt speaks of Freedom", in Donald Cameron,* **Conversations with Canadian Novelists,** *Toronto, 1973, p. 107.*

33. *"The Black Celt Speaks of Freedom", p. 103 ; "Gadgetry or Growing", p. 56.*

34. *See Wayne Booth,* **The Rhetoric of Fiction,** *Chicago, 1961, pp. 158-59. A narrator is reliable when he speaks for or acts in accordance with the norms of the work (which is to say, the implied author's norms), unreliable when he does not.*

35. *The network of tears (shed or unshed) and water reticulates the whole novel.*

36. *Wayne Booth, p. 304. Was it, for instance, necessary to underscore the similarities between two scenes, in which John is seen interacting respectively with his father and with his* mother with "he gave me the same *look he'e given Bram that time the honeyed knife was thrust into his mouth" (p. 125 ; p. 141).*

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NOTES

Titles preceded by an asterisk refer more specifically to **The Stone Angel.**

The N sign indicates that the article is contained in W.H. NEW, ed, **Margaret Laurence. The Writer and Her Critics.** Toronto, 1977.

CCC means that the article/book can be found in the Centre culturel canadien, 5 rue de Constantine, 75007 Paris (Tel. 551.35.73).

Bx means that the article/book can be found in the Library of the English Department (University of Bordeaux III), Domaine universitaire, 33405 Talence. Photocopies are available.

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COMPTES RENDUS

LE QUEBEC ET SES HISTORIENS DE 1840 A 1920. LA NOUVELLE-FRANCE DE GARNEAUX A GROULX

Serge GAGNON

Québec, Presses de l'Université Laval, collection : « Les cahiers d'histoire de l'Université Laval », n° 23, 1978, 474 pages, bibliographie, index onomastique, index thématique.

Voici la publication d'une thèse de doctorat soutenue à l'Université Laval en 1974, remaniée et résumée par l'auteur. Serge GAGNON se propose d'étudier « les rapports d'influence entre la connaissance historique (de la Nouvelle-France) et la société canadienne-française » de 1840 à 1920, son but ultime étant d'établir « la relation entre le savoir historique et la lutte pour le pouvoir ». Il utilise une méthode d'analyse de contenu qualitative, « impressionniste » mais « pas arbitraire », écrit-il, fondée sur des mots clés servant de grille de lecture (axes espace et temps, groupes sociaux et ethniques, religion, grands événements, grands hommes, grands thèmes). Il insiste non seulement sur les historiens mais aussi, et c'est là qu'il apporte le plus de nouveau, sur leurs lecteurs : une collectivité conquise et colonisée, dominée par le clergé après l'échec de l'insurrection des Patriotes, et passant du stade agricole à une économie industrielle.

Serge GAGNON étudie ensuite 23 livres de 16 historiens différents. Il présente de nombreuses et longues citations au moule de sa grille de lecture, si bien que le livre ressemble à une anthologie. Les auteurs retenus comprennent 9 clercs, dont 2 Français émigrés au Canada, et 7 laïcs, tous Canadiens. Serge GAGNON a combiné un plan chronologique et un plan thématique, analysant 7 hagiographies, 8 biographies de héros, 4 synthèses spécialisées et 4 synthèses générales, dans l'ordre de leur parution.

Les hagiographies ont toutes été écrites par des clercs afin d'obtenir la canonisation de Canadiens-français. Cette production historique particulière serait « une première étape vers la consécration du pouvoir clérical par le biais du recours à l'histoire » et « une manifestation exceptionnelle de la volonté de puissance des clercs » (p. 120). Les candidats retenus (5 sur 7 sont d'ailleurs des femmes) appartiennent plutôt au monde religieux que laïc. Seuls les établissements ecclésiastiques

peuvent en effet assumer les frais des procès de béatification. Ce qui explique aussi que les hagiographies bénéficient d'un tirage non négligeable pour le Québec de 1900, de 4000 à 10000 exemplaires parfois.

Les laïcs dominent la production de biographies de héros, puisqu'une seule sur huit est écrite par un prêtre. Serge GAGNON voit dans ces œuvres l'illustration de « la volonté de survie de la collectivité » (p. 123). Tous ces héros,sauf un, font partie du panthéon canadien classique (Cartier, Champlain, Maisonneuve, Jolliet, Talon, Montcalm, et Lévis). Ces biographies, « bible de la religion civile » (p. 197), reflètent les caractères de la société canadienne-française, cléricale, agriculturiste, méfiante devant la révolution industrielle anglo-protestante. « De là la haine manifestée à l'égard de l'histoire commerciale de la Nouvelle-France » (p. 200). Car ces historiens sont des anciens des collèges classiques, conservateurs et ultramontains, d'origine rurale, comme Casgrain, Dionne et Chapais, plus familiers de Québec que de Montréal. Et l'auteur d'affirmer, de façon quelque peu déterministe : « L'allure conservatrice de leurs récits va de pair avec leur environnement économique et social » (p. 205).

Le 3e chapitre est consacré aux « synthèses spécialisées : pour la plus grande gloire du clergé et de la petite bourgeoisie ». Quatre auteurs différents, dont deux prêtres, ont écrit l'histoire générale du droit, du notariat, de l'instruction et de l'Eglise au Canada-français. Ils ont en commun d'être des professionnels de la matière étudiée et de prêcher pour leur paroisse.

Le dernier chapitre, à mon avis le plus intéressant, et cela tient autant au thème choisi qu'à la manière de le traiter, analyse « les synthèses générales, lieu privilégié des représentations globales ». Deux laïcs et deux clercs ont donné leur interprétation de l'histoire de la Nouvelle-France. « C'est dans cette partie que nous nous sommes le mieux conformé aux hypothèses de départ, écrit Serge GAGNON... L'analyse descriptive des idéologies n'est... qu'une étape vers l'étude de la relation entre société, pouvoir et savoir historique » (p. 287). Ce chapitre correspond vraiment au sous-titre de l'ouvrage puisqu'il présente enfin la Nouvelle-France de Garneau à Groulx. François-Xavier Garneau, « conscience historique de la petite bourgeoisie canadienne-française » dans son **Histoire du Canada,** de 1845-1852, témoigne du « dynamisme laïque » de cette bourgeoisie, « pas encore entamé par l'ascension des clercs » (p. 300). Le clergé a critiqué l'anticléricalisme du premier tome, puis fait le silence sur les suivants. Garneau a corrigé les éditions ultérieures, avec la participation d'un prêtre pour la troisième. « L'œuvre de Garneau fait donc partie, écrit Serge GAGNON avec à propos, de la lutte sociale qui oppose clercs et laïques dans la course au leadership national au lendemain des troubles » (p. 322).

Le **Cours d'histoire du Canada 1534-1759** (1861-1865), de l'abbé Ferland constitue pour Serge GAGNON « le support idéologique de l'ascension des clercs ». Il a pour but de réfuter les historiens anglo-protestants, rouges et français, en retraçant la « puissante et salutaire influence » de la religion sur la Nouvelle-France. Ferland écrit surtout l'histoire de l'évangélisation du Canada, taisant les conflits entre l'Eglise et l'Etat, pour « provoquer l'unanimité idéologique autour du clergé » (p. 346). Cet accent mis sur l'aspect missionnaire explique la sympathie, exceptionnelle dans l'historiographie de l'époque, pour les Amérindiens, dans la mesure où ils ont adopté le Christianisme. « Or, depuis le réveil religieux des années 1840, l'Eglise catholique est en pleine phase d'expansion missionnaire vers les indigènes du Canada » (p. 347), ce qui explique le regain d'intérêt pour l'épopée mystique du XVII^e siècle.

Benjamin SULTE écrivit **l'Histoire des Canadiens français ,1608-1880** en réaction contre les historiens français trop attachés aux intérêts de la métropole, et surtout contre les jésuites, coupables à ses yeux de privilégier l'évangélisation des Amérindiens au détriment de la colonisation agraire. Les milieux conservateurs accueillirent fort mal cette thèse, car « toute critique du rôle historique de l'Eglise au Canada français était interdite » (p. 390). Mais son attachement fondamental à l'agriculture fit de Sulte un historien conservateur, écrivant « à la lumière des années de dépression » (p. 391). Jésuitophobie mise à part, Sulte n'est pas loin des thèses de l'abbé Groulx dans **La naissance d'une race,** 1919, qui insiste sur le rôle de l'Eglise, considéré comme fondamental. Groulx souligne l'action de la Providence et la valeur de la colonisation agricole. Il se montre sévère pour la bourgeoisie d'affaires.

Il ne décèle pas de lutte de classes. Il considère la conquête anglaise et l'urbanisation comme deux catastrophes. Le livre de Groulx signifie, pour Serge GAGNON, une « réaction de peur du clergé et des classes moyennes à l'égard de la révolution industrielle des démocraties libérales » (p. 394).

En conclusion, Serge GAGNON estime que le providentialisme de l'historiographie canadienne-française révèle l'influence du colonialisme ; que son mépris de l'activité marchande reflète l'absence des Canadiens-français de la grande entreprise à partir du début du XIX^e siècle. Si les historiens québécois du XIX^e siècle ont eu l'esprit critique, ils ont souffert en revanche de l'insuffisance des méthodes de recherche et piétiné autour des mêmes sources depuis le début de leurs travaux.

Bernard PÉNISSON

DICTIONNAIRE BIOGRAPHIQUE DES OBLATS DE MARIE-IMMACULÉE AU CANADA

Gaston CARRIERE, O.M.I.

Ottawa, Editions de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1976-1979. In-4°, 3 vol., 350, 429 et 350 p., Pl. h.t.

Dans l'histoire religieuse contemporaine du Canada, la congrégation des Oblats de Marie-Immaculée occupe une place considérable. Il est impossible d'en étudier le déroulement, si on ignore la personnalité de cet institut religieux et l'action de ses membres.

Les Oblats de Marie-Immaculée ont été fondés en 1816 par Eugène de Mazenod, futur évêque de Marseille, pour réanimer la foi dans les paroisses de Provence au lendemain de la Révolution. Mais au cours des décennies suivantes, la congrégation fut amenée à élargir le domaine de ses activités et les étendit aux missions à l'extérieur. Cette nouvelle orientation commença avec l'arrivée des Oblats au Canada en 1841, où ils avaient été appelés par Mgr Bourget, deuxième évêque de Montréal.

Ils commencèrent leur travail parmi les bûcherons de la grande forêt canadienne, s'insérant activement dans la constitution de la jeune nation. A Bytown, la future Ottawa, ils fondèrent en 1848 un collège destiné à devenir l'Université d'Ottawa, dont l'influence allait être si importante sur l'ensemble de l'Eglise canadienne. Puis, poussant toujours davantage vers l'Ouest et vers le Nord, ils entrèrent en contact avec les Indiens. En 1858, le Père Grollier, originaire de Montpellier, atteignait le Cercle polaire. En 1863, le P. Seguin, natif du Puy-de-Dôme, traversait les Montagnes Rocheuses et pénétrait dans le Yukon. D'année en année l'apostolat des Oblats s'étendait à tout le Canada. D'innombrables témoignages en subsistent aujourd'hui : 340 lacs, fleuves, montagnes, lieux divers portent le nom de missionnaires ; une très vaste documentation ethnique, linguistique et géographique que réunirent les missionnaires est utilisée constamment. Enfin, leur souvenir est attaché à une action de pionniers et à la création de nombreux diocèses. Leur activité ne se borna d'ailleurs pas au Canada. Ils en partirent pour les Etats-Unis dès 1852 et en 1858 ils s'installèrent à Mexico.

C'est ce rayonnement multiforme que l'on découvre en dépouillant le **Dictionnaire** du P. Carrière. Toutes les notices présentent de l'intérêt et peuvent introduire à des recherches ultérieures. Quelques grands noms apparaissent. Evoquons-en quelques uns : Gabriel Breynat (1867-1954), premier vicaire apostolique du Mackenzie, apôtre du Grand-Nord, et son

successeur Pierre Fallaize (1857-1964), dont les noms ont été longtemps populaires, même en France ; Mgr Vital Grandin (1828-1902) évêque de Saint-Albert ; son action au cours de la rébellion de 1885 est célèbre ; le cardinal Villeneuve (1883-1947), archevêque de Québec, qui jouissait d'une réputation mondiale. Mais combien d'autres plus modestes faudrait-il citer : Jules Teston (1856-1955) ; Arthur Thibert (1898-1963) ; André-Marie Garin (1822-1895) ; J.-B. Honorat (1799-1862), un des premiers compagnons de Mgr de Mazenod, qui conduisit au Canada le premier groupe d'Oblats en 1841, etc.

On comprend, dans ces conditions, pourquoi le P. Gaston Carrière a voulu réaliser ce dictionnaire, afin de rendre possible le contact avec ce monde complexe des Oblats. Pour cela il a consacré une notice à tous les Oblats profès de la Congrégation qui ont œuvré au Canada. Cela a permis de montrer la contribution d'Oblats étrangers appartenant à un grand nombre de nations au travail apostolique et social dans le pays. Les Oblats prêtres qui ont quitté la congrégation sont inclus à côté de ceux qui ont persévéré, et on tente de les suivre dans leur apostolat après leur sortie. Le P. Carrière a pu ainsi réunir plus de 1700 notices des origines à 1977. Pour chacune d'elles, les sources et la bibliographie, s'il en existe, sont indiquées. Des tableaux permettent de suivre le développement des maisons canadiennes des Oblats. Des cartes facilitent l'étude de cette masse d'informations.

Comme on le voit à travers ces quelques notations, ce **Dictionnaire** est appelé à rendre les plus grands services. Il prendra très vite place à côté des instruments de travail indispensables pour étudier l'histoire religieuse du Canada contemporain. Il se situe dans la ligne des grands travaux de biographie canadienne : le monumental **Dictionnaire biographique du Canada,** les ouvrages sur les diocèses de Chicoutimi et de Sainte-Anne-de-la-Pocatière, les travaux de l'abbé Morin sur le diocèse de Rimouski, ainsi que le **Dictionnary of Basilian Biography** du Père Robert J. Scollard, qui sont venus compléter des publications plus anciennes. Il faut souhaiter que des suppléments soient donnés ultérieurement pour le tenir à jour.

Raymond DARRICAU
Université de Bordeaux-III

DICTIONNAIRE NORD-AMÉRICAIN DE LA LANGUE FRANÇAISE

Louis-Alexandre BÉLISLE

Édition entièrement refondue... Préface de Maurice Lebel. Montréal, Beauchemin. 1979. Préf., Introd... + 1196 pages.

A l'âge de 77 ans, le lexicographe chevronné dont le célèbre **Dictionnaire général de la langue française au Canada** date de 1957, publie un ouvrage à la fois si amplement renouvelé et si fidèle à l'esprit de son coup d'essai que se justifie l'apparente bizarrerie de la mention « Edition refondue », à la suite d'un titre neuf. On disait « le Bélisle », on dira « le nouveau Bélisle ».

Sur la surprenante carrière de l'auteur, qui a joué un rôle non négligeable dans l'émergence des francophones du Québec à la compétence technologique, commerciale, financière, etc., on lira la vivante préface de M. Maurice Lebel, son confrère à la Société royale du Canada. Quant au **Dictionnaire**, nous indiquerons surtout l'intérêt qu'il présente pour ceux qui, au vieux pays, suivent les progrès de la culture d'expression française en Amérique.

« Nord-Américain », il appuie l'essentiel de son recensement lexical sur le Québec, pour ce qui déborde le français « international ». On aura besoin d'autres secours pour lire les textes créoles, ou même les livres acadiens qui se multiplient, surtout s'ils cultivent les vocables populaires ou semi-anglais comme la « dôré » ou la « boquouite » de la Sagouine, ou simplement s'ils emploient « séance » au sens de « représentation ». Il permettra de déchiffrer le joual dans une plus large mesure, bien qu'il fasse peu de place aux « sacres ». Il ne prétend pas, Dieu merci, révéler un « québécois » décomposé en déformations fluctuantes, encore qu'il retienne, par exemple, un verbe **pleumer** à côté de **plumer,** parce que la première forme commande une sémantique pus étendue, ou enregistre des prononciations sans mystère, comme **leu** pour **leur** (ne vaudrait-il pas mieux signaler que **raque** est une graphie courante pour **rack** ?).

Le sort du lexicographe imbu de ses devoirs est d'osciller entre conservatisme et laxisme. L.-A. Bélisle en a parfaite conscience ; son Introduction reflète ce déchirement. Fidèle à l'attitude normative que certains lui reprochent, il maintient les trois signes diacritiques qui distinguent l'un les canadianismes de bon aloi, le second - une fleur de lis -

ceux qui sont populaires et « folkloriques », le troisième les anglicismes, barbarismes, etc. qui supplantent indûment des mots français et sont proscrits en principe du bon usage. Il n'en reste pas moins que ces derniers figurent utilement dans la nomenclature, et quand on remarque l'abondance des sous-acceptions indiquées pour **chéquer,** par ex., on doit considérer, hélas, ce barbarisme comme naturalisé. L'auteur admet d'emblée qu'en quelques années des promotions se produisent d'un niveau à l'autre, et il fait montre déjà d'une ouverture sur laquelle il est juste d'insister.

Ce constat actuel ne peut manquer de prêter à discussions. Pour le lecteur européen, les classements à première vue étonnants ou illogiques ne sont pas les moins instructifs par les nuances qu'ils révèlent. Que l'on condamne **shack** pour **camp** paraît normal ; mais L.-A. Bélisle admet **shop, shèver** (raser), **sproquette** (pignon) comme simplement familiers, de même que **bôlter** (boulonner), alors que, discrimination subtile, **bôlte** (boulon) est blâmé absolument. Il place sur le même plan, en revanche, **motoneige** et **skidoo.** De tels choix, non exempts d'une certaine subjectivité, attestent au moins une attention aiguë portée à la langue parlée, et le désir de guider exactement l'usager. De plus, ils intéresseraient sans doute un sociologue. Les Français prennent, comme toujours, des leçons de lutte contre le franglais, en voyant **check-up** banni, tandis que L.-A. Bélisle s'abandonne à un optimisme excessif en donnant **corn-flake** et **hot-dog** pour québécois, et en assurant que le second s'appelle en France un « pain fourré ».

Toutes catégories réunies, on aura plaisir à feuilleter le **Dictionnaire** en raison de son opulence en termes et acceptions propres au Canada français, d'autant plus que les exemples suggèrent l'allure vivante de propos éclairant la définition, parfois illustrée aussi d'un croquis. Le semi-profane apprend ou réapprend des canadianismes relativement rares dans la langue écrite, soit modernes (**guibou** pour juke-box), soit plus ou moins techniques (**minoter, pivé,** bois **quartelé...**), et les acceptions spéciales qui transforment en « faux-amis » tant de mots très ordinaires, comme on le sait bien pour **claque, fourneau, fournaise, chaudière, jongler, magasin général,** mais moins pour **gibelotte, parfumeuse, raton,** ou pour les **vieux-garçons** de Michel Tremblay. Dans bien des cas, le Bélisle explicite une sémantique locale foisonnante, comme celles de **caler** (sans confusion avec **câler,** appeler), de **ligne,** de **monter,** etc. (pourquoi pas de référence ichtyologique au mot **blanc** ?). La volonté d'introduire les réalités nord-américaines sous les mots qui les désignent conduit à des définitions explicatives sur le chemin de l'encyclopédie : voir **débenture, jobbeur**... Le mot **test,** ici, renvoie en première ligne au serment de ce nom. L'**évaporateur** dessiné sert à l'eau d'érable. De la **chaussure** ordinaire, on croit encore utile de distinguer la « chaussure de magasin ». Le **Dictionnaire** compte d'ailleurs 8 à 9000 canadianismes de mot ou d'acception. Le **Supplément** des noms propres privilégie nettement les lieux et personnalités du Canada français, et rendra par là de grands services.

S'il oublie Marie Le Franc, regrettablement, et si la **Bibliographie** classe d'autorité Georges Bugnet et Louis Hémon parmi les écrivains canadiens, c'est qu'un tel monument ne saurait éviter les imperfections. Malgré une présentation très soignée, il arrive que l'illustration fasse coq-à-l'âne avec la définition (**épiornis**). L'étymologie manque parfois de rigueur : voir **catin,** où les deux homonymes ne sont pas distingués. Pourquoi placer l'expression « **par exprès,** par messager » s.v. « **exprès,** adv. », alors que figure le n. m. « **exprès,** messager » ? **Garde,** dans « pomme de garde », n'est pas du masculin, et l'expression n'a rien de spécifiquement québécois. Par rigueur, flou ou lapsus, quelques définitions, à la lumière de l'actualité, laissent perplexe. **Rapatriement** ne s'appliquerait qu'à des personnes. Un **péquiste** veut « l'autonomie des francophones du Québec ». La **France** est une « république de l'est de l'Europe ».

Ces vétilles, relevées en vue des prochaines éditions, prouvent que l'entreprise a conservé un certain côté artisanal, qui la rend plus méritoire et n'ôte pas grand-chose à la valeur du résultat. M. Lebel recommande l'ouvrage aux divers milieux de la communauté francophone canadienne. On ne le recommande pas moins aux amateurs de « parlure » et de littérature françaises d'outre-mer, comme un usuel très pratique et un solide instrument au service de la francophonie.

Jean MARMIER

LE LANGAGE GEOGRAPHIQUE DE CARTIER ET DE CHAMPLAIN
(Choronymie, vocabulaire et perception)

Christian MORISSONNEAU
Avec la collaboration de Henri DORION

Comme l'indique la préface de cet intéressant ouvrage, amplement documenté et faisant profiter le lecteur du fruit de recherches très méthodiques sinon exhaustives, le but essentiel que se sont proposé les auteurs à été de déterminer, à partir d'une étude systématique du lexique géographique de CARTIER et CHAMPLAIN, la perception que ces deux marins, découvreurs de la Nouvelle-France, avaient pu avoir, au cours de leurs explorations respectives, d'un espace qui leur était jusqu'alors inconnu. Pour ce faire, Christian MORISSONNEAU et Henri DORION ont dépouillé les éditions les plus autorisées des récits de ces deux navigateurs et pris en considération les cartes laissées par le seul CHAMPLAIN.

Dans un premier chapitre, consacré à la choronymie, les auteurs se sont efforcé de préciser « les motivations conscientes ou subconscientes qui ont présidé au choix des noms »[1]. Parmi les désignations originales dues à CARTIER, une grande proportion d'hagionymes ou d'anthroponymes explicables par l'influence du catholicisme de ce navigateur malouin et un certain « culte de la personnalité »[2]. CARTIER ayant relativement peu pénétré dans les terres, ce sont surtout des choronymes relatifs à la configuration littorale qui se rencontrent parmi ceux dont la signification est descriptive. Certes le sentiment religieux joue encore un rôle non négligeable chez CHAMPLAIN, au début du siècle suivant, mais ce grand voyageur, qui a fait plus de vingt fois la traversés, est plus naturellement porté à utiliser des choronymes descriptifs. Quelques-uns des termes utilisés, relatifs à la faune (''Port-aux-ours'' etc.), doivent rappeler des faits exceptionnels. Ces remarques, comme celles qui ont trait à la forme « flottante » des choronymes[3], à l'image des hésitations orthographiques de l'époque, aux hésitations ou aux anomalies syntaxiques (emploi ou omission de la particule « de », « mécoupures ») sont corroborées par l'inventaire des choronymes[4], étudiés chronologiquement en ce qui concerne CARTIER, par régions dans le cas de CHAMPLAIN, avec l'indication, pour chacun des noms, de la dénomination moderne correspondante. Cet inventaire est établi avec le plus grand soin et il convient de déplorer seulement, ici et là, quelques discordances entre les coordonnées géographiques qui y sont mentionnées et celles qu'on peut lire sur les cartes dressées par le Laboratoire de cartographie de l'Université Laval[5]. On regrettera aussi que la distribution régionale des choronymes dans cet inventaire ne s'inscrive pas exactement

dans le cadre des cartes, qui isolent la vallée du Saint-Laurent du reste du Québec[6].

Il faut souligner les grands mérites du travail lexicographique de Christian MORISSONNEAU et Henri DORION : ils ont en effet effectué un relevé des principaux termes géographiques en citant les contextes les plus signifiants dans les récits de CARTIER et CHAMPLAIN et en les accompagnant de références à différents dictionnaires du XVII[e] siècle à nos jours (Jean NICOT, FURETIERE - dont il eût peut-être été préférable d'utiliser l'édition de 1690 -, HUGUET, F.E.W. de Von WARTBURG) ou aux ouvrages de toponymie de DAUZAT et ROSTAING[7]. Ils ont également établi un tableau des fréquences d'emploi du vocabulaire géographique[8] et étudié les registres positifs et négatifs de la qualification des termes « pays » et « arbre » et de quelques éléments lexicaux concernant le paysage et les indigènes[9]. L'analyse de cette terminologie donne lieu à de pertinentes remarques sur le manque de précision du vocabulaire employé par les deux découvreurs de la Nouvelle-France et l'insuffisance de certaines discriminations sémantiques - sensibles d'ailleurs dans tous les récits de navigateurs jusqu'au XVIII[e] siècle - : c'est ainsi, par exemple, que CARTIER et CHAMPLAIN distinguent mal « chutes » et « sauts », « brisants », « basses » et « battures », « anses » et « baies ». Les auteurs de cette étude ont aussi montré, avec raison, comment le lexique des termes géographiques traduisait les réactions des navigateurs devant un milieu physique et humain nouveau pour eux, et l'approche quantificatrice leur permet de déceler une polarisation positive dominante, qu'il s'agisse des appréciations esthétiques devant les paysages de la Nouvelle-France ou de jugements sur les qualités du « terroir », envisagées au point de vue des possibilités agricoles, ou sur les « sauvages », dont l'aspect physique bénéficie d'une estimation favorable, alors que CHAMPLAIN se montre tout aussi révolté que CARTIER par certaines de leurs pratiques rituelles. Ajoutons que les chercheurs, qu'ils soient littéraires, linguistes ou géographes, trouveront particulièrement utiles les index qui viennent compléter cette riche étude.

Qu'il nous soit permis toutefois de formuler quelques remarques relatives aux conclusions que Christian MORISSONNEAU et Henri DORION déduisent de ces investigations lexicologiques. Le caractère assez vague des appréciations esthétiques, utilitaires ou morales ne peut être considéré comme une spécificité du domaine géographique : il suffirait pour s'en convaincre de se reporter aux récits des conteurs contemporains, qu'il s'agisse des **Cent nouvelles nouvelles** ou de l'**Heptaméron** de la Reine de Navarre. Il nous semble par ailleurs que, si les auteurs de cet ouvrage soulignent à juste titre le rôle de la subjectivité et de la formation culturelle dans les jugements formulés par les navigateurs, ils vont peut-être un peu loin en y voyant un déterminisme absolu, de même qu'ils surestiment à nos yeux l'importance du facteur socio-économique dans les réactions de CARTIER et CHAMPLAIN[10].

Il n'en demeure pas moins que ce livre fournit un bon exemple méthodolologique et représente une très utile et très louable contribution tant à l'étude de la choronymie que du lexique géographique des XVI[e] et XVII[e] siècles. Il permettra aussi une meilleure compréhension, non seulement de l'œuvre des deux découvreurs de la Nouvelle-France, mais aussi de leur époque, et ce n'est pas là un de ses moindres intérêts.

E. VAUCHERET

1 p. 19
2 p. 21
3 p. 23-24
4 p. 26-75
5 cartes figurant p. 137 sqq.
6 cartes 5 et 6
7 p. 170-197
8 p. 225-226
9 p. 227-230
10 p. 167, p. 216-17

LOUIS HÉMON, AVENTURIER OU PHILOSOPHE ?

Gilbert LÉVESQUE

1980. Montréal, Fides. 64 pages.
Préface de Marcel Cadotte.

L'auteur de ce petit livre a coordonné, en 1980, les manifestations organisées au Canada en l'honneur de Louis Hémon pour le centenaire de sa naissance, et a participé au colloque de Brest. C'est un essai personnel qu'il nous livre, inspiré à la fois par l'admiration littéraire et par l'amitié vive née entre lui et Lydia Louis-Hémon, fille de l'écrivain.

Livre de cœur, livre d'enthousiasme, qui assume sans hésitation les risques du genre, et n'a pas pour hantise de résoudre méthodiquement le dilemme posé par le titre. Il entremêle, à bâtons rompus, des rappels biographiques, des réflexions sur l'œuvre, des pages extraites à peu près telles quelles du carnet de l'auteur, des extraits de lettres, des confidences de Lydia. S'y ajoutent quelques citations de critiques, de nombreuses références au livre d'Ayotte et Tremblay, une brève et récente interview de Mgr F.A. Savard, etc. L'image de Louis Hémon en ressort incomplète certes, mais vivifiée par des éclairages variés et colorés. Si la pertinence du terme d'« aventurier » se discute, il faut féliciter M. G. Lévesque d'avoir risqué celui de « philosophe », inattendu et justifié. Louis Hémon mérite ce titre, car, s'il ne se souciait vraisemblablement guère de métaphysique, il se forma une conception ferme du monde, de la société, et de ce que devait être sa vie, en apparence livrée au hasard. Des textes bien choisis révèlent en cet être indépendant et délicat, lucidement attentif au « colin-maillard » de l'existence, angoissé sans doute et optimiste à coup sûr, un moraliste qui appelle une étude approfondie.

Esquisse chaleureuse, celle-ci pâtit un peu d'élans trop fougueux et hâtifs. Peut-on faire endosser à Hémon, pour son compte et pour sa race, le « rien ne changera » de Maria Chapdelaine ? C'est une curieuse inadvertance que de qualifier de célibataire (même s'il le fut dans l'âme) le légitime époux de Lydia O'Kelly. L'éloquence bouscule parfois aussi la syntaxe jusqu'à la renverser : l'auteur veut-il vraiment dire à propos de son héros : « Ce qui ne l'empêche nullement de perdre de vue l'essentiel ! » ? Et c'est pousser un peu loin le dithyrambe que d'assurer : « Il aura fallu qu'un Français **effacé** s'attarde à Péribonka, pour qu'un jour le Québec puisse goûter au bonheur de figurer sur la carte du monde ! (pp. 16, 21, 33, 49).

Ne croyons d'ailleurs pas pour autant que l'auteur se cloître dans le culte chapdelainien. Au contraire, un mérite et un agrément de ce livre québécois réside dans l'intérêt qu'il porte à l'ensemble de l'œuvre de Louis Hémon. C'est pourquoi, parallèlement aux travaux érudits qui se multiplient, il aidera un grand écrivain aujourd'hui méconnu en France à entrer d'un pas alerte dans son second siècle de vie.

Jean MARMIER

STRUCTURES DE L'IMAGINAIRE DANS COURTEPOINTES DE MIRON

Eugène ROBERTO

Editions de l'Université d'Ottawa 1979, 173 pages.

Ce volume forme le 19e **cahier** du Centre de Recherche en civilisation canadienne-française. Les **COURTEPOINTES** ont paru en fin 1975, cinq ans après **l'Homme rapaillé.** E. Roberto a eu le privilège de suivre de près la tâtonnante et scrupuleuse élaboration du recueil, depuis le premier poème écrit au début de 1971, sous l'impression directe de l'emprisonnement d'octobre, jusqu'aux corrections sur épreuves. Il nous offre d'abord une étude « stratigraphique », non seulement des variantes de texte, mais surtout de la répartition et de la disposition changeantes des segments qui se sont regroupés dans les sept « Courtepointes ». Ce témoin minitieux déclare n'avoir pas tout su ni retenu : mais devant des observations si précises et méthodiques, on ne croit pas à des lacunes notables. Heureux les scoliastes futurs, pour qui sont sauvegardées jusqu'à onze versions manuscrites d'un fragment, et toute la stratégie évolutive d'une œuvre, qui révèle en Miron le « poète » au plein sens étymologique du mot !

Du même coup se trouvent réunis des éléments précieux pour une histoire de genèse. Tel n'est pas le propos d'E. Roberto, qui ne veut que fixer un processus de gestation. A la deuxième partie s'applique véritablement le titre général. Elle n'exploite donc les données chronologiques que dans une mesure restreinte. Toute question de genèse mise à part, on peut s'étonner que le critique saute de la construction matérielle, savamment disséquée, aux structures profondes et permanentes de l'imaginaire, sans passer par l'étape, qui semblerait naturelle, des structures thématique, stylistique, métrique... Pour une part importante, il est vrai, ces considérations entrent en jeu dans la seconde partie, mais sous forme morcelée.

E. Roberto adopte sans discussion les cadres de Gilbert Durand pour définir les structures de l'imaginaire. Selon lui, chez Miron, prédominent les structures « synthétiques », qu'il pare d'étiquettes imagées, « l'escargot » pour la structure d'harmonisation, « le fils » pour la structure dramatique, « le cercle » pour la structure historienne, « l'arbre » pour la structure progressiste. Des analyses brillantes, dont il est impossible de donner ici des échantillons, illustrent le fonctionnement et prouvent la fécondité de chacune d'entre elles. Elles sont menées avec pénétration et ingéniosité, en un style tendu, qui se hausse lui-même à la poésie, et glisse parfois

vers l'obscurité. On se demande, en les admirant, si une virtuosité excessive ne se plaît pas à rattacher au cadre établi des notations et connotations apparemment fort éloignées. La « Structure du fils » englobe toutes les formes de différence, d'opposition, de séparation, et tout ce qui introduit une nouveauté. Elle a pour « symbole » la fête, l'orgie, le deux-fois-né, la mutilation, le sacrifice (p. 127) : c'est beaucoup, mais de plus elle englobe la dualité du moi, les images maternelles... On en arrive à se demander si les structures non retenues, « héroïques » et « mystiques », n'auraient pas permis des applications aussi convaincantes. Honnête, l'auteur lui-même discute le problème et se justifie dans une conclusion riche de nouvelles nuances. Il reste que les « structures » en soi, cadres universels et d'une extrême plasticité, ne sauraient caractériser Miron plus qu'un autre.

Mais l'essentiel, en de telles tentatives, est moins le mode d'accès que les multiples voies et sentiers frayés dans l'épaisseur du texte poétique, les perspectives ouvertes qui multiplient le sens et affinent l'intuition première. De ce point de vue, l'ouvrage d'E. Roberto sert remarquablement la poésie de Gaston Miron.

Jean MARMIER

SÉQUENCES INITIALES

Joël POURBAIX

Éditions de l'Université d'Ottawa. 1980. 55 pages.

Sans passer en revue l'actualité littéraire, **Etudes canadiennes** peut, à l'occasion, signaler une œuvre de création, surtout quand elle comporte en préface une analyse substantielle : ici, Pierre Nepveu parle du poète Joël Pourbaix en témoin de son travail, témoin sympathique et sagace, lui aussi. Le recueil s'organise en quatre sections, « Brûlures des eaux », « Manipulations nocturnes », « Incidences grises », « En plein jour », dont la dernière manifeste moins un regain d'optimisme qu'une violence libératrice plus résolue. Les thèmes dominants, que parfois - rarement - le poète a le tort d'évoquer en mots abstraits, « anéantissements », « conditionnements »..., ne le distingueraient guère de beaucoup de ses jeunes contemporains : refus d'un monde de machines et de solitude, de discours logique, de pouvoirs et d'artifices, recours aux forces primitives du corps, du délire, de la parole rénovée. Mais les images jaillies du pays et de la modernité, le rythme et ses ruptures brusques et fréquentes, la densité de chaque poème isolé sur sa page font éclater une sensibilité et un talent très personnels. La beauté de l'impression et des illustrations de Marc Rochon font regretter que le typographe ait maltraité le langage (jusqu'à **là** cendre, p. 15 ; neurones sédiment**ées,** p. 17, et coll**ées,** p. 30 ; les douleurs **s'**hérissent, p. 18 ; jet**t**é, p. 47).

Jean MARMIER

LES MOTS A L'ECOUTE. POESIE ET SILENCE CHEZ FERNAND OUELLETTE, GASTON MIRON ET PAUL-MARIE LAPOINTE

Pierre NEPVEU

« Vie des Lettres Québécoises », n° 17,
Presses de l'Université de Laval, Québec, 292 pages.

Etude approfondie de l'œuvre de trois poètes québécois représentatifs de la génération dite de l'Hexagone, le livre de P. Nepveu implique une conception théorique du texte poétique moderne. Folie ou déraison, errance rebelle au « savoir absolu », la négativité de ce texte s'ouvre par là-même vers un possible illimité, passant par la voie - la voix - dont l'éros travaille le langage.

Ce silence d'où naissent les poèmes et qui les entoure de ses marges est aussi une écoute, celle de « l'altérité », de ces multiples voix qui pénètrent le sujet écrivant à l'insu de son « je ». La poésie moderne « commence dans le silence du locuteur », silence ambigu où s'instaure une tension entre la nécessité de le maintenir et celle de donner naissance à une parole neuve. Dès lors, écrit P. Nepveu, l'œuvre « dégage une force muette qui tient à la fois à la rigueur de ce qui est dit et à la certitude que tout n'est pas dit ». Le poème se fonde à la fois sur la réalité du langage et sur sa limite.

Telles sont les perspectives selon lesquelles P. Nepveu examine les poèmes de Ouellette, Miron et P.M. Lapointe. Examen trop détaillé pour qu'il soit possible d'en rendre compte ici : de multiples citations soutiennent l'analyse des modalités syntaxiques, rythmiques ou grammaticales, des procédés rhétoriques, des processus verbaux, de l'usage des pronoms et embrayeurs, etc... Pareil examen poursuivi à travers les variations éventuelles d'un recueil à un autre autorise les considérations pertinentes sur la thématique ou la conception poétique de ces trois auteurs. Bien que différents, tous trois relèvent d'un « mode de la dissonnance » et leur écriture est diversement travaillée par des éléments de rupture, en rapport avec certain silence.

Pour un condensé évidemment schématique, disons que Ouellette se caractérise par une « poétique de la tension », une fulgurance dont la violence originelle essaie de se conserver dans un projet ordonné, par une volonté de donner cohérence à l'excès, une tension entre vie et mort, conscience et désir, concentration et infini. Pour ce qui concerne Miron, et plus spécialement **l'Homme rapaillé,** P. Nepveu insiste sur la nécessité

de le « dépayser », c'est-à-dire de montrer que son rapport au pays est plus symbolique que réaliste : pays perdu - à commencer par la dépossession du moi - pays métaphorique, réseau d'images dont se nourrit l'énoncé proliférant, la poésie très orale de Miron. Si elle finit par déboucher sur le collectif, c'est à partir d'une subjectivité marquée, de sorte que ce poète du pays est aussi celui du dépaysement, du dépassement, du mouvement illimité et que le référentiel est constamment transcendé par l'imaginaire. Chez P.M. Lapointe, dans **Le Réel absolu,** c'est surtout l'évidence d'une parole nue, d'une énonciation lapidaire que P. Nepveu met en valeur. Dans l'abolition de tout tracé narratif, cette parole vierge qui semble refuser symbolisme et connotations crée un imaginaire hors du temps et procure le pur « plaisir du texte ». Un langage de l'immédiat tend à célébrer la fête du corps et du monde dans l'espace atopique du désir.

C'est là résumer sommairement et fatalement avec quelque inexactitude un ouvrage riche et stimulant, dont je regretterai seulement que l'écriture sacrifie elle-même parfois un peu trop aux rites et aux tics de la « modernité ».

Emilien CARASSUS

Récit (s) – QUAND LA VOILE FASEILLE

Noël AUDET

Montréal, Editions Hurtubise HMH
(''L'arbre HMH''), 1980, 312 pages.

Le sujet et l'intérêt principaux de ce premier livre en prose de Noël Audet résideraient-ils dans sa substance narrative ? Celle-ci, dans les trois premiers récits (divisés en parties ayant elles-même des titres) évoque la vie familiale dans la Gaspésie rurale pendant la première moitié, environ, de notre siècle.

Le premier récit, « Mon oncle Arsène », met en texte un personnage épris de liberté et dont l'humour, infatigable (même lors des funérailles d'une sœur bien-aimée) constitue une façon de ne pas mourir, de dire non au destin, et oui à la vie. Un humour-philosophie de la vie, donc, qui rattache ce personnage d'Arsène au topos littéraire du paysan-philosophe, incarnation de la sagesse - mais un topos renouvelé grâce au contenu de cette philosophie, à sa charge, non d'acceptation des lois des hommes et de la nature, mais de révolte.

« Grazie et Laure », le deuxième des quatre récits signalés dans la table des matières, est apparenté au premier (comme le seront le troisième et, dans une moindre mesure, le quatrième) par la présence de certains des mêmes personnages ; parenté renforcée ici par cet émouvant goût de la liberté chez deux jeunes filles et, plus tard, chez les mêmes devenues deux femmes désireuses de conquérir le droit à la responsabilité dans un monde qui s'y oppose.

Le troisième récit, « L'Arche de Noé pêle mêle » met en avant Ernest-N. (le père du narrateur), un être fier quoique discret, réservé mais tendre, courageux au travail et prompt à sourire, personnage qui inscrit ainsi cet ouvrage plus fortement encore dans une tradition littéraire nord-américaine à laquelle le rattachent déjà son cadre géographique et social, ses référents temporels : espace, temps, mode de vie et type de personnages rappellent, par exemple, dans leur américanité, **Les Raisins de la Colère** de Steinbeck. Il convient de noter, certes, des différences aussi : la société gaspésienne de **Quand la voile faseille** semble moins misérable que celle des **Raisins de la Colère,** et le malheur, dans ce roman québécois, est raconté avec une ironie, voire un humour, qui témoignent d'une certaine pudeur paysanne : défense par le sourire et le rire, même amers, contre ce malheur, et que le narrateur doit, peut-être, à son oncle Arsène.

Le quatrième récit comporte un nouveau changement de focalisation, cette fois-ci vers le narrateur lui-même. « Une simple histoire d'amour » n'est que cela : problème éternel du démon de midi (un peu prématuré, peut-être) et du triangle amoureux. Cette substance narrative nous semble moins intéressante que celle des trois récits précédents.

Mais justement, il faudrait répondre par la négative à notre interrogation liminaire, car le sujet et l'intérêt principaux de ce livre résident moins dans sa substance narrative attachante mais peu originale que dans son écriture même ; ils résident moins, peut-être, dans ce « sous-titre » qui n'en est pas un (puisque - insistance hautement significative - il figure **au-dessus** du titre, juste sous le nom du scripteur) et qui néanmoins en dit long : « Récit (s) ». Ce « sur-titre » invite à voir dans **Quand la voile faseille** non une simple série d'histoires mais une série d'expériences, un récit très travaillé par son scripteur. Vu ce travail/jeu sur le récit, l'on pourrait enrichir sa lecture de ce livre par la relecture de « Discours du récit » (de G. Genette dans son **Figures III,** Seuil, 1972), tant **Quand la voile faseille** illustre les diverses problématiques et possibilités du récit selon Genette.

D'abord, que de « récits » dans ce livre ! Leur nombre n'est point limité aux quatre dont les titres figurent seuls dans la table des matières. Chacun de ces quatre-là étant divisé en chapitres tantôt intitulés, tantôt non, et ces sous-chapitres se divisant à leur tour en parties clairement signalées, le plus souvent, par la disposition paginale ou typographique, le tout fourmillant de micro-récits et enrichi, à l'occasion, de récits racontés par tel ou tel personnage, la construction d'ensemble de l'ouvrage prend l'allure d'un extraordinaire enchevêtrement de récits (la structure temporelle y aidant) qui convie le lecteur à une véritable fête du diégétique. La modernité du livre (malgré sa substance narrative apparente) se révèle non seulement dans cette complexité mais dans cette fragmentation elle-même, si l'on accepte de voir, avec Barthes, la fragmentation comme une caractéristique importante de l'écriture contemporaine.

Ce même travail sur l'écriture se manifeste au niveau du temps. Un jeu complexe se décèle dans les relations entre le temps de la diégèse et celui du/des récit/s. Cela est frappant au niveau de l'ordre temporel : le début de « Grazie et Laure », par exemple, nous ramène à une époque antérieure (1924, Laure/Laurette a neuf ans, p. 86) à celle qui ferme « Mon oncle Arsène » et même à celle évoquée à la deuxième page du livre (1913, naissance d'Arsène). L'ordre temporel et donc la trame diégétique des trois premiers récits signalés dans la table des matières viennent souvent se croiser. Analepses et prolepses, de portée et d'amplitude variées, les anachronies sont ici fréquentes, le temps semble se mouvoir en zigzags, reculant à l'occasion jusqu'à la première guerre mondiale pour se rapprocher, dans « Une simple histoire d'amour », de l'époque actuelle, voire du moment même de l'écriture.

A ces jeux temporels s'ajoute le jeu des focalisations, D'un récit à l'autre la focalisation se déplace de l'oncle Arsène vers Grazie et Laure, puis sur Ernest-N. Ces différentes focalisations principales sont souvent interrompues au profit d'autres personnages. Cette focalisation multiple, mobile et, par là même, contemporaine, se déplace néanmoins, dans l'ensemble, vers un but unique et final - le narrateur lui-même, ce « je » sur lequel (en bonnes mœurs autodiégétiques, puisque ce dernier récit prend le caractère d'une autobiographie du narrateur) porte la focalisation principale dans « Une simple histoire d'amour ».

Quand la voile faseille évolue ainsi vers une présence toujours plus affirmée d'un narrateur qui à de multiples reprises, pourtant, signale sa présence et ses fonctions (voir Genette, **op. cit.,** pp. 261-5) tout au long du texte. La tendance mimétique (caractérisée, selon Genette, par l'absence du narrateur) va en décroissant au profit de la diégésis, bien que la richesse de détails dans l'histoire amoureuse de la fin lui conserve une facette mimétique non négligeable, Surtout : si la focalisation est toujours interne dans ce volume, le statut du narrateur passe du simple homodiégétique (focalisation sur un personnage autre que le narrateur, ce dernier n'étant le plus souvent, au cours des deux premiers tiers du livre, qu'un personnage secondaire) à l'autodiégétique, le narrateur étant devenu le personnage principal de son propre récit.

La problématique de la voix narrative, dit Genette, relève de la question de savoir : « Qui parle ? » Parfois le « je » ici semble relever non seulement de la voix du narrateur mais même de l'auteur, à en juger par un langage qui évolue depuis l'emploi de termes paysans ou maritimes et de régionalismes jusqu'à un déferlement de vocables savants empruntés aux sciences sociales, à la psychanalyse et, surtout, à la théorie littéraire, joint à mainte référence artistique ou culturelle, aux écrivains ou à leurs œuvres, aux critiques littéraires, etc.

La voix la plus intéressante reste celle du narrateur narrant, et le sachant. L'intérêt principal de ce livre - et vraisemblablement son véritable sujet - résident dans son écriture réflexive, consciente d'elle-même, éprouvant, montrant, analysant et jugeant ses propres procédés narratifs et scripturaux. Cette réflexivité s'affirme surtout quand le narrateur assume sa fonction de régie, proférant des commentaires métanarratifs et discourant avec humour sur sa manière de (dés)organiser son récit (pp. 54, 55, 58, 78, 86-7, 124, 194, 226 et bien d'autres), un narrateur qui affirme que son père est né de lui (p. 143) et qui évoque sa situation concrète de scripteur (p. 262).

Cette ontogénèse littéraire est remarquable, car elle permet de déceler à l'intérieur de **Quand la voile faseille,** pris dans son déroulement, une évolution parallèle à cette ontogonie littéraire qu'André Belleau a si bien su mettre en lumière dans son admirable étude du roman québécois

depuis quelques décennies[1] : évolution vers une écriture toujours plus réflexive, devenant de plus en plus son propre objet, inscrivant toujours plus, selon le mot de Ricardou, non plus « l'écriture d'une aventure » mais « l'aventure d'une écriture »[2]. Récit (s) d'une écriture.

Se fera également remarquer, dans le langage d'Audet, une certaine poésie qui sourd des images du monde naturel dont surtout (scripteur gaspésien oblige) la montagne et la mer. Auteur de deux recueils de poésie, Audet n'hésite pas à enrichir la trame narrative de passages de poésie lyrique.

Certes, nombreuses sont désormais les œuvres qui relèvent d'une volonté d'écrire « l'aventure d'une écriture », et si **Quand la voile faseille** n'était qu'une telle tentative de plus son intérêt serait moindre. Mais Audet a déclaré avoir essayé, en écrivant ce livre, « de parler à plusieurs publics et de construire divers niveaux de signification à partir d'histoires simples »[3] tout en évitant de faire « un roman d'intellectuel [malgré] quelques amuse-gueules à l'usage exclusif des professeurs »[4]. Cette écriture éminemment réflexive intéressera pourtant non les seuls professeurs mais tous ceux qui s'intéressent à - ou qui pratiquent - le travail/jeu de la création artistique.

La deuxième remarque d'Audet citée ci-dessus nous semble dangereuse : de quel droit (et dans quel but) découpe-t-on depuis des siècles les lecteurs entre intellectuels et non-intellectuels pour mépriser tantôt ceux-là, tantôt ceux-ci - et au profit de qui ? Noël Audet a réussi mieux peut-être qu'il ne l'espérait.

Quand la voile faseille, d'une lecture agréable (quoique longuette), accessible - et c'est une réalisation d'une réelle importance - à tous, ne manque pas pour autant de mettre en texte plusieurs niveaux de signification dont l'un est celui d'une réflexion et d'une expérimentation, parfois un peu trop voyantes, peut-être, mais intelligentes et passionnantes de l'écriture. En effectuant cette réflexion-expérimentation dans un roman accessible à tous les publics, Audet aura contribué précieusement, nous l'espérons, à sensibiliser de nouvelles couches sociales à l'écriture contemporaine.

Neil B. BISHOP

1 André BELLEAU, **Le Romancier fictif - Essai sur la représentation de l'écrivain dans le roman québécois,** Québec, Les Presses de l'Université du Québec, collection « Genres et Discours », 1980, 155 p.

2 Jean RICARDOU, **Problèmes du nouveau roman,** Paris, Editions du Seuil, collection « Tel Quel », 1967, 111 p.

3 Noël AUDET, « Autoportrait », dans **Québec français** (rubrique « Pourquoi parlent-ils ? »), N° 41, mars 1981 (note : la couverture de ce numéro porte la mention « Février 1981 », mais la page-titre et toutes les pages intérieures portent la mention « Mars 1981 », 32 p.

4 **Ibid.**

MARGARET LAURENCE

Patricia MORLEY

Boston, Twaine Publishers,
1981, 171 p.

Cette étude sur Margaret Laurence complète utilement le nombre relativement restreint des ouvrages critiques sur un auteur qui a surtout fait l'objet jusqu'à présent d'articles et de recensions. Un texte de 140 pages (sans compter les notes et les références bibliographiques) semble relativement court pour une production aussi vaste et aussi diverse que celle de M. Laurence mais P. Morley nous offre ici une présentation synthétique très claire de l'auteur et de son œuvre.

Une chronologie rapide de trois pages et le début du premier chapitre sont consacrés à la biographie d'une romancière dont il serait prématuré de relater la vie dans les moindres détails (cf. Préface). Les analyses critiques qui suivent l'entrée en matière ouvertement biographique ne sont cependant pas dépourvues de références à la vie de l'auteur. Ce volet apporte d'ailleurs peu de nouveau par rapport au numéro spécial du **Journal of Canadian Studies,** automne 1978, vol. 13, n° 3 et au recueil M. Laurence du **Journal of Canadian Fiction,** n° 27, 1980 auxquels P. Morley avait d'ailleurs collaboré.

La structure d'ensemble du livre est simple. La première partie aborde l'« inclassable » : éléments biographiques, jugements critiques de Laurence sur elle-même (il est souvent décevant d'interroger les auteurs car les créateurs ne sont pas toujours de bons critiques mais M. Laurence a déjà fait la preuve en l'occurrence de ses dons et de sa faculté de distanciation vis-à-vis de ses textes), œuvres diverses bien qu'importantes et notamment les traductions de la littérature somalie (**A tree for Poverty**), l'étude critique sur les romanciers et les dramaturges nigérians (**Long Drums and Cannons**) ou l'ouvrage pour enfants (**Jason's Quest**). Le reste du livre suit l'ordre chronologique et présente l'œuvre africaine (chapitre 2) puis le « cycle de Manawaka » (chapitre 3). Le déséquilibre entre les différents chapitres - léger, il est vrai, car le dernier chapitre contient la conclusion et fait la part belle à **The Diviners** que P. Morley serait tentée de considérer comme le chef d'œuvre souvent contesté mais finalement incontestable, tout en respectant le classique que constitue **The Stone Angel** - est considérablement atténué par l'existence d'un fil directeur que P. Morley impose à son travail : elle y privilégie en effet la métaphore du voyage qui structure aussi en l'unifiant le corpus laurencien.

L'analyse des romans dans leur ordre de publication conduit à d'inévitables redites mais, en réalité, ces répétitions traduisent avec force les préoccupations centrales voire obsessionnelles de Margaret Laurence. L'approche de P. Morley est résolument thématique en accord sans doute également avec un auteur davantage soucieux du message que de la technique narrative. Nous retiendrons des thèmes que l'on aurait parfois tendance à considérer comme typiquement canadiens mais dont il faudrait dire avec plus d'exactitude qu'ils reflètent assez bien les préoccupations de la littérature canadienne : solitude et aliénation, voyage et exil mais aussi Terre Promise de la liberté intérieure, amour et communication, acceptation de l'Autre dans sa dignité essentielle.

L'acte littéraire n'est pas gratuit, il est lié à la perception des réalités sociales et politiques. La lecture de Laurence est signifiante à plusieurs niveaux - celui de l'individu, celui de la communauté nationale, celui de l'universel. La quête d'identité est marquée par le désir de survivre et d'être reconnu malgré toutes les dépossessions et tous les impérialismes. Les Africains, les Canadiens, les Métis, les Femmes réclament le droit à la différence car ils ont tous souffert de leur situation d'exploitation coloniale. Il apparaît fondamental de saisir l'importance du passé et de retrouver les ancêtres et les dieux qui seuls permettent la libération. Les mythes sont nécessaires pour s'assumer tel que l'on est. La vie est menacée, la survie est précaire mais la mort est libératrice car elle métamorphose et conduit à une nouvelle naissance - connaissance de soi et co-naissance avec les autres. L'analyse est donc psychologique mais elle est aussi socio-historique et Patricia Morley insiste à plusieurs reprises de façon très judicieuse sur l'extrême importance de Mannoni. L'étude critique de P. Morley reflète également avec bonheur les affinités profondes qui lient M. Laurence à Patrick White, à Chinua Achebe et à des auteurs canadiens tels que Sinclair Ross, Adele Wiseman, Rudy Wiebe. Les difficultés que traverse l'adolescent pour atteindre la maturité, ce voyage du monde de l'innocence à celui de l'expérience pour parodier W. Blake, ressortissent à cette recherche personnelle pour s'assumer pleinement en tant qu'adulte que connaissent tous les personnages individuels de M. Laurence mais l'analyse vaut aussi pour les minorités ou les communautés négligées, qu'elles soient écossaises, africaines, ukrainiennes, indiennes ou métis mais également enfin pour le Canada tout entier dans sa diversité multiculturelle.

La quête d'identité est un véritable pélerinage religieux vers la foi, la grâce et la joie qui s'opère sans que Dieu soit jamais très loin mais où la Bible, en tout cas, est toujours présente dans sa grande capacité à fournir des symboles à l'imaginaire de Laurence. Quand on sait l'importance des rites de passage dans le monde fictionnel créé par M. Laurence on ne peut que se réjouir de la publication de cette nouvelle mais réelle initiation que nous propose ici Patricia Morley.

Jean-Michel LACROIX

LES STRUCTURES DU VRAISEMBLABLE DANS TROIS ROMANS DE MORDECAI RICHLER

Françoise PERROTIN

Thèse de Troisième Cycle. Université de Bordeaux III
Multigraphié, 1981. 413 pages.

Le travail de déconstruction auquel F. Perrotin se livre sur les trois romans de Richler qui constituent la trilogie de Montréal n'est heureusement pas de type traditionnel. La thèse n'est ni un catalogue de thèmes ni une analyse de personnages ; c'est l'étude de la production du sens et des relations qui s'établissent entre l'écrivain, le texte et son lecteur dans trois récits qui se situent dans la tradition du réalisme. Et c'est précisément le rapport du vraisemblable et de l'imaginaire qu'elle met à jour dans une analyse conflictuelle des romans conçus à la fois comme témoignages et comme fiction.

Le roman réaliste est fondé sur une reconstruction de la réalité fortement charpentée par le hors-texte. Le lecteur authentifie l'œuvre et l'accrédite par la conformité qu'il vérifie entre les normes du vraisemblable et les références à une réalité extérieure qui apparaît ainsi nécessaire au fonctionnement de la compréhension. « Ecrire, c'est insérer dans un cadre vérifiable et acceptable un récit qui respecte une logique interne perçue comme possible par le lecteur » (p. 84).

F. Perrotin retrouve les règles de la logique du récit réaliste en analysant le texte comme combinatoire entre « l'aspect de re-connaissance » et « l'aspect de connaissance ». Elle étudie la structuration de l'espace et celle du temps en montrant en particulier comment le lieu dans ses aspects de déplacement, de mobilité, d'ici et d'ailleurs devient une structure signifiante, et comment les réseaux temporels - mémoire du groupe et mémoire de l'individu - organisent les récits en enfermant le héros dans l'éternel recommencement de l'irrémédiable et de l'inéluctable.

L'ici devient alors la métaphore même de l'échec. C'est dans la forme des récits que l'analyse trouve le sens des trois romans qui apparaissent comme des variations d'un invariant qui est marginalité, claustrophobie, exclusion du héros multiple et unique de la trilogie.

L'analyse est perspicace et minitieuse sans être jamais pédante ni obscure. L'œuvre romanesque de Richler ainsi déconstruite donne à l'auteur l'occasion de montrer qu'elle utilise avec bonheur les instruments nouveaux de la critique textuelle sans pour autant jamais perdre de vue la richesse sémantique de cette œuvre presque autobiographique où à chaque page elle retrouve Richler et ses visages contradictoires.

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